



Florence's Ponte Vecchio

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# DREAM OF ITALY

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## FLORENCE SOLO: *The Highs & Lows of Going Alone*



I was determined to see Florence, and sooner rather than later.

Why Florence? Perhaps all the glowing references I've read about the beauty of the city, or the ravings (and I do mean ravings) from family and friends about its abundant art treasures had taken over that part of my brain that stores "next trip" bytes. And, my well-traveled brother's observation that Florence has more art per square foot than any other city impressed me.

I've never met a museum I didn't like, and although it has taken me some years to fully appreciate the extraordinary qualities of medieval painters, I've become a convert (the one excep-

tion being lushly painted pillow, billowing figures that appear likely to overflow outsized canvases).



As for the sense of urgency — I think of my mother, regretfully wishing that she'd gone to Stockbridge, in western Massachusetts, to see the Norman Rockwell Museum. It wasn't far from Rhinebeck, N.Y., where she and my father had retired, but something else always took priority. I didn't want to have a so deeply felt regret.

I've been single for a few years after a long marriage, and I enjoy my own company [she said, modestly]. I've traveled happily with friends (three

*continued on page 4*

## ROME:

## *Sleeping Where Keats Died*

The keys — two small, one long and heavy — came in the mail. With a clunk and a jingle, they fell from an envelope with a United Kingdom postmark onto our dining table in Brooklyn, N.Y. We hand-carried the keys to Rome and used them to open our way to a stay in a house beside the Spanish Steps — the one where poet *John Keats* died of tuberculosis (and complications of lovesickness) 185 years ago.



My wife and I rented the apartment from the *Landmark Trust*, a British brainchild that raises money from charities to save centuries-old wrecks nobody will live in, and then restores them. In some cases, the restoration takes years and costs millions of dollars. To generate the funds to maintain the homes, the Trust rents them out to hotel-jaded travelers like me.

Quirky is the Landmark Trust's *leitmotif*. It buys several old properties a year, and now has 183 towers, chapels, follies and forts, mostly in Britain but also in Italy. One of the newest spots available to travelers: "the Ruin," an 18th-century mock ruin in North Yorkshire that has been restored to its original ruined state. (Guests are advised to reach the toilet by "flitting" across "a moonlit terrace.") The roster includes the Pineapple, a 1777 neoclassical house, also in North Yorkshire, that has a gigantic you-guessed-it on the roof.

The stock of landmark homes available to travelers has been steadily increasing over the years. In addition

*continued on page 2*

Dante called Florence "the most beautiful and most famous daughter of Rome."

## Sleeping Where Keats Died *continued from page 1*

"I confess to feeling a shame I actually lived in one of the

to the homes in the U.K. and Italy, Ireland and the U.S. each now have a Landmark Trust. Interest in renting historic properties has picked up in recent years as business travelers spend increasing amounts of time in chain hotels and want an alternative during their vacations, according to travel analysts. One sign of that: the popularity of Scottish castles as places to stay.

In the U.S., Landmark Trust USA has salvaged four houses in Vermont (three in the past three years) including

Naulakha, near Brattleboro, where Rudyard Kipling wrote the *Jungle Books*. Landmark Trust USA used to be an arm of the British group but is now independent. Its properties are also available for rent.



For whimsical scope, the British Landmark Trust takes the cake. The most popular properties tend to be towers, generally sleeping four, that range from about \$792 to \$1,443 for three days. Also popular are the larger country homes suitable for gatherings such as family reunions.

As with its counterparts in other countries, the trust, based in Maidenhead, Berkshire, protects its buildings from typical vacation-rental shocks such as next-door gas stations and views of lead smelters. It is involved in a court battle in Italy over an *autostrada* project that is within sight of its 16th century villa near Venice, designed by *Andrea Palladio*.

