



# FLORENCE

The Italian city of Florence overflows with romantic offerings from cultural adventures to heart-stopping shopping, all topped off with gastronomical feasts.

For the ultimate in luxury, book a room at one of the city's most stylish addresses – JK Place. Located in the picturesque Santa Maria Novella Piazza, across from the 13th Century church of the same name, JK Place is a sanctum of style.

With just 20 rooms, this boutique hotel is designed to make you feel as if you're arriving at a friend's palatial apartment. The city seems centuries away from the elegant panelled walls and chic furnishings.

Designed in 2003 by Florentine architect Michele Bonan, the hotel is a hot spot for style savants; with the lounge often being hired out during fashion week for private parties.

No expense was spared in decking out the rooms, which are sleek and inviting with luscious linen sheets, white marble Louis XVI fireplaces, deep indulgent baths and high-tech gadgets. Enjoy a buffet breakfast together in a converted glass-ceilinged courtyard or take evening drinks for two on the chic rooftop terrace.

During the day, delve into the city's rich cultural history with a visit to the stunning Duomo cathedral (just a few blocks away) and climb the adjacent Giotto's Tower for a breath-taking 360 degree view of the city surrounds. Next check out the Ponte Vecchio (home to a vibrant jewellery market), the only bridge over the river Arno to survive World War II and book ahead to see the Uffizi gallery (it houses Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*).

Not surprisingly, the shopping is incredible. After all, the city was once home to many great Italian designers including shoe-maker to the stars Salvatore Ferragamo. Wander down the city's most elegant strip – the luxurious Via Tornabuoni (home to Gucci, Prada, Versace and Armani) – or meander among the markets (try the Saint Lawrence or the Sant'Ambrogio markets). Just make sure you save some cash for the Holy Grail of shopping experiences – the outlets.

Around 40 minutes drive from the city is The Mall, Italy's most exclusive outlet destination offering a plethora of designer brands – think Gucci, Yves Saint Laurent, Fendi, Armani and more – at up to 75 per cent off. Nearby is the Dolce & Gabbana Outlet and a little further out, (one hour drive from Florence but well worth a visit) is the Prada and Miu Miu outlet. You can either take a Sita bus from via Santa Caterina Da Siena or hop on a tour and stop at both outlets (check out [www.enjoyflorence.com](http://www.enjoyflorence.com)).

When you're all shopped out (but before you drop) take a pre-dinner stroll around the city. The charming cobblestone streets and storybook bridges beg to be wandered at dusk, when a gilded light gives everything an ethereal beauty. Stop in for dinner at the trendy, yet well-priced eatery, Il Santo Bevitore ([www.ilsantobevitore.com](http://www.ilsantobevitore.com)) for cheese, wine and beautiful homemade pastas.

Rates start at \$854 (440 E) per night per couple. Special three night honeymoon packages are available on request. For more info visit [www.jkplace.com](http://www.jkplace.com) or call +39 055 264 51 81.

– Sigourney Cantelo