



**CICERONI**  
T R A V E L

# PATRICIANS & PATRONAGE FLORENCE & THE EARLY MEDICI

THURSDAY 7 – MONDAY 11 MARCH 2019 (5 DAYS)

LECTURER: PAULA NUTTALL

£1675

- Discover the story of one of Italy's most extraordinary dynasties of art patrons
- Witness the transformation of Florence into the cradle of the Renaissance
- See masterpieces by Donatello, Ghiberti, Masaccio, Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Ghirlandaio & many others
- Visit led by Paula Nuttall, one of the acknowledged experts on Florence in the fifteenth century
- Based in a comfortable 4\* hotel overlooking the River Arno, used for *A Room with a View*



Benozzo Gozzoli, *The Procession of the Magi*,  
Florence, Palazzo Medici

## OVERVIEW

The Medici family are synonymous with Florence and with the birth of renaissance art. Rising to power in the early 1400s, thanks to the enormous wealth of their international banking network, they were effectively the rulers of the Florentine republic. They were also amongst the most influential statesmen in Italy, until political upheavals and the collapse of the Medici bank in the 1490s led to their downfall and temporary exile.

The heyday of the Medici family in the fifteenth century coincided with some of the most ground breaking artistic developments of the renaissance period. The family were swift to recognise the value of art as propaganda, harnessing the skills of the greatest artists of the day to reflect their status and prestige, as well as to beautify their city. Focusing on the era of the early Medici, we shall explore the monuments, churches and museums of Florence, looking at some of the masterpieces created for successive generations of the family.

The founder of the family fortunes was undoubtedly one Giovanni di Bicci, a shrewd member of the Guild of Moneychangers whose luck it was to gain the post of papal banker to the anti-Pope, John XXIII. Despite this prelate's questionable entitlement to his papal role, the connection between the family and the papacy was established, continuing almost to the end of the century. On this foundation was built a web of connections which allowed Giovanni's son, Cosimo the Elder, to consolidate the family's political and economic power at home and abroad. There now began a golden age of artistic and humanist patronage, continued by Cosimo's son, Piero 'the Gouty' and into a fourth generation under his son, Lorenzo 'the Magnificent'.

The list of the architects, sculptors and painters employed by the family is astounding. So too is the variety of buildings in and around Florence which either they directly funded, or contributed to in some fashion. These include Brunelleschi's Old Sacristy at San Lorenzo – a family mausoleum; Fra Angelico's mystical frescoes at San Marco, the friary funded by Cosimo for the salvation of his soul; the Medici Palace, the first domestic building to revive classical forms with Benozzo Gozzoli's jewel-like chapel of the Magi within; Donatello's bronze statue of *David*, which once graced its courtyard; and Botticelli's lyrical mythological paintings *The Birth of Venus* and *Primavera*. These are just a handful of the masterpieces that we shall encounter on this five-day visit, specifically designed to bring some of the best-loved works of the renaissance into sharp relief.

The visit will be led by Paula Nuttall, one of the acknowledged experts on Florence in the fifteenth century and the author of several acclaimed books and exhibition catalogues. We stay at the 4\* **Hotel Degli Orafi**, ideally and dramatically set by the banks of the River Arno in central Florence. The hotel is well known worldwide as the setting for James Ivory's film *A Room with a View*, based on E.M. Forster's evocative novel.

## ITINERARY OUTLINE

**Day 1:** Thursday 7 March – We fly from Heathrow to Pisa, arriving mid afternoon, transfer by coach to **Florence** and check into the 4\* Hotel Degli Orafi. Time allowing, there will be a short ‘orientation’ walk to the **Piazza della Signoria** and the **Palazzo Vecchio** by way of introduction to the city. Later that evening there will be a group dinner in a local restaurant. Wine, water and coffee are included with both group dinners.