As we learned during our two-night stay on *Piazza di Spagna*, the trust doesn't overprotect its guests. We were told not to appear at the house before 4 p.m., despite my wife's 7 a.m. touch-

## The Details...

**Landmark Trust**  
(44) 01628 825925  
www.landmarktrust.org.uk

*This building preservation charity rescues and restores architecturally interesting and historic buildings at risk, giving them a future by renting them for self-catering vacations. Once a building becomes a Landmark, its vacation rental income pays for its upkeep. Money to save other buildings at risk is raised in other ways.*

*Full details of all 183 Landmark Trust buildings are available in the 40th anniversary edition of the Landmark Trust Handbook, the price of which can be refunded against the first booking. The Handbook can be bought through the Landmark USA office for \$25. Call (802) 254-6868.*

### LANDMARK TRUST PROPERTIES IN ITALY

*Prices below are the starting rates, per night, to rent the entire property. Properties must be booked for a minimum of three nights.*



#### Keats-Shelley House Piazza di Spagna, Rome

The third-floor apartment has been refurbished to look as it did in 1800, almost identical to the second-floor rooms

where Keats spent his last days. "Every tall shuttered window has a view almost unchanged since the days of the Grand Tour," according to the Landmark Trust. Sleeps four. (\$453)



#### Casa Guidi Piazza San Felice, Florence

Once the home of poets Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Casa Guidi was purchased by the Browning Institute in 1971 and refurbished to appear as it did when the young couple lived there. Sleeps six. (\$384)

#### Sant' Antonio Tivoli (near Rome)

This old monastery contains remnants of thousands of years of history including walls of a villa dating to 60 B.C. and believed to have belonged to the poet Horace. The simple rooms have shuttered windows overlooking a valley and a waterfall. Sleeps 12. (\$462)



#### Villa Saraceno Finale (Vicenza)

Although the Veneto is sprinkled with 16th-century villas designed by Andrea Palladio, Villa Saraceno, built as a country retreat and working farm, is the only one that can be rented like this. Enjoy restored frescoes in the grand room, sitting room and loggia, an open fireplace and enclosed garden. Sleeps 16. (\$520)



— Kathy McCabe

1 € = \$1.23 at press time

# Keats did not write a single line of

ful smugness in being able to pretend for a couple of days that best houses in one of the best locations in one of the best cities.”

down. So, keys in her pocket, she checked her bag at the train station and went to look at art.

We prefer eat-in kitchens to room service, and I confess to feeling a shameful smugness in being able to pretend for a couple of days that I actually lived in one of the best houses in one of the best locations in one of the best cities. At \$570 a night, our digs on the Spanish Steps were worth it. On the other hand, if you want 5-star coddling in Rome, stay at the Hotel de Russie (cost: about \$820 a night for a medium-size room with a queen bed).

One floor below our apartment was the *Keats-Shelley House*, which occupies the rooms where Keats, staring at the blue and white trompe l’oeil rosettes on the ceiling, raved and hemorrhaged for more than three months until his death on Feb. 21, 1821. (The \$570 doesn’t get you into the museum.)

The building was rescued from demolition a century ago. An 18th-century facelift on a 16th-century frame, it was derelict when eight American writers led by Robert Underwood Johnson raised \$21,000 to buy it in 1906.

To help restore the property, Marshall Field gave \$50, Andrew Carnegie \$2,000, the Mermaid Club of Indiana University \$15. The Keats apartment (its furniture was burned when he died; the current pieces weren’t in the apartment when the poet was a resident) became a shrine to English Romantic poetry. It has 8,000 books, a



The Keats apartment



Piazza di Spagna

Keats death mask, a lock of his hair and a rental receipt for his piano.

Keats would surely recognize the apartment’s four big rooms,

with their stone floors, faded rugs, oak chests and oil portraits. The bathroom, a full kitchen, and an old short-wave radio are the anachronisms. (The radio didn’t work.)

