

# Untold Italy Episode 326: A perfect day in Florence with a Local

Florence is one of the most visited cities in Italy. But most people see about one square kilometer of it. Today, Francesca, a Florentine guide, takes us across the river, into the artisan workshops, and up the hill to where the city's Iris Garden opens for just a few weeks a year. This is what a real day in Florence, one of the world's most beautiful cities, looks like.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week, your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy Clarke:

Ciao a tutti and benvenuti. Welcome to episode 326 of the Untold Italy podcast. I'm Katy, your host and founder of Untold Italy

Now, I know what you might be thinking. Florence. Surely she has covered Florence before? And yes, of course I have. Many times. But today, we are doing something a little different, because this is part of my Perfect Day series, where I ask people who actually live in these cities to map out how they would spend a glorious day in their city as a visitor. Not a press trip. Not a standard tour. A real day, the way someone who knows a city deeply would actually approach it, if they were to show a friend around and give them the very best of their city.

Katy Clarke:

And today's guest is Francesca Ermini, a licensed Florentine guide who, despite traveling the world and visiting many places, has an unshakeable love for her city. Francesca studied foreign languages, literature, and cultural anthropology right in the heart of Florence. She has worked on cruise ships, with NGOs across the world, and in the end, she kept coming back to her own city, because that is what Florence does to people. If you know, you know. Francesca has that beautiful lyrical way of describing her city, and this conversation made me want to get on a plane.

A quick note before we start. As we curate our episodes, I'm always thinking about how we can help you enjoy your trips to Italy, whether you are traveling independently or on a tour. It may be practical information or something esoteric and beautiful like our episode today. The best way I know how to help you enjoy Italy is to introduce you to locals - real people. Tour guides, artisans, hotel owners, the Untold Italy team and fellow travelers. We do not

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gatekeep our knowledge, we like to share it far and wide, so if you appreciate that approach, it would be wonderful if you could leave us a lovely review. We so appreciate it and read every single one.

So now it is time to meet Francesca, and take you on a journey to one of the world's most beautiful cities and one that keeps drawing travelers back again and again.

Katy Clarke:

Benvenuto, Francesca. Welcome to the Untold Italy Podcast.

Francesca Ermini:

Very, very happy to be here with you.

Katy Clarke:

Yes. And Francesca is joining us from beautiful Firenze or Florence. And how is everything in Florence today, this beautiful spring day?

Francesca Ermini:

Well, to be honest, these are a little bit cloudy days, but it's springtime, so everything is now very colorful. So all of us are happy and waiting for the very sunny days. But it's springtime, so we are happy now. The hills are very beautiful. It's the right moment for that. So sometimes we need umbrella, but it's part of the game. It's the best moment of the year probably to be here, to be in Florence. In Italy in general, but in Florence in particular, for me at least.

Katy Clarke:

It's very interesting actually, because a lot of visitors like to come now in autumn or fall, don't they? But I agree with you. I think spring is really the best time because everyone's really fresh and ready to go for the new season. And everything looks absolutely beautiful with all the flowers and everything. Yeah, I really love spring, actually.

Francesca Ermini:

Yeah. Then depend a little bit the purpose of your traveling as well. Because it's true every season of the year, to be honest, has it's magic. But now it's probably the very. It's not coincidence that my town's name, it's Florence, I mean, that comes from Flora. I mean this town was dedicated nothing less than to the goddess of nature and wishing to us success and beauty blooming in eternal springtime. So that's what we really, in this moment we can experience.

Katy Clarke:

Yes. Oh, of course. Flora. Florence huh? I learn something new every day. Thank you, Francesca. And it's such a beautiful time because it's the time of the lilies, isn't it? And that's a very special time in Florence.

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Francesca Ermini:

It is now. That's really the very special time. There's a garden dedicated to iris, which is the very first original symbol of my town, this beautiful purple color flower. So now we have iris, but not only that, we have wisteria. We have all these nice purple colors all over. And the iris can be admired in a very special garden, the Iris Garden. And it's open only in this specific period of the year. So from the 25th of April to mid of May, because that's the real peak of the season for these, for these flowers.

Francesca Ermini:

And you find them not only in beautiful, specific gardens, people, I mean, we have competitions for making the most beautiful ones. I mean hybrid is making all these special things, but you find along the toll roads - everywhere. So it's so beautiful now and so elegant and a nice flower.

Katy Clarke:

They're gorgeous, aren't they? I think it's very special. We run some tours in Tuscany, in the countryside and people go to a beautiful iris farm where you can just see the whole hills blanketed.

Francesca Ermini:

Yeah, sure. It's amazing. It's amazing.

Katy Clarke:

Well, we're going to talk a little bit more about. More detail about beautiful Firenze for today's episode. But before we do that, Frances, please introduce yourself to our listeners and tell them about your story, how you came to be a tour guide and your passion for your city.

Francesca Ermini:

I've been always working in the tourism since I was very young. I love a lot traveling. So one of my very first works was working on a ship. I work as a volunteer for non-governmental organizations on children's projects abroad. I work a lot in different cities in the world, but at the very end I was always back home. So where I study and I completed my studies, that's another privilege of my town - you can really... whatever you decide to study. We have all the universities here and I graduated here in foreign languages and literature and cultural anthropology.

