



CICERONI
T R A V E L

PATRICIANS & PATRONAGE FLORENCE & THE EARLY MEDICI

WEDNESDAY 23 – MONDAY 28 FEBRUARY 2022 (6 DAYS)

LECTURER: PAULA NUTTALL

£2075

- 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 & the Renaissance
- 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 fifteenth 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 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: Wednesday 23 February – We fly from Gatwick to Florence, arriving early evening, transfer by coach to

the city centre and check into the 4* Hotel Degli Orafi. 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: Thursday 24 February – Our first morning in Florence will begin in **Piazza della Signoria**, dominated by the **Palazzo Vecchio** and a veritable ‘pantheon’ of late medieval and early renaissance sculpture, that provides the perfect introduction to the renaissance city. After a pause for coffee, we have our first ‘encounter’ with the Medici at 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 focus on the Cathedral complex, viewing the romanesque **Baptistry** and Florence’s Cathedral, **Il Duomo**, with its great dome by Brunelleschi (exterior only). Many of the artworks made for these buildings are now spectacularly displayed in the nearby **Museo dell’Opera del Duomo**, including the original sculptures from the cathedral and campanile, Ghiberti’s ‘Gates of Paradise’, Donatello and Della Robbia’s Singing Galleries, and the *Pietà* intended by Michelangelo for his own tomb in the cathedral. The evening will be free.

Day 3: Friday 25 February – Our day is firmly rooted in the world of the Medici. The church of **San Lorenzo**, designed by Brunelleschi and paid for by Cosimo de’ Medici, was their parish church and became the family mausoleum. It is particularly rich in sculptures by Donatello and Verrocchio. Having paused for coffee, our visit concludes with the **Medici Chapel** designed by Michelangelo for later generations of the family. After lunch (not included) we visit the adjacent **Palazzo Medici-Riccardi**, the family’s great palace to see the tiny private chapel commissioned by Cosimo, with jewel-like 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 continue to the church of **Santa Trinita**, which contains the fascinating **Sassetti Chapel**, commissioned by Francesco Sassetti, a partner in the Medici Bank, from Ghirlandaio. The frescoes and accompanying altarpiece include views of Florence in the 1480s together with contemporary portraits, including Lorenzo ‘the Magnificent’. We return to the hotel and the evening will be free.

Day 4: Saturday 26 February – We begin with a visit to the **Bargello Museum**, housed in the thirteenth century city magistrate’s palace, with outstanding sculptures by all the leading Florentine masters: Ghiberti, Donatello and Michelangelo. After a break for coffee we continue to the great Franciscan church of **Santa Croce**, which houses masterpieces by Giotto and Donatello, and Brunelleschi’s **Pazzi Chapel**. 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 in the **Tornabuoni Chapel** by Ghirlandaio, which provides a window onto Florentine life in the time of Lorenzo ‘the Magnificent’. The evening will be free.

Day 5: Sunday 27 February – We spend this morning in the **Uffizi Gallery**, concentrating on paintings from the time of the Medici. These rooms contain some of the finest paintings by all the greatest names of Florentine painting: altarpieces by Leonardo da Vinci; *Madonnas* by Michelangelo and Raphael, allegories by Botticelli such as *The Birth of Venus* and *Primavera*; exquisite portraits by Piero della Francesca; even great paintings from Flanders such as Hugo van der Goes’s *Portinari Altarpiece*, which had a profound effect on Florentine art. At the end of this visit the rest of the afternoon will be free and we meet later that evening for our second group dinner.

Day 6: Monday 28 February – On our final morning, a gentle walk over the Arno River brings us to **Oltrarno** to 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 early afternoon flight from Florence to London’s Gatwick.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2075 **Without Flights** £1930 **Deposit** £300 **Single Supplement** £149 (Double for Sole Use)

Room Upgrade £300 (per room, sharing) Executive Room with View

Hotel 5 nights with breakfast at 4* Hotel Degli Orafi

Flights Vueling

Outward: **VY6205** Depart London Gatwick (South Terminal) **1605** arrive Florence **1910**

Return: **VY6206** Depart Florence **1410**, arrive London Gatwick (South Terminal) **1525**

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 Gatwick, 2 dinners & 4 lunches



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