



# MY CITY\*: FLORENCE

FOOD WRITER GIULIA SCARPALEGGIA SHARES HER FAVOURITE SPOTS IN THE PLACE SHE CALLS HOME







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**GIULIA SCARPALEGGIA**

Giulia is an Italian food blogger, food writer and freelance food photographer. She loves her dog Noa and her cat Wolfi, enjoys her walks in the countryside and can't say no to anything with chocolate.

Most of us live in cities. Even if a tiny part of us yearns for the country, it's hard to deny the excitement of town. We ask one person – clearly in love with their city – to tell us what makes it so special. Through their eyes, we can take a fresh look at where we live too.

**Where are you from originally?**

I was born in a small village in the countryside between Siena and Florence, in Tuscany. I've always lived in the same house, where my grandmother was born and my father was born – I still live there next to my family with my dog Noa. It's where I work, write and teach.

**What drew you to Florence?**

Probably the best answer would be friendship. Almost all my friends live there, so I'm in Florence at least three times a week. You share a meal, an ice cream, discover markets and shops... and it happens. You gradually fall in love with the city, the food, the walks in the evening, and you start to consider Florence your home town.

**What does it feel like in September?**

September is sweet as the figs that ripen on the trees. July and August can be almost unbearable in the heat, but in September the air cools down, and the light and the colours begin to change, though it's still warm enough to live outdoors.



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- 1 Ponte Vecchio at sunset – one of the most romantic views in Florence.
- 2 The late afternoon, during the golden hour: the River Arno and the setting sun create a superb picture; you feel like you're living in a Renaissance painting.
- 3 Look up to enjoy a glimpse of the majestic Arnolfo tower of Palazzo Vecchio.
- 4 Begin your morning with a cappuccino and a pastry for breakfast at ChiaroScura.
- 5 The fruit and vegetable market in Sant'Ambrogio, where you can find the best seasonal produce.
- 6 Search for treasures at the flea market in Piazza de' Ciampi.

**What time of day do you most enjoy?**

It's easy to feel the magic of Florence in the early morning, when the shops are still closed and the bars begin to open their doors to let out the smell of freshly baked pastries. Another great moment is in the late afternoon, during the golden hour: the River Arno and the setting sun create a superb picture; you feel like you're living in a Renaissance painting.

**Where's your favourite green space?**

Piazza d'Azeglio is a tree-lined square surrounded by elegant buildings. There's a children's playground, silent paths in the middle of the bursting city and »





*“ENJOY the narrow backroads, the private gardens of the HISTORICAL buildings and the tiny SHOPS off the main tourist routes”*





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- 1 Caffetteria delle Oblate has a stunning view of the dome of Florence's cathedral, the Duomo
- 2 Try the drinks at Golden View Open Bar, just next to Ponte Vecchio.
- 3 Grab a *lampredotto* sandwich, served in stalls across the city.
- 4 Vintage photos and postcards from the flea market at Piazza de' Ciampi make the perfect souvenir.
- 5 A bench in Piazza d'Azeglio: the ideal spot to pause and eat your sandwich.

beautiful colours in autumn. A few minutes' walk from Sant'Ambrogio market, it's the perfect place to enjoy your *panino* with ham and cheese, relaxing on a bench in the shadow of an old tree.

**What's your favourite way to get about the city?**

I'm not a big fan of driving into Florence since I'm a country girl and I'm used to empty roads. So I walk, walk, walk. It's true that the best way to discover a city is to get lost there. Enjoy the narrow backroads, the private gardens of the historical buildings and the tiny shops off the main tourist routes. Then you just look up and search for the Duomo (cathedral) to find your guiding landmark.

**What are your favourite places to go with friends?**

We usually hang out after work in a bar or café to have a drink – or better, an *aperitivo*. Golden View Open Bar, just next to Ponte Vecchio in Via de' Bardi 58/r, has the perfect atmosphere to relax at the end of the day with

a unique view of Ponte Vecchio, the River Arno and the Uffizi. Try the fruit cocktails, made with fresh seasonal fruit. If you're a wine lover, don't miss Le Volpi e L'uva, a wine bar in Piazza dei Rossi 1, where you can also enjoy tasty *crostoni* with your glass of wine.