One evening, we walked to a *salumeria* and brought back wine, cheese, bread, olives and prosciutto. We dined at

home, at a long dark-wood table guarded by a large Roman head with a broken nose.



## The Keats-Shelley House Museum

Piazza di Spagna, 26  
(39) 06 6784235

[www.keats-shelley-house.org](http://www.keats-shelley-house.org)

**Open:** Monday through Friday,  
9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.;  
Saturday, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.  
and 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

**Tickets:** 3.50€ per person

We fell asleep to the babble of tourists on the steps, and awoke, staring up at those trompe l’oeil rosettes, to the babble of the *Bernini* fountain beneath our shutters. At 10 a.m. on our second morning, the Landmark Trust’s housekeepers came and hustled us out. We lugged our bags down to the street to look for a cab in the rain. Then my wife put the keys to the apartment into the trust’s prepaid envelope, and we popped them back into the post.

— Barry Newman,  
*The Wall Street Journal*

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Kathleen A. McCabe  
Publisher and Editor-In-Chief

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### Editorial feedback is welcome.

E-mail: [editor@dreamofitaly.com](mailto:editor@dreamofitaly.com)

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E-mail: [frances@dreamofitaly.com](mailto:frances@dreamofitaly.com)

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poetry during his time in Rome.



## Florence Solo *continued from page 1*

years ago to Prague and Budapest) and with my son to Ireland two years ago. A teacher, he's engaged to a wonderful young woman who's in medical school and (understandably) a trip to Florence with his mother wasn't on his agenda—or in his budget. Coordinating schedules seems to become more difficult all the time, so I decided to coordinate my own and make plans when it suited me.

Having missed the opportunity to join good friends and amicable traveling companions on a Florence/Siena adventure several years ago, because the invitation came too late to rearrange my work schedule, I wasn't inclined to sit around. Another friend volunteered to come with me last fall, but she wanted to see Rome and Venice, too, on her first visit to Italy. That seemed a reasonable decision for her, but I'd seen those glorious cities and wanted more than a day or so with the wonders of Florence. [Note: She's been and returned, and is talking about her next trip to Italy. Perhaps the two of us will enjoy Sicily.]

The more I thought about it, the clearer it was to me that Florence was my next



place to visit—I interpreted a raise and a bonus as signs that I was meant to enjoy the fruits of my labor in Italy. An Air France promotion this past November—choose a European city for \$300, and add a second for another \$50—was simply confirmation of my Florentine travel destiny.

### What I loved about going solo

One joy of traveling alone is that you can do what you want; last-minute itinerary changes won't throw anyone else off. When I learned that the *Pitti Palace* would be open on a day I had expected it to be closed—the time had changed from when my guidebook was printed—I canceled a tentative

day trip to *Siena*. (I could have used a spreadsheet to track openings, closings, and lunch hours for all the places on my long list of “must-sees.”)

I was rewarded by a leisurely stroll through mostly deserted, magnificent galleries, the warmth of the sun on a bench in the *Boboli Gardens* with several tabby cats for company, and a glass of wine in the palace courtyard while I contemplated my next stop. Yes, I would have enjoyed Siena, but I'm not unhappy with my last-minute choice.

I also could enjoy wandering as I wanted and fill in my “must-sees” with unexpected finds, such as the bookstore in the *Piazza della Repubblica*, the Edison (I like bookstores even more than museums) and the stalls around the *San Lorenzo Market* that held wonderful choices for family mementoes. I ambled down alleys, particularly around *Santa Croce*, to see what lay in store, just because a colorful doorway or a flowering window box caught my eye.

