



## Florentine Palaces

Defence, humanism, magnificence and beauty

**29 March–2 April 2023 (MJ 661)**

5 days • £2,630

Lecturer: Prof. Andrew Hopkins FSA

An examination of one of the most fascinating aspects of the Florentine Renaissance, the private palace.

Medieval, Baroque, Neo-Classical and 19th-century examples as well.

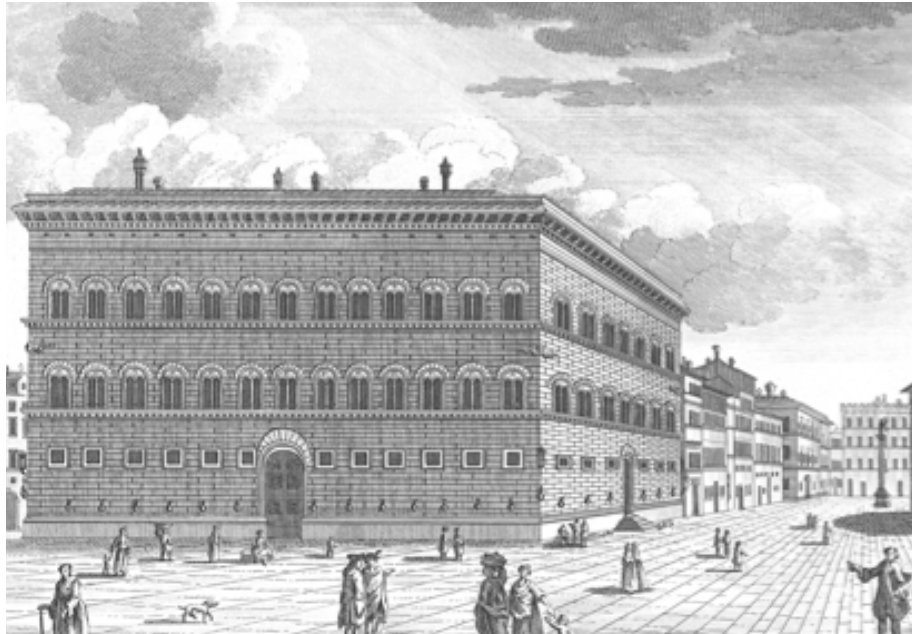
Several special arrangements to see palaces not usually open to the public.

Renaissance Florence experienced one of the most spectacular property booms of all time. From the second half of the 14th to the beginning of the 16th century as many as 100 private *palazzi* were built throughout the city. The period was also one of the pivotal moments of western architecture, witnessing a design revolution that was to have an impact on the rest of Europe and the Americas for 500 years.

In the preceding couple of centuries, intense clan and class rivalries required *palazzi* to be highly defensible structures. Like many Italian cities, Florence bristled with tower houses, of which several stubs can still be seen, and the massive Palazzo Vecchio, the town hall, retains its fortress-like aesthetic. While an intimidating monumentality remained a design feature of the Renaissance palace, decreasing lawlessness and increasing wealth fortuitously combined with new humanist concepts of 'magnificence' and 'virtue', by which the elite were required to demonstrate their greatness with 'fitting expenditure'.

Constructed on a magnificent scale, three times the height of a three-storey building today, the typical palace's spread was equally expansive, frequently swallowing up a multitude of smaller dwellings. And the design of these high-fashion mansions represented a dramatic shift in architectural language. The credit for their creation, however, remained the patron rather than the architect. A Renaissance *palazzo* was intended as a statement of dynastic ambition, its façade emblazoned with coats of arms, its interior trumpeting the family name in every visual detail.

Fortunes were spent – and lost – keeping up with the Medici. Many palaces remained unfinished through lack of funds (neither the Gondi nor the Rucellai were complete at the time of their founder's death); and even more – including the Pitti and the Davanzati – changed hands through financial necessity within a generation.



Palazzo Strozzi, copper engraving, c.1770.

By the end of the 16th century, the Florentine *palazzo* was being adapted to accommodate more elaborate households and lifestyles, but splendour remained their defining characteristic. Certainly no Renaissance patron would have felt embarrassed by the endeavours of his 17th- and 18th-century successors, such as Alessandro Capponi or the Corsini family.