**Where do you find your guilty pleasures?**

Florence is famous for its hearty street food, *panino al lampredotto* – the fourth stomach of the cow, served hot in a sandwich with a tasty *salsa verde* and a pinch of black pepper. I love queuing with workers and tourists, grabbing my *panino* and looking at the people passing by. There are many stalls throughout the city where you can taste it, and my favourites are L'Antico Trippaio, Via dei Cimatori 16 and Il Trippaio del Porcellino, Piazza del Mercato Nuovo, close to Ponte Vecchio. If you're not an offal lover, try a *panino* with local cheese and salami at I Maledetti Toscani, in Via Dei Cerchi.

**What games do you play in your everyday life?**

Clet Abraham is a French artist living in Florence. He has amended street signs across Europe with stickers to entertain people and make them think. I love walking with my nose up in the air to discover his pieces of work. You can find them in the most unexpected places. »






- 1 Take a walk, gelato in hand, to discover tiny alleys in Florence.
- 2 The Gelateria Edoardo serves superb organic ice cream just next to the Duomo.
- 3 Search for Clet Abraham's stickers throughout the city.



### Where do you like to go with friends?

In the evening we choose a *gelateria* to enjoy our *gelato* while walking in the deserted streets. There's plenty of choice: Gelateria Edoardo, in Piazza Duomo, for an artisanal organic ice cream; Gelateria Carabé in Via Ricasoli for a Sicilian granita; and Gelateria dei Neri, in Via dei Neri 22, for my favourite chocolate ice cream.

### Where do you like to go alone?

I'm quite a romantic person: I love daydreaming, creating plots and listening to music while walking or driving. Every time I'm alone and I'm driving in Florence, I can't help but stop by Piazzale Michelangelo. Find your spot, lay against the brick wall and admire the city; the Duomo, Palazzo della Signoria, the Arno river and the red roofs. It's breathtaking during the day, and amazingly romantic during the night. If you stretch your hands you can almost touch the Duomo, and you'll feel like Florence is yours. 



GIULIA SCARPALEGGIA is a food blogger and teaches Tuscan cooking classes in her country house in Tuscany. She published her first book, *I Love Toscana*, in 2012. Visit her food blog, *Juls' Kitchen*, at [www.en.julskitchen.com](http://www.en.julskitchen.com).

## GIULIA'S PRIVATE TOUR

### FAVOURITE SHOP

#### Bizzarri

**Via della Condotta, 32**  
A charming and mysterious century-old shop with wooden shelves and big glass jars that preserve the ancient apothecary's wisdom. You'll find spices, essences and tinctures, as well as supplies for restoration, painting and photography.

### FAVOURITE CAFÉS

#### ChiaroScuro

**Via del Corso, 36**  
Pop by at breakfast for a cappuccino and a tiny rice tartlet, or enjoy a chat over a cup of your favourite coffee in the afternoon. Wide selection of coffees and teas.  
[www.chiaroscurofirenze.it](http://www.chiaroscurofirenze.it)

#### Caffetteria delle Oblate

**Via dell'Ortiolo, 26**  
Inside the Oblate Library, this is the place to be if you want to take some time for yourself, enjoy a cultural event or try the excellent food in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere. Superb view of the Duomo.  
[www.lospaziochesperavi.it](http://www.lospaziochesperavi.it)

### FAVOURITE MARKETS

#### Mercato di Sant'Ambrogio

**Piazza Ghiberti**  
Fruit, vegetables, meat, cheese, clothes and flowers. You'll meet lots of locals here! Buy a *panino* and some fruit and enjoy your lunch in the nearby Piazza D'Azeglio.

#### Mercato di San Lorenzo

**Piazza San Lorenzo**  
Food, fruit and vegetables in the indoor market, clothes and leather products outside. More touristy but just around the corner from the Duomo. Don't miss lunch at Nerbone.

### PLACE FOR A SOUVENIR

#### Flea market

**Piazza de' Ciampi**  
Tiny flea market with old jewellery, pottery, second-hand clothes, hats, pieces of furniture and chandeliers. Buy an old Tuscan postcard or black-and-white photos from big paper boxes.

### BEST VIEW

#### Basilica di San

#### Miniato al Monte

**Via delle Porte Sante, 34**  
An elegant Romanesque church perched atop a hill overlooking Florence. It's one of the highest points in the town, and quieter than the underlying Piazzale Michelangelo. Enjoy the view and the fresh breeze.