

MERCHANTS & PRINCES: CONNOISSEURS' FLORENCE

MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY – FRIDAY 2 MARCH 2018 (5 DAYS)

LECTURER: TOM DUNCAN

£1870

- Discover a 'hidden' Florence
- Emphasis on the patronage of the Medici & Corsini families
- Wonderful paintings & interiors from the fifteenth to the eighteenth centuries
- Private visits to two Corsini city palaces & the Corsini villa at Maiano, hosted by the owners
- Unhurried pace with time to explore independently
- Comfortable 5* villa-style hotel in Florence



Benozzo Gozzoli, Cosimo il Vecchio di Medici with Family & Attendants, Chapel of the Magi, Florence

OVERVIEW

The dark clouds of medieval strife which had shaped the great Tuscan cities of Florence, Siena, Pisa and Lucca began to clear at the dawn of the fifteenth century. The rise of Cosimo de' Medici saw Florence transformed through the construction of sumptuous secular palaces and landmark civic monuments. Via a career based in merchant activity and banking, the Medici became the city's most prominent patrons of the arts and sciences.

They ruled first the city and then Tuscany, transformed from merchants into Imperial Dukes by the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V in 1532, then upgraded to Grand Dukes by Pope Pius VI in 1569. Under Cosimo I, his sons Francesco I and Ferdinando I, and his grandson, Cosimo II, Florence once again became a great centre of the Renaissance, a position it had temporarily yielded to Rome at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

The Corsini family came from the hills south of the city at Val di Pesa. Rising to important positions in the republic as traders, politicians and churchmen, the family's political influence yielded to the Medici in the sixteenth century. However, through a Europe wide web of brokerage and banking interests, the family flourished, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even producing a pope, Clement XII (1730 – 1740).

It is these two families' extraordinary patronage which will be the focus of our five-day visit to Florence, but which will also include a number of visits to other remarkable collections, with a day in and around Fiesole.

We shall be based at the comfortable **5* Villa Medici**, located on Via il Prato close to Borgo Ognisanti. Facilities include a handsome garden and terrace, and a good restaurant. The River Arno and Santa Maria Novella are close by whilst the Cathedral area of Florence is either a fifteen minute stroll or a short journey by taxi.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Monday 26 February – We fly from London Heathrow to **Pisa** and transfer to **Florence** arriving mid afternoon. En route into Florence we shall stop at the Romanesque church of **San Miniato al Monte**, one of the finest basilicas in Tuscany, little changed since the twelfth century. From its high vantage point there is a superb view of the city. Its sober interior contains the famous **Cardinal of Portugal Chapel** designed by some of the finest artists of the mid *quattrocento*. Following our visit we continue to our hotel and later in the evening we have dinner at a local restaurant - water, wine and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Tuesday 27 February – Our day begins nearby at the Franciscan church of **Ognissanti**, founded in 1251. Both Ghirlandaio and Botticelli (who is buried here) worked in the church and Ghirlandaio completed a **Last Supper** in 1480, which we shall see. We continue to a largely unknown treasure, the **Rucellai Chapel**, located

inside the **Church of San Pancrazio**. The architect and Renaissance theorist Leon Battista Alberti not only completed the influential facade of the Rucellai family's palace, but he also designed this extraordinary space – a small funerary chapel emulating the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. After coffee we continue to **Palazzo Corsini** for a private visit. The Corsini family purchased the original *casino* (a little house) from Grand Duke Ferdinando II di Medici in 1649 and extended it to form an imposing Arno-facing palace, decorated in the final decade of the seventeenth century. Princess Lucrezia Corsini will guide our visit of the ground floor summer apartments, the grotto and the family's private picture gallery in the State Rooms on the *piano nobile*. We break for lunch (not included) and walk to the **San Lorenzo** district for our second private visit of the day. **Casa Martelli** once belonged to an influential Florentine merchant and banking family with strong Medici connections. Today, the house is a small picture gallery with fine seventeenth and eighteenth textiles and paintings by Salvator Rosa, Beccafumi, Giordano and Piero di Cosimo. We end at the **Medici Palace** and its jewel-like **Chapel of the Magi** with famous frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli. We return to the hotel and the evening will be free.