### Itinerary

**Day 1.** Fly at c. 8.30am (British Airways) from London Heathrow to Pisa. Drive to Florence. Visit the Palazzo Vecchio, a sturdy fortress at the civic heart of the city with outstanding interiors and lavish frescoes by Ghirlandaio in the *sala dei gigli* and by Bronzino in the Chapel of Eleanor of Toledo.

**Day 2.** Visit Palazzo Davanzati, built in the second half of the 14th century in one of the oldest quarters of Florence. See Palazzo Strozzi, a late 15th-century construction of formidable proportions. In the afternoon visit the privately-owned Palazzo Corsini al Parione (by special arrangement), a vast baroque *palazzo* with views over the Arno. See the exterior of the 16th-century Palazzo Lanfredini, with handsome *sgraffiti* on the façade. Visit also the chapel in the Palazzo Medici-Riccardi with exquisite frescoes by Benozzo Gozzoli, and the

Palazzo Budini Gattai, designed by Renaissance architect and sculptor Bartolomeo Ammannati.

**Day 3.** Visit the Bargello, a medieval *palazzo* housing Florence's finest sculpture collection with works by Donatello, Verrocchio and Michelangelo. Following this visit the Palazzo Corsini al Prato (by special arrangement): begun in 1591 to designs by Bernardo Buontalenti, the *palazzo* was acquired in 1621 by Filippo Corsini and most of the palace and gardens date to his refurbishment. Lunch here, hosted by the owner. Also see Palazzo Marucelli Fenzi, built in the 16th century for the Castelli family by Gherardo Silvani and later enlarged by the Marucelli family. It contains paintings by Sebastiano Ricci.

**Day 4.** Begin at the Uffizi, which has masterpieces by every major Florentine painter as well as international Old Masters. Walk through the Vasari Corridor (by special arrangement) from the Uffizi, viewing the collection of artists' self-portraits. In the afternoon, visit the privately-owned Palazzo Gondi (by special arrangement), designed in 1490 by Giuliano da Sangallo, the favourite architect of Lorenzo de' Medici. There are remarkable views of the city from the terrace. Dinner is at a Michelin-starred restaurant.

Florentine Palaces  
continued

**Day 5.** In the morning visit the redoubtable Palazzo Pitti, which houses several museums including the Galleria Palatina, outstanding particularly for High Renaissance and Baroque paintings. The visit includes rooms not generally open to the public. The afternoon is free. Fly from Pisa to London Heathrow Airport, arriving at c. 8.30pm.

*The tour is dependent on the kindness of many individuals and organisations, some of whom are reluctant to make arrangements far in advance, so the order of visits outlined above may change and there may be substitutions for some palaces mentioned.*

## Lecturer

**Professor Andrew Hopkins.** An internationally recognised authority on architecture and cities, as well as museum collections and their buildings. He was previously Assistant Director of the British School at Rome. Part of Andrew's PhD at the Courtauld Institute was awarded the Essay Medal by the Society of Architectural Historians, GB. Numerous fellowships include Harvard University's Villa I Tatti in Florence, the National Gallery of Art, Washington DC, the Getty Center, Los Angeles and St. John's College, Cambridge. Among his many publications are *Italian Architecture from Michelangelo to Borromini*, Thames & Hudson, 2002 (World of Art) and *Baldassare Longhena and Venetian Baroque Architecture*, Yale University Press, 2012.

## Practicalities

**Price, per person. Two sharing:** £2,630 or £2,510 without flights. **Single occupancy:** £2,890 or £2,770 without flights.

*Suggested train itinerary: London – Paris – Milan – Florence: c. 12 hours.*

**Included:** flights (Euro Traveller) with British Airways (Airbus A320); travel by private coach; hotel accommodation; breakfasts; 1 lunch and 3 dinners (1 Michelin-starred) with wine, water, coffee; all admissions; all tips; all taxes; the services of the lecturer and tour manager.

**Accommodation. Hotel Santa Maria Novella, Florence** (hotelsantamarianovella.it): a delightful 4-star hotel in a very central location. *Single rooms are doubles for sole occupancy.*

**How strenuous?** The tour involves a lot of walking in the town centre where the ground is sometimes uneven and pavements are narrow. It should not be attempted by anyone who has difficulty with everyday walking and stair-climbing. Fitness is essential.

**Group size:** between 8 and 18 participants.