Traveling solo also allowed me the luxury of eating when I wanted. I'm usu-  
*continued on page 8*



Italian Tourism Board

Duomo



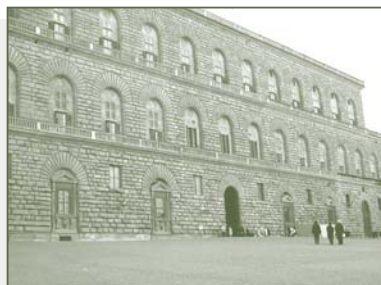
Polo Museale Fiorentino

Palatine Gallery, Pitti Palace



Polo Museale Fiorentino

Boboli Gardens



Golffence.it

Pitti Palace



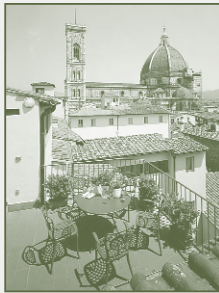
Cafe Gilli

# Florence's Uffizi is the world's oldest gall

## Where to Stay

**Hotel Brunelleschi**  
**Piazza Santa Elisabetta, 3**  
**(39) 055 27370**  
[www.hotelbrunelleschi.it](http://www.hotelbrunelleschi.it)

This hotel was recommended by a cousin (single and female) who travels to Paris and Florence frequently; friendly and comfortable, and practically next door to the Duomo. My room overlooked the street, and on a warm Saturday night with the windows open, it seemed as noisy as any New York City avenue. Still, the nightly rate of 90€ with breakfast, was a good one. (November is considered off-season. The hotel Web site currently quotes a rate of 245€ per night for a single.)



Hotel Brunelleschi

## Where to Eat

**L'Osteria di Giovanni**  
**Via Del Moro, 18/20/22**  
**(39) 055 284897**  
[www.osteriadigiovanni.it](http://www.osteriadigiovanni.it)

I'm not sure that I have the words to describe, adequately, the food and the ambiance of this charming restaurant at the end of *Via del Moro* near the Arno. You read about Giovanni in the June 2005 issue of *Dream of Italy*, and every word was true. I would have eaten all my meals there if I'd gone sooner in my stay. Here's one dining experience: a glass of *Prosecco*, bread with new olive oil (a

Nile-green shade), barley-pumpkin soup, ravioli with mushrooms and truffles, bass en papillote with string beans, accompanied by a glass of lovely new red wine, and finished by a scoop of mango sorbet.

**Café Gilli**  
**Piazza della Repubblica, 36-39r**  
**(39) 055 213896**  
[www.gilli.it](http://www.gilli.it)

Yes, it's a tourist spot and not cheap, but that doesn't detract from its wonderful location, around the corner (almost) from the Duomo with its exceptional opportunities for people-watching. Gilli is frequented by everyone from elegantly dressed grandmothers to hurrying students to Italian businessmen. Try the delectable pastries.

## Where to Shop

**Furla**  
**Via della Vigna Nuova, 28r**  
**Via Calzaiuoli, 47r**

The two Florence locations offer handbags and accessories at prices only marginally less expensive than the Furla store in New York. I ran my fingers up and down, and along, small and large bags, and succumbed to the allure of a wine-colored beauty, large enough to stash a notebook, a newspaper, and a book or two.



1 € = \$1.23 at press time

**Madova**  
**Via Guicciardini, 1R**  
**(39) 055 2396526**  
[www.madova.com](http://www.madova.com)

Rows of leather gloves are meticulously arranged in this tiny shop on the *Oltrarno* side of the *Ponte Vecchio* (facing the Oltrarno, it's at 11 a.m. on a clock). I loved just looking at them all, in amazing shades and hues. A dark green pair won me and my hands, for about \$40.



**Libreria Edison**  
**Piazza della Repubblica 27/r**  
**(39) 055 213110**  
[www.libreriaedison.it](http://www.libreriaedison.it)

Spend time browsing through a selection of best-sellers in English and a plenty of guide books on Florence and Italy. Internet café upstairs.

## What to See

**San Marco Museum**  
**Piazza San Marco, 3**  
**(39) 055 2388608**  
[www.firenzemusei.it/sanmarco](http://www.firenzemusei.it/sanmarco)  
**Tickets: 4€ per person**

The only word to describe the works of *Fra Angelico* is "heavenly." Their delicate lines and majestic wings, and the exquisite shades of gold, all contribute to a glory that I haven't found in other works of art. It was a humbling and uplifting experience to find these masterpieces in the corridors and cells of a former monastery.

