

## La Dolce Vita -- Florence and Rome

By Mira Temkin



Florence, the Renaissance capital of the world, with famous sons like Leonardo, Michelangelo and Dante, remains one of Europe's greatest treasures. Turn a corner and you're

instantly transported back centuries by lovely piazzas and dazzling sculptures. From the impressive 12th century Duomo, with its striped bands of Carrara marble, to the magnificent "David" to the Uffizi Museum and Pitti Palace, no city in Italy can match Florence's artistic wealth.



### Hotel Lungarno -- A Room with a View

In awe of their images on their Web site, I knew Hotel Lungarno is where I wanted to stay. Situated along the Arno River, at the foot of the Ponte Vecchio Bridge (the world's largest jewelry store), Hotel Lungarno has the ideal location for exploring the famous Florentine sights.

Listed among the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, Hotel Lungarno offers 73 spacious, pampering rooms that recall the era of an aristocratic Italian home. Each room is a unique blend of energy and charm, with a warm, inviting ambience, brought on by the magic of the river below. Breakfast is elegantly served in the library. Guests can also use the exercise/sauna facilities at the nearby Continentale, another Lungarno Group hotel. Or, shop in Lungarno Details, offering many of the fine furnishings and accessories from the

hotels. After a delightful day of touring, Hotel Lungarno proved to be an equally inspiring oasis in the middle of the city! For reservations, visit [www.lungarnohotels.com](http://www.lungarnohotels.com)



### Seeing Italy at See Level with Rail Europe

The easiest and most convenient way to travel within Italy is via rail. My husband and I rode the trains between Florence, Rome and Venice, watching the splendid Italian countryside, as we sipped cappuccinos. And, arriving in the middle of these cities made it easy to start seeing the sights immediately. Rail Europe provides rail passes, tickets and reservations for train service throughout Europe. In addition, Rail Europe also sells point-to-point tickets on scenic trains, high-speed trains, and Rail 'n Drive passes, which combine train travel with car rental. Rail passes must be purchased before leaving the US, as they are not sold in Europe. For reservations, call 888.382.7245 or visit [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com).



### Visiting the Roman Jewish Ghetto with Jewish Roma Tours

We had toured Rome before, enthralled with its Coliseum, Pantheon and awesome remnants of ancient history. But this time,

we chose to see the Jewish Ghetto with Micaela Pavoncello of Jewish Roma Tours. "Jews have been living in this neighborhood for 22 centuries," she told us, as we toured the Synagogue, museum and ghetto streets. Her passion for Jewish history, tradition and religion as well as her own family's story made centuries of Jewish life come alive for us. The Great Synagogue, built in 1904, features the only square dome in the city. Decorated in Art Nouveau with a touch of Tiffany, the majestically free Temple is surrounded by the "pure and free light of the sun." To give us an authentic taste of Roman Jewish cuisine, we stopped for Pizza Giudia at a Kosher bakery and Micaela explained the origins of this culinary delight. Pavoncello also provides tours of the Roman Forum, Arch of Titus, Vatican City and other sights. For booking, visit [www.jewishroma.com](http://www.jewishroma.com).



### Arreviderchi, Florence

Before we returned home, we visited Piazza Michelangelo, high above the city. The focal point is a bronze replica of "David," standing tall and proud against expansive views of this metropolis, a perfect reflection of all the glory that is Florence.

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