

An Artisan Walk Through the Oltrarno Quarter

The narrow streets of this neighborhood feature unique studios



[Print now](#)

Rating: 3 out of 5 by EveryTrail members

Difficulty: Easy

Length: 0.3 miles

Duration: 1-3 hours

Overview: Florence's Oltrarno district is known for its artisans—"artigiani" in Italian—a dying breed of creative hands that carry on centuries' worth of Florentine traditions. From bookbinders to sculptors to metalworkers and gold-gilders, the little maze of streets between the Ponte Vecchio and Santo Spirito are quietly off the beaten track, overlooked by most visitors.

It's a wonderful neighborhood to explore and get a peek into another era. Some of these workshops look like something straight out of the Renaissance. While you are here, visit some of the great little cafes in the area. Also in this neighborhood are the Pitti Palace's beautiful galleries—a visit here would complement this artisan trail that looks at the decorative arts in Florence.

Tips: Note that Florence has a unique address system! Any street number with an "r" after it means "red." Look for red-colored numbers, which usually signify a business. Any numbers written in blue or black are usually a residence. This means any street could have two separate places with the same number, one black, one red and they are not always near each other!

The best time for this walk is morning, from 9am to 12:30pm or the afternoon up until 7:30pm. Artisans usually have a schedule much like office hours—that is, Monday to Friday, but some will probably also be open on a Saturday morning. Try not to do this walk around lunchtime, as most will be closed from 12:30 to 3:30pm.

The Pitti Palace (mentioned in POI No. 5) is also a wonderful place to explore and if you wanted to beef up this trail, visit the Silver Museum, the Costume Gallery or the Palatina Gallery of the Pitti Palace for more.

[Send feedback on this guide](#)

[N](#)

2000 feet500 m

© 2014 Nokia© 2014 Microsoft Corporation

Points of Interest



1. [Caffe degli Artigiani](#)

Florence's Oltrarno district is known for its artisans-- a dying breed of creative hands that carry on centuries' worth of Florentine traditions. From bookbinders to violin makers to metalworkers and restorers, the little maze of streets between the Ponte Vecchio and Santo Spirito are quietly off the beaten track, overlooked by most visitors.

Begin in Piazza della Passera. More a tiny intersection of labyrinthine streets than a "piazza," this picturesque square is a popular meeting point for locals and artisans. Caffe degli Artigiani is an appropriate place to begin with a coffee and a bit of people watching.

Located in the Piazza della Passera, on the corner of the Borgo San Jacopo side of Via Toscanella.

Phone: 055.291882.

Hours: Open 8am until late





2. Bartolini & Maioli

From Caffè degli Artigiani, head across the little piazza to Bartolini & Maioli. A peek inside the large, stable-like doors will give you an idea of what's done here: wood restoration. Not just your grandmother's furniture, though, we are talking sculptures, artworks and antiques.

These sculptor-restorers have any impressive resume that includes work for the Kremlin, the Sultan of Brunei and Silvio Berlusconi. A wander through the workshop is probably the closest thing to stepping back into the Renaissance.

Admire the beautiful work the artisans do to repair and restore wooden artifacts, sculptures and important art pieces from past centuries.

Located at the corner of Piazza della Passera at Via Vellutini (not to be confused with Via Velluti, where POIs #3 and 4 are located!) no. 5r.

Phone. 055 281723.



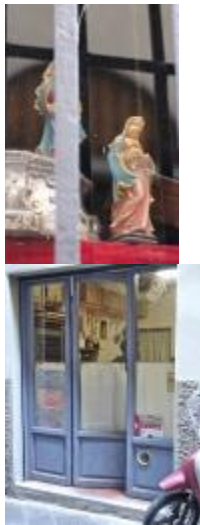
3. The wood sculptor

Continuing through the characteristic little streets of this neighborhood, we arrive at a different type of wood restorer.

His space is open to visitors, so even though he may not speak much English he is happy to have you to pop your head in and have a look at what he does. He works mostly on small sculptures, often for antique stores or private commissions.

You may see work in the sculpture phase, or perhaps being gold-gilded or prepared for gilding with a brick-red colored substance. He is one of those artisans that has found it difficult to find an apprentice to continue his workshop. When he retires--which will not be too far away--what will become of this beautiful workshop and these precious traditions?

Navigation Note: The wood sculptor has no name outside, but can be found next door to POI #4 below (Via Velluti 10r) at no. 8r. The wood sculptor's is simply a studio with no name on the door, but you can clearly see when you walk past that it is a wood sculptor's studio--one of the joys of wandering in this area. Also, this is set in a very tiny, narrow alleyway, so you should not miss it. Across the road at no. 19r are a pair of furniture restorers too.



4. Enrico Giannini

Next door is Enrico Giannini, a fifth-generation bookbinder. He speaks English, so feel free to ask him any questions. His tiny studio belies the amount of things he does. Not only does he make books, albums and boxes but he also makes the city's most beautiful marbled paper. This Florentine tradition of beautiful colors and flecks of gold or silver floated on a large surface of water creates unique, one-of-a-kind designs onto paper.

Giannini uses this paper to create his beautiful products, but you can also purchase the paper alone to take home for your own projects or give as gifts.

Address: Via Velluti 10r.

Note: He is usually closed both Saturday & Sunday.





5. The Sarubbi Brothers

Continue down Via Toscanella to the end of the street. To one side you have the Pitti Palace, the most enormous family palazzo in the city. Here lived all of Florence's ruling families from the time of the Medici grand dukes until the early 20th century. It is still filled with the families--collections of silver, paintings and inlaid marble furniture and is well worth a visit.

On this street is the studio of the Sarubbi brothers, two young lithographers who create handmade prints based on antique designs: maps, still life images and botanical subjects like plants and coral, for example. They are printed and painted by hand. A great place to come for extremely affordable yet unique handmade print. They start at 15 Euro.

Address: Sdrucciolo dei Pitti 11r

Hours: 10am-7pm Monday through Saturday. Closed Sunday



6. [Volume](#)

Heading into Piazza Santo Spirito, the heart of Florence's artisan district, you should make a stop at the quaint little café, Volume. With books on the shelves to buy or flip through, comfy leather couches and artisan gelato from Carabe--gelateria (on via Ricasoli), this little café became an instant favorite when it opened last year.

What makes it even more special is the fact that it was the home of wood sculptor Bini's studio, whose works and tools still decorate the walls of the café--keeping true to the artisan nature of the neighborhood.

Address: Piazza Santo Sprito 5

Phone: 055 2381460



7. Giuliano Ricci

In the back of Piazza Santo Spirito, at No. 12, is the beautiful laboratory of Giuliano Ricci. Do not miss out on the opportunity to visit this wonderful little studio, tucked away in the courtyard (you must ring the bell outside to be buzzed in).

Ricci makes beautiful objects in Florentine-style metalwork from pill boxes to jewelry to card holders, which are dipped in silver and hand enamelled.

His works can be found in prestigious shops such as Dior, Neiman Marcus and the Pharmacy of Santa Maria Novella, but you can buy them for next to nothing directly in his studio-shop.

Address: Piazza Santo Sprito, No. 12

Hours: 8:30am-12:30pm then 3pm-7pm Monday through Friday. On weekends he is only open by appointment.