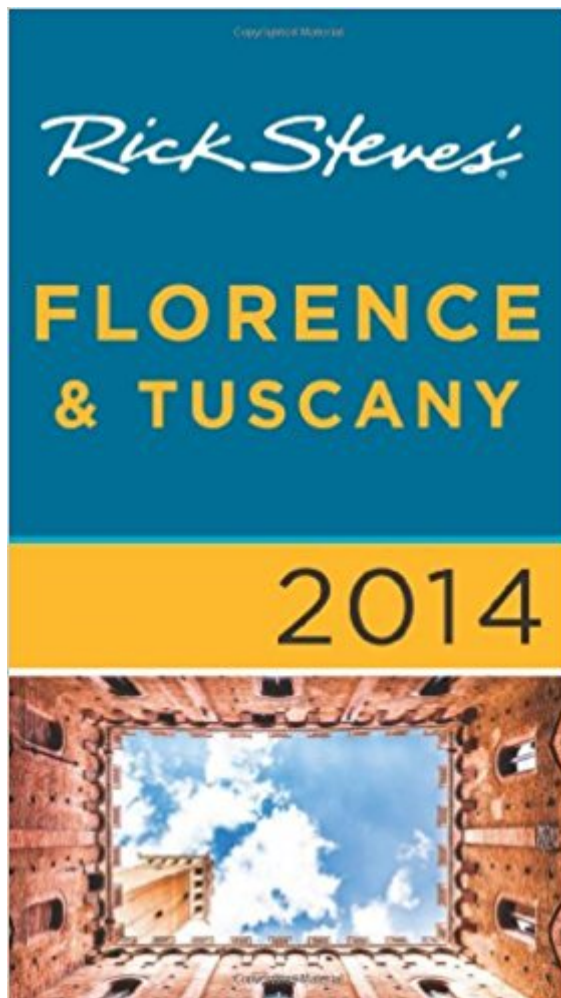


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# Rick Steves' Florence & Tuscany 2014



## Synopsis

You can count on Rick Steves to tell you what you really need to know when traveling through Florence and Tuscany. With the self-guided tours in this book, you'll discover the geographic heart of Italy. Take the Renaissance Walk and tour the Uffizi Gallery to learn how Florence taught civilized living to the rest of Europe. Wander through the medieval city of Siena and find out what Pisa has to offer beyond the Leaning Tower. Relax in sunny Tuscan hill towns where you'll enjoy full-bodied wine, the world's best gelato, and the company of friendly locals. Rick's candid, humorous advice will guide you to good-value hotels and restaurants. You'll learn how to get around by train, bus, or rental car and get up-to-date advice on what's worth your time and money. More than just reviews and directions, a Rick Steves guidebook is a tour guide in your pocket.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Rick Steves has spent 100 days every year since 1973 exploring Europe. Rick produces a public television series (Rick Steves' Europe), a public radio show (Travel with Rick Steves), and an app and podcast (Rick Steves Audio Europe); writes a bestselling series of guidebooks and a nationally syndicated newspaper column; organizes guided tours that take thousands of travelers to Europe annually; and offers an information-packed website (RickSteves.com). With the help of his hardworking staff of 80 at Europe Through the Back Door in Edmonds, Washington, just north of Seattle; Rick's mission is to make European travel fun, affordable, and culturally broadening

for Americans. Gene Openshaw is a writer, composer, tour guide, and lecturer on art and history. Specializing in writing walking tours of Europe's cultural sights, Gene has coauthored 10 of Rick's books and contributes to Rick's public television series. As a composer, Gene has written a full-length opera (Matter), a violin sonata, and dozens of songs. He lives near Seattle with his daughter, and roots for the Mariners in good times and bad.

There is a lot of helpful information in this book. It breaks down Tuscany into smaller regions and gives you insider tips. It made me so excited for my upcoming trip. It gives you a better sense of Florence and places to visit or skip in the region. But then I bought the Rick Steves' Italy book. The sections on Tuscany in that book are almost identical to what is written here. You do not need to get both books.