**Day 2:** Friday 8 March – Our first morning in Florence will begin at one of the key monuments of the early renaissance, the guild church of **Orsanmichele**. Here we shall find a veritable ‘pantheon’ of late medieval and early renaissance sculpture by Ghiberti, Donatello and others. We continue to the romanesque **Baptistry** and Florence’s great Cathedral, **Il Duomo**, where we shall see its fine contents and the great dome of Brunelleschi (exterior only). After a pause for coffee, we end the morning with a visit to the Dominican friary of **San Marco**, one of Cosimo di Medici’s pet projects. Here we shall find a wealth of paintings by one of the great masters, Fra Angelico. After lunch (not included) we continue to the church of **San Lorenzo**, designed by Brunelleschi and paid for by the Medici – it was their parish church and indeed, the family mausoleum. It is particularly rich in sculptures by Donatello and his contemporaries. Finally, we visit the adjacent **Palazzo Medici-Riccardi**, the family’s great palace to see the tiny family chapel commissioned by Cosimo the Elder, with frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli showing the *Journey of the Magi*. It includes many Medici portraits amidst the great cavalcade of Florence’s ‘great and good’. We return to the hotel and the evening will be free.

**Day 3:** Saturday 9 March – We spend this morning in the **Uffizi Art Gallery**, where we concentrate on paintings from the late middle ages up to about 1500. These rooms contain some of the finest paintings by all the greatest names of Florentine painting. We shall focus on works by painters from the time of the Medici: altarpieces by Fra Filippo Lippi and Leonardo da Vinci; great allegories by Botticelli such as *The Birth of Venus*; exquisite portraits by Piero della Francesca; even great paintings from the Northern European tradition such as Hugo van der Goes’s *Portinari Altarpiece*, a painting which had a profound effect on Florentine art. At the end of this visit the rest of the afternoon and evening will be free. Lunch and dinner are not included today.

**Day 4:** Sunday 10 March – We begin with a visit to the **Bargello Museum** with outstanding sculptures by all the leading Florentine masters: Ghiberti, Donatello and Michelangelo. After a pause for coffee we continue to the **Museo dell’Opera del Duomo**. Reopened in 2015 after a major refurbishment, one of Florence’s great collections contains sculptures by Donatello and Michelangelo, and Ghiberti’s Baptistry doors, now restored to their original splendour and magnificently displayed. We then break for lunch (not included) and make our way to **Santa Maria Novella**, the Dominican church, in order to see Masaccio’s ‘Trinity’ fresco and the great fresco cycle commissioned by the Tornabuoni family from Ghirlandaio. Later in the evening we shall enjoy our final dinner.

**Day 5:** Monday 11 March – We make a final visit this morning to the nearby church of **Santa Trinita**, internally an austere, late fourteenth century Gothic church. It contains the remarkable **Sassetti Chapel**, commissioned by Francesco Sassetti in 1483 from Ghirlandaio. The frescoes and accompanying altarpiece include views of Florence in the 1480s together with contemporary portraits, including Lorenzo ‘the Magnificent’. A gentle walk over the Arno River brings us to **Oltrarno** where we shall visit **Santa Maria del Carmine** where in the **Brancacci Chapel** the innovative frescoes by Masaccio (in collaboration with Masolino, and completed by Filippino Lippi) mark the birth of renaissance painting. After a coffee break we return on foot to the hotel to collect our luggage and depart by coach for the return mid-afternoon flight from Pisa to London’s Heathrow.

## PRACTICALITIES

**Price** £1675      **Without Flights** £1550      **Deposit** £275

**Single Supplement** £195 (Double for Sole Use)

**Hotel** 4 nights with breakfast at 4\* Hotel Degli Orafi

**Flights** British Airways

Outward: **BA604** Depart London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1100**, arrive Pisa **1415**

Return: **BA605** Depart Pisa **1510**, arrive London Heathrow (Terminal 5) **1635**

**Price includes** 2 dinners with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees, City Tax & gratuities, services of Paula Nuttall & tour manager, Geoffrey Nuttall

**Not included** Travel to/from Heathrow, 2 dinners & 4 lunches



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