Day 3: Wednesday 28 February – This morning we travel by coach to the eastern outskirts of Florence. Within the refectory of the Vallombrosan **Abbey of San Salvo** we shall see Andrea del Sarto's extraordinary **Last Supper** fresco. We continue to **Fiesole** and after coffee we visit the village's fine **Duomo**, begun in the eleventh and completed in the thirteenth century. We end our morning at the **Museo Bandini**, named after the Florentine librarian who in the eighteenth century brought together this small, yet fine collection of Medieval and Renaissance Tuscan art. We have our group lunch in Fiesole after which we end our afternoon at nearby **Maiano**, where we visit **Villa di Maiano**. Originally owned by the Sforza and the Pazzi families, it was the English politician and connoisseur, John Temple Leader, who in the nineteenth century returned the villa to its original appearance in a neo-Renaissance style. Now owned by the Corsini family, Countess Isabella Miari Fulcis Battaglia Corsini will guide us around the villa's rooms, a joint homage to Temple Leader and the Corsini family, their taste shaped by the romanticism of the nineteenth century. We return to Florence and the evening will be free.

Day 4: Thursday 1 March – This morning we leave our hotel by mini-coach for **Palazzo Vecchio**. The Medici Grand Dukes transformed the interiors of the city's most imposing public building into a series of lavishly frescoed spaces, much of it executed by Vasari, as the setting for the more ceremonial aspects of their rule. From here we shall walk along the newly extended, raised **Vasari Corridor**, hung with hundreds of famous artists' self-portraits, connecting Palazzo Vecchio to the **Palazzo Pitti**. Part grand private palace, part art gallery, the Pitti's collections reflect the power and wealth of the Medici dynasty in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. After a break for coffee we shall look at its celebrated picture collection and the royal apartments. Lunch (not included) and the afternoon will be free for private explorations. Our final group dinner will be in our hotel.

Day 5: Friday 2 March – We depart our hotel and walk quite literally next door to visit privately a rare Florentine survival, **Villa Corsini al Prato**. Princess Georgiana Corsini will guide us through the palazzo, built in 1591 and bought by the Corsini family in 1621. The formal garden was added at this time and remains largely unchanged. The splendid interiors of the palazzo and the mannerist statuary of the garden will bring together many of the themes encountered during these remarkable few days in Florence. After refreshments in the palazzo we walk over the Arno River to visit **Santa Maria del Carmine** where in the **Brancacci Chapel** the innovative frescoes by Masaccio (assisted by Masolino, and completed by Filippino Lippi) mark the birth of renaissance painting. After lunch (not included) and a little free time we transfer by coach from our hotel to Pisa Airport for the early evening return flight to Heathrow.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £1870 **Without Flights** £1740 **Deposit** £275

Single Supplement £275 (Double for Sole Use)

Please note that there is a £250 discount if Connoisseurs Rome is taken with Connoisseurs Florence

Hotel 4 nights with breakfast at the 5* Villa Medici in Florence

Flights British Airways

Outward: **BA604** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1055** arrive Pisa **1410**

Return: **BA605** Depart Pisa **1845** arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **2025**

Price includes 2 dinners & 1 lunch with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, City Tax, entry fees & gratuities, services of Tom Duncan & tour manager James Hill

Not included Travel to/from Heathrow, 2 dinners & 3 lunches



CICERONI TRAVEL
2 The Square, Aynho, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX17 3BL
Telephone +44 (0) 1869 811167 Fax +44 (0) 1869 811188
Email info@ciceroni.co.uk Website www.ciceroni.co.uk

