



A Boost for Florence, and a Little Relief for the American Pocketbook

Eleonora Mazzucchi (April 28, 2008)



The Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) hosted an event to promote American tourism in Florence. With discounted offerings, a slew of summer attractions, and an emphasis on its timeless monuments, Florence can count on its appeal to the American vacationer

How can Florence be improved upon? A city that has been voted as the top destination by readers of Travel + Leisure for three consecutive years and as Condé Nast's "Most Desirable City" can't truly get any better, but you can make it less hostile for the Dollar there. The Italian Government Tourist Board (ENIT) is trying to do just that—mitigate the exchange rate a little so American tourists can focus more on Renaissance art than penny-pinching.



Last week it unveiled, with Matteo Renzi, the President of the Province of Florence and Antonio Preiti, the Director of the Florence Tourist Board, a new travel-friendly initiative: [“The Fiorino Effect”](#) [2]. The Fiorino, or Florin, is the Florentine currency of a bygone era, the gold coin that came to rise in 1252 and that saw the sweeping growth and success of the city’s economy. Widely imitated by other European economies since, it is being celebrated this year in conjunction with the [Genio Fiorentino Festiva](#) [3], an event that will last through May and highlight the works and lives of Florentine geniuses. And remembering the Florin means that American tourists haven’t been forgotten: all Americans traveling to Florence between May 15th and December 31st, 2008, will get a 10% discount in 90 restaurants and 130 participating hotels. 10%, as Renzi and Riccardo Strano, the ENIT Director for North America, pointed out in their presentation, doesn’t seem substantial but it can make a difference, especially if a tourist is always eating out or is in a family-size group. Anyone who was present to witness the Fiorino Effect’s promotional video, a brief but photographically spectacular homage to Florence and Tuscany, might agree that that alone created an incentive to visit the region. Pictures of Florence’s magnificent churches, veritable treasure troves of art, and Tuscany’s smaller, charming towns, like Siena, Pisa and Pistoia, were persuasive messages in and of themselves.





For the more seasoned traveler to Florence, the city will also host an unusual exhibit on the Renaissance Age in China and, as Consul General Francesca Maria Talo' announced—not without a little challenge in his voice—bring back its “steak culture” (Florence is Italy’s steak capital and Talo' was confident that the city’s “fiorentine” could easily rival any famous American cuts). The future will also hold promising—and scholarly—things for Florence: the Medici archives, with funds from American philanthropists, are being reconciled and will represent one of the world’s most important historical archives.

With 600, 000 Americans in Florence last year, Renzi said that Florence isn't suffering from a diminished American presence (American tourists are the city's most numerous, surpassing even Italian tourists), or a tourist drought of any kind. And with Italy, according to UNESCO, retaining two thirds of the world's artistic heritage, the whole of Italy will continue to receive a high volume of culture-seeking visitors. But Renzi believes his discount proposal, because of a disproportionately strong Euro, will be appreciated as a gesture. Strano seconded the thought, and added that the “Fiorino Effect” is part of ENIT's overall approach of staying close to the American consumer. He hopes to coordinate all of Italy's regions and work with them to draft similar projects and marketing campaigns on a streamlined, national scale.

The beauty of the “Fiorentino Effect” may just be how simple it is. Any individual planning a trip to Florence, or already on their way, need not do more than visit http://www.firenzeturismo.it/en_EN/ [4]

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