

Why You Should Plan A Weekend Escape To Florence And Siena

For crew who love travelling and exploring different destinations, Emma Knott (aka the travelling stewardess) shares her first-hand experience on how to have the best weekend escape to Florence and Siena.

People often ask what do yacht crew do on the weekends? And in my experience, most yachties spend the weekends drinking and sleeping. Well, I'm here to put some much-needed weekend trips back on the agenda. Following on from my previous article highlighting [5 of the best restaurants and bars in Livorno](#), I'm bringing you great escapes within 3 hours of Livorno & Viareggio. Starting with why you should plan a weekend escape to Florence and Siena.

I'm in love with Tuscany, in fact, I'm in love with most of Italy. I've been lucky enough to spend a great deal of time here and afforded the weekends off while in the shipyard. During that time, I definitely used this to my advantage and explored as much as I could.

Florence



Florence is one of the most famous and beautiful cities in Italy. It also happens to be the epicenter of Renaissance art. As a result, the city is full of gills with museums, galleries, churches, palaces, and piazzas. It's an excellent place for wandering the streets, taking in the city's romantic charms and delicious cuisine.

5 of the best things to do and see while in Florence, Italy:

1. **Uffizi Gallery** is home to the most important collection of Italian art in the world.
2. **The Duomo** is the impressive gothic cathedral that is the cities icon. It's worth climbing the 463 steps for the most spectacular views of the city.
3. **Ponte Vecchio Bridge** was built in 1345 and today it's the only surviving historic bridge, which is lined with beautiful shops selling gold, diamonds & lots of jewellery.

4. **Boboli & Bardini Gardens** are some of the most Instagram-worthy gardens on the planet. Not only are they beautiful they offer gorgeous views over the city, hidden grottos, and babbling fountains.
5. **Accademia Gallery** is where you will see Michelangelo's colossal icon 'David', which is carved from a single slab of marble, you must also see Michelangelo's unfinished 'The Prisoners'.

5 Restaurants to visit on your weekend escape to Florence:



Golden View Firenze – This restaurant allows guests to dine while admiring the Ponte Vecchio bridge in all its glory. I would strongly suggest you book in advance and ask for a table overlooking the Arno River.

Trattoria Zà Zà – This is one of my favourite restaurants in Florence, it's located close to the San Lorenzo market and has been going strong for years. I recommend trying the beef tartare & gnocchi with gorgonzola and truffles – yum!

Osteria Gucci da Massimo Bottura – Massimo Bottura is one of the best chefs in Italy and this restaurant reflects that.

It's not cheap but it's well worth the treat.

The 2 Hidden Gems:

[All'Antico Vinaio](#) – Turns out to be one of the best in the city and we just happened to stumble on it one afternoon. I can easily say that they serve THE best Italian sandwiches ever!

[Gelateria Santa Trinita](#) – I found this little gem after a long day of wandering the streets. The black sesame ice cream is to die for and not something you find often.

Siena

Siena is a perfect example of an Italian medieval city and for me, it is breathtakingly beautiful. Sitting high upon a hill overlooking Tuscany, with a thriving historic centre and a maze of ancient streets weaving themselves around the city, The historic centre of Siena is super easy to explore in a weekend. But, I guarantee that'll you'll be returning pretty soon after, due to its sheer beauty.

5 of the best thing to do and see while in Siena, Italy:

1. **Piazza Il Campo**, this square is the best in Italy and is home to Siena's famous horse race "The Palios". There are two races a year and it's a horse race I have yet to see, even without the madness and exhilaration it is still a highlight to enjoy a glass of wine in the Piazza.
2. **The Duomo** is truly a magnificent building. Its white and black marble interior and exterior is impressive but the mosaic floors and statues by Michelangelo and Bernini are impressive too.
3. **Palazzo Pubblico**, is one of the most iconic buildings in Siena with its red bricks & overbearing Torre del Mangia. It's home to some beautiful frescos, paintings, and opulent decorations.
4. **Biblioteca Piccolomini**, is a hidden treasure within the

Duomo. The library is filled with remarkable frescos which depict the life of Pope Pius II, along with several historical manuscripts.

5. **Torre del Mangia** provides panoramic views across Siena, it has 400 steps to the top but you will be rewarded. The tower was built in 1338 to indicate that church and state were equal in power but standing at 102 meters it is taller than the Duomo.

5 Restaurants to visit on your weekend escape to Siena:



Osteria da Divo – This is my all-time favourite and not because they have the most amazing wine glasses, but because they also create outstanding food. Everything about this place is a must; the food, the wine & the architecture... amazing, especially if you're a truffle lover.

La Prosciutteria Crudi e Bollicine Siena – They specialise in Tuscan wine, antipasti, local cheese & charcuterie along with sandwiches and small bites. I love sharing a bottle of wine and nibbling on local cheese & hams... my idea of heaven!

[Il Cavaliere Errante Siena](#) – This is the place to go if you love Pizza... It is honestly one of the best I have had.

The 2 Hidden Gems:

[Venchi](#), serves the best gelato ever and they even add chocolate fudge sauce if you want an extra treat... yum!

[Il Battistero Siena Bistrot](#), doubles as a hotel, restaurant, and café. They also have the most amazing wine cellar, the first in an underground viaduct that fed water to the Duomo. The second is under the restaurant and has an impressive collection of Italian wines.

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