# News, Tips, Deals

## Plan Now to Attend Slow Food's *Biannual Extravaganza*

Foodies from around the world have been waiting nearly two years for one of the foremost gourmet events in the world—Slow Food's *Salone del Gusto* (Hall of Taste). This celebration of gastronomic culture, held every other October in Turin, will take place October 26 to 30, 2006 in the *Lingotto Fiere*. The exhibition hall will be filled with hundreds of stalls devoted to Italian meats, cheeses, grains and



spices as well as international offerings, including foods in danger of extinction. In addition, special dinners, slow food tours and workshops will be offered.

Those who want to visit the premier Slow Food event can benefit from the added hotel rooms now available in Turin as a result of the recent Winter Olympics. The National Trust for Historic Preservation (800-944-NTHP;



[www.nationaltrust.org](http://www.nationaltrust.org)) and *Food Artisans* (805-963-7289; [www.foodartisans.com](http://www.foodartisans.com)) offer culinary tours that coincide with the Salone. A five-day pass will cost 40€ for Slow Food members and 60€ for non-members. Daily passes will also be available. For more information visit, [www.slowfood.it](http://www.slowfood.it) and [www.salonedelgusto.com](http://www.salonedelgusto.com) (which will soon be updated with 2006 details).



### Rome's Ara Pacis Reopens

Over ten years ago, American architect Richard Meier was commissioned to design a new home for the Ara Pacis, a marble altar constructed by Roman Emperor Augustus in 9 B.C. to celebrate his victory over Spain and Gaul. Meier's glass building—the first new structure in Rome's center since World War II—opened in Piazza Augusto Imperatore on April 21, the anniversary of the founding of Rome. After viewing an exhibition on the history of the white marble piece, the public can now visit the altar in specially air-conditioned room, bathed in plenty of natural light. The building also features a rooftop café overlooking the Tiber. Entrance: 6€ per person. Call (39) 06 82059127 for more information.

### GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH A FLORENTINE FRESCO

Visitors can don hardhats and clamber up scaffolding for a close-up on early Renaissance frescos undergoing cleaning in Florence. This extraordinary construction site is the Church of Santa Croce. The work? A fresco cycle by Agnolo Gaddi depicting the "Legend of the True Cross," which has graced church walls since 1380.



Jen Henson

Gaddi, a prolific painter with a gift for vivid narrative, was trained by his father Taddeo, the star pupil of Giotto. Commissioned by the powerful Alberti family, Gaddi covered the 3,280 square foot chancel with murals and stained glass relating to a 13th-century legend of a cross that is capable of resurrection. After centuries of smoke and dirt, the fresco is getting a painstaking cleaning that will bring it back to life.

Groups of up to ten (with audio guides in five languages) can get an eyeful of the work while

visiting four of the eight floors of scaffolding that will keep the painting under wraps until 2010. The window of opportunity is a large one, but like many things worth doing in Italy, it does require a bit of organization.

Visits can be scheduled three days a week (Friday, Saturday and Sunday) from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Friday and Saturday and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday.

Reserve well in advance by calling (39) 055 2645184 or sending a fax (English is fine) to (39) 055 2656761 between the hours of 9 a.m. and 1 p.m., Monday to Friday. Last-minute tour reservations can be snapped up by checking in where the audio guides are rented at the back of the church in Largo Bargellini. Entrance: 10€ per person. Children under 12 are not allowed.