We used previous editions on two trips to Florence. We followed its advice on places to eat and the very nice place we stayed at. We have not been disappointed. The maps are excellent. Guides to the museums, Uffizi, Academia, Bargello, etc. are accurate and helpful, likewise walking tours. General info on traveling in and around Florence, getting cash, making calls, tipping, weather, etc. are also useful. It has what you need. I have looked at other guides for Florence and they are just not as good. I hope to return to Florence this fall. I will take the guidebook with me. There were a couple of places that have really great Renaissance frescos that were not mentioned. These are Chiesa di Santa Trinita and Chiesa di San Salvatore a Ognisanti. Now you know.

I think Rick Steves' needs to go back and revisit Florence. I found some of the information of basic use during my six week stay. Some of the info in the museum tour guides didn't quite jibe with what I was told by our art history teacher who lead us through some of the tours. I didn't see these roving bands of pick pockets and miscreants that were so reported. The bus ride to Fiesole is nothing but pleasant and a shame to miss if you're afraid of getting your pocket picked. Also the super market chain that is recommend to buy supplies for a picnic is currently out of business. The guide was also a little vague on how exactly one was suppose to get from where to where so I just asked at the TI which kills time because you have to pay on line. Also I was not successful in paying for a bus ride on the bus. You really need to buy tickets at the vending machines or smoke shops. Basic I found Florence to be a lot different than I expected from the guide, but in a good way. It's a easy city to get around in, most attractions are very reasonably priced, everything is within walking distance (if you are moderately healthy) and about the only thing that gets annoying are the massive throngs of

tourist being lead on walking tours and the very rude and annoying Chinese. Yes, I said that and I've been to China also. Also it helps to know some Italian especially if you are on your own outside a group. Also, under no circumstances should you exchange money at Florence Peratola airport, They charge a 16% service fee and the only reason I did it was because my ATM card wouldn't work in Frankfurt airport. This is a giant rip-off meant for the Chinese. Also Lufthansa sucks as an airline as probably most airlines do now. I'm only five foot four and I didn't have any leg room on a nine hour flight, the food they give you wouldn't feed a bird, they only allow one hand bag as carry on and they charged me 100 euros because my bag was 1 Kg over weight. BTW...I did run into Rudy Maxxa in Florence so he has more current information.

Yeh, I know, Rick isn't a European art history scholar, and his tours of the Uffizi and other Florentine sites seemed a little hokey,...but hokey in a fun way. I guess if you are looking for a scholarly book on what you are seeing, you need to find another book. On the other hand, I'm not a scholar, and I really did appreciate Rick's no non-sense effort to get you through large museums in a reasonable amount of time while also conveying the essential features of the most important paintings in a very easy to understand way. Honestly, most of the paintings in the famous Uffizi, despite being done by masters, were very dark with age and more difficult to appreciate now, then when they were originally done. Additionally, as Rick mentioned a few times in his audio guides, he did consult with museum curators, so what you are getting from Rick guide seems to be what Rick got from the curators...only Rick translated the message into every day, common traveller talk, which I appreciated. Additionally, and I still am having a hard time figuring out why Rick gives this away for free, make sure to download the Rick Steve's app for smartphones, and listen to the 5 or so audioguide tours that Rick Steves makes available online for free. I thought they were really good and very much the same as what I got from the tours I took on the same topics. The audio guides were extremely well designed and the content right on the money. Admittedly when I first got his Florence book, I was overwhelmed by the 600 pages, but very soon it became clear that about 1/2 of that is very easy to do step by step tours of different sites, including several museums. I really appreciated all these tours, which were not included in the Lonely Planet guide book that I also had, that I eventually relegated to a minor supporting roll. The maps in Rick Steves were also very easy to read. There is also about 200 good pages of info on nearby sites, like Siena and Pisa.

Buying the kindle version of this book is a waste of money and time. This is the type of book that needs to be printed in order to optimize it's usefulness. There are maps, restaurant reviews,

museum tips, etc. all that need to be printed and carried in your day bag. The kindle version does not allow you to print any of the content. You can print some of the pages by jumping through a few hoops and taking some screen shots, but it really is a time consuming process that can be avoided if you just buy the real physical book. The content of the book is great. My favorite sections are the restaurant suggestions of good places to eat that are close to the major attractions. I also love the section on basic phrases and the guided tours. Great, great book. I see why Rick is #1.

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