Francesca Ermini:

My thesis was already on my passion oriented on the Grand Tour in Tuscany during the Lorraine dynasty age. And then I had the opportunity to become a licensed specialized guide. At the beginning, I thought it was going to be a little bit boring for me. I'm very adventurous or used to always being on the move and everything. And then I discovered that was really something so incredible. So now for me, it's really my passion too - of course, because I love

art and history, but it's not only that. My city has really - so a lot to offer and to have the possibility to share all that beauty every day with different people.

Francesca Ermini:

And it's just for me, it's the best things I could ever happen in my life. So I'm really very happy of that.

Katy Clarke:

I know sometimes in this job you think, oh, does someone pay me to do this? It's amazing, isn't it?

Francesca Ermini:

Yeah. No, it's true, it's true. Sometimes I really feel, and believe me, because as I like to say, we the guides, we suffer with you or we enjoy with you. And because to be honest, it's always such an incredible experience. So when I finish and I have to say goodbye - sometimes it's very sad. So no, it's really... it's something beautiful.

Katy Clarke:

It is such an incredible city. Is there something about Florence that is just apart from the fact that it's your home? What is it about the city that you love? So much. It really has everything and I can rattle off a lot of things. But it's really lovely to hear from a local of what you feel about your own city.

Francesca Ermini:

Well, let's say that sometimes we make fun with my friends in Rome or Milan, you know, these big towns, they look at us a little bit like up, down, a little bit like the provincial cause our town is not that big, but we don't complain about it. I mean, we, the local people, I mean, almost all of us, the people of Florence, me in particular, what I really love is that the town is not really that big. Because if you want the very old town, it's small, you can walk everywhere. I mean, it's not that hard and doesn't matter where you live, if you have a scooter, a motorbike, as most of us, in 10 minutes, or by bicycle, 20, let's say - but wherever you leave, you are in town, in one of the most beautiful cities in the world, with the highest concentration of works of art per square meter in the world. Full of history, music, theater, cultural events, traditional or international, doesn't matter, everything. And at the same time, if you had the same 10 minutes in the opposite direction, you find yourself on these wonderful hills.

Francesca Ermini:

So, I mean, we are surrounded by this magic and you can just easily sit under an olive tree, read a book in peace in this little corner of paradise in the countryside of Tuscany. So there's nothing for me more beautiful than this to be in town, but to have always inside this gorgeous, beautiful vision, which is more or less what you can still see in the works of art, to go and see the museum is amazing. That's what I like the most.

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Katy Clarke:

It is. And you were saying to me the other day that, and I didn't know this, that the whole area of Florence, outside and the hills are part of the UNESCO World Heritage area, which is very special.

Francesca Ermini:

That was a very great idea. I mean, what happens? Because most of times are the heart of towns to be protect. But here, the countryside and the way the area was created, with these beautiful gardens and cultivations, it's an image of what is a little paradise, actually. So it was worth to be protected as a UNESCO Heritage site. And we are very happy because we can still walk in these places. I say we can, because most of people, they think towns, they are nice for visitors, they are made for visitors. And honestly, I'm very happy that people, they can share the beauty of this place. But also for us, the local people, now is the time, because the good weather, the nice springtime temperatures.

Francesca Ermini:

We like to hike up on the hills because it's a mix of this incredible, beautiful nature. And on the way, you find the Galileo Galilei villas, or you find a place where Tchaikovsky used to live, or the place where you can talk to the children, the place where Leonardo da Vinci tried to fly and all these kind of things. So it's always to be in a sort of dream sometimes. And that's something that we love too. That's a very special thing. Yeah, we are very happy that all that. It's a real treasure. Not only the city, it's the whole place.

Francesca Ermini:

And the Arno valley is really magic.

Katy Clarke:

Yes. Yeah, it's. It's quite unique, actually, because even in Italy, where you do have so many beautiful cities, even the outskirts can be quite industrial. But yes, as Francesca says, in Florence, you can easily just have that experience where you're up in the hills and Francesca, I don't know if you've watched this movie, but it's one of my favorites. It's A Room with a View. Do you know this one?

Francesca Ermini:

Si, Si, Si. Bellissimo! Yes, sometimes we explore as well the city and the suburbs of my town, or Tuscany. Just following special thread, the one of movies, because Tuscany influence. They are really the set of many movies. And this one, it's really special. Yeah. I like always to suggest movies during my tours because there are many giving you a glance of things. Quite special. Yes.

Francesca Ermini:

This is very nice.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, it's very nice. The one with Helena Bonham Carter, I mean, it's quite an old movie now. Right. But she's just her transformation. But I think it really demonstrates nicely how you can go into the countryside and then go down into Florence and you see down into Florence. If you haven't seen it. I do talk about this a lot, but I just love that movie because it just captures the essence of Tuscany and Florence so well. Oh, wow.

Katy Clarke:

Yes. I can't remember the last time I was there, but I just - every time I talk about Florence, I think, oh, I've got to go back. Oh, soon! I will do that. But today we're going to do something a little bit special. Now, we know we can't see everything in Florence. We can't even scratch the surface. We can't even go close to it in one day.

Katy Clarke:

But I'm doing a bit of a series where I ask locals how they would spend the perfect day as a tourist in their own city. So it's kind of to give people the idea of what are some of the more local things that you could do or something different to experience than maybe say in Florence. We know the Academia, the David Statue, the Uffizi Gallery, the Duomo, and you have to see those, of course, they're popular for a very good reason. But Francesca, if you were to take us on a day around Florence, how would you do