—Nicole Martinelli, [zoomata.com](http://zoomata.com)

1 € = \$1.23 at press time

“Rome is a world, and it would take years



# and Events



## *A Rose in Bloom Just Off Via Veneto*



Rome's Rose Garden Palace Hotel was one of the best and most surprising finds of a recent visit to the Eternal City. The 4-star property has a location that can't be beat – just a block off the famed *Via Veneto*, in one of the city's best neighborhoods, and a stone's throw from the American Embassy. The Villa Borghese and Spanish Steps are within a short walk.

The hotel is partly owned by Steve Perillo, the third generation owner of Perillo Tours. Steve's late father Mario pioneered the concept of tour packages in the 1940s and brought Italian touring to the masses, earning the nickname "Mr. Italy." As a tour operator, the younger Perillo felt it was a natural progression to own a hotel. He and his Italian partner bought this 19th-century building in 1998 and named it after the rose bushes in the courtyard.

One might expect a hotel owned by a tour company to seem impersonal or touristy. In the case of the Rose Garden, nothing can be further from the truth. The 59-room property feels more like a small boutique hotel featuring a cozy lobby, the perfect mix of modern and classic design and ample-size guest rooms offering every amenity. There's even a small spa and indoor swimming pool.

Most surprising is that there's little evidence of organized groups and the hotel attracts at least as many European visitors as Americans. Guests can enjoy the food of the hotel restaurant *Il Roseto* in a formal dining room or at the bar. The chef's delicious *minestrone* makes the perfect late-afternoon snack, when dinner is still hours away.

The quality of the Rose Garden Palace makes it seem like it should be classified as a 5-star hotel, such as the Westin Excelsior just around the corner. But guests at the Rose Garden will pay far less than their neighbors for a satisfying stay.



### **Rose Garden Palace**

Via Boncompagni, 19  
(39) 06 421741

[www.rosegardenpalace.com](http://www.rosegardenpalace.com)

**Rates:** A double with breakfast starts at 300€ per night during high season. The hotel offers special weekend rates and packages that can bring the cost of a double down to about 275€ a night.

## LET THE WINE FLOW

One of the highlights of spring for Italian wine lovers is the annual *Cantine Aperte* (Open Cellars) celebration that takes place the last Sunday in May. On May 28 of this year, wineries across Italy will throw open their doors between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m. and invite the public to taste their productions either for free or just a small fee. The event has been coordinated for 14 years by the Wine Tourism Movement. Some producers are so excited by the event that they are opening a day early for guided tours (by appointment only). At some wineries, you will be able to buy a special *Open Cellars 2006* commemorative tasting glass to benefit UNICEF. For more information, visit the Web site of your favorite vineyard to find out if they are opening their cellars or visit [www.movimentoturismovino.it](http://www.movimentoturismovino.it)

## SEGWAY TOURS HIT FLORENCE, ROME

If an old-fashioned walking tour just doesn't do it for you, how about seeing the sites of Florence or Rome from the vantage point of a Segway? The thought of mixing the ultra-modern self-balancing, personal transportation device with ancient buildings and Renaissance art may not appeal to some, but for others, it is an exciting way to see these cities in a new way. An English-speaking guide leads a group of six tourists—each on his or her own Segway—on a three-hour tour of the highlights of either city.



Participants get 30 minutes of training on using a Segway before the tour. Price: 75€ per person.

For more information or to make reservations, call (39)055 291958 or visit [www.segwayfirenze.com](http://www.segwayfirenze.com)



to become a true citizen of it.” —Goethe

ally a creature of habit about lunchtime, but one day, the lavish breakfast at the *Hotel Brunelleschi* was particularly filling (I can't resist freshly baked rolls with butter and jam), so I didn't eat again until almost 3 p.m. when I collapsed into a chair on the terrace at the *Café Gilli*, one of the oldest in Florence. Fortunately, the weather in early November was sufficiently warm to sit outdoors with little more than a light sweater or jacket. And what did I crave—a spinach omelette and an *espresso*. Just as well I was alone—I didn't need anyone to tell me the next morning why I was still awake. Another day, an unexpected shower, which became a serious downpour, dictated my lunchtime in a trattoria along the Arno, where I enjoyed panini and wine, while I contemplated the buildings across the river and speculated on the lives of their residents.

### What worked for my solo voyage

I took special precautions because I was traveling alone. I'm usually more vigilant when I travel—not hard for me since I grew up in Manhattan and am always aware of who's around me. Except, of course, when my wallet was stolen from my purse on a Fifth Avenue bus (the only time in my life that my bag was unzipped).

I'm careful about clothes—cotton, linen, and wool combinations are my wardrobe in Europe. No sneakers and no jeans, which still proclaim the wearer as an American, no matter how universal these items have become. I want to look like the cultural and social landscape, so I put on protective coloring and feel more comfortable. My reward is being asked for directions in a language not my own. This happened once in Florence; my personal record is four times in Madrid, but the most entertaining story occurred in the Ercolano train station one summer

about 15 years ago. Two natives engaged me in earnest conversation, while I explained, apologetically, in poor French and worse Italian that I spoke English only. They had bypassed my son and his father, dressed in short-sleeved shirts, shorts, and sneakers and to stop me, the woman dressed in a long cotton dress and sandals.

I took note that the staff at the hotel was good in not announcing my room number to the lobby's occupants—and I was happy with their discretion.

By far the smartest thing I did was to alert credit card companies and the bank that issues my ATM card before I left, where I would be and when. (What if I was alone without money, or access to it? Yes, I know the odds were against it, but when I'm being neurotic, I'm truly neurotic.) Each company told me that I was smart to do so; since I'm not in Europe regularly, I may not have been able to access cash machines or charge purchases. I was amused to hear a report on NPR several weeks later by a traveler who hadn't alerted his banking masters and had to call several companies from London to free his assets

### What I didn't like

The hardest part about my trip was that I missed having someone to share stories and observations with, especially over dinner.

"I'm in Florence!!!"

"The most touching Annunciation is the one by *Lorenzini* in which Mary withdraws from the angel. That's the most natural, initial reaction to the message."

"Look at my splurge at Furla. This wonderful bag—big enough for a newspaper, a guide book—and it's so Italian."



Mary Service catches up with her son Tim after returning from Florence.

"The glove shop across the Arno is as great as my godmother said!"

And, leaving the splendors of the Rodin Museum in Paris (on the second half of my trip),

having no one to declare to: "It's noon, and I haven't yet to enter a church! I guess I'm not in Florence anymore."

Although I kept a journal and wasn't unhappy to be electronically untethered, writing wasn't the same as an immediate, personal exchange of delights and discoveries.

### What did I learn?

I learned much more than I expected on my solo trip last fall to Florence—I loved it, but I'll look for a companion on my next adventure. If traveling is as much about exploring new territory within one's self as it is about encountering unknown geography, then traveling alone can sometimes be a trip of considerable, and possibly too many, solitary dimensions.

With apologies to Dickens, it was a far, far better thing I did, traveling alone, than not having gone. For future trips, I'll look harder for a friend or a tour. And an opportunity may have fallen into my lap: I stayed with a grad school friend and her husband recently. They asked if I would be interested in joining them for part of a two-week rental in the south of France next year. It may not be Italy but, *ah, ma chérie, bien sur!*

—Mary Brady Service

# Two million foreigners visit Florence each year.



*A unique and inspiring vacation  
Rome, Italy - Villa Rental*



*Families, Artists, Friendly Groups Welcome*

Featured in *Gourmet Magazine* and *The Boston Globe*,  
the Casale Sonnino is the perfect home base  
for visiting Rome and touring all of  
Central Italy from Florence to the Amalfi Coast

The fully renovated 18th Century Villa, built upon  
foundations dating back to 100 AD is nestled  
amidst 30 acres of vineyards, a mere 35 minutes  
from the heart of Rome. Sleeps up to 10  
in 5 bedrooms/3 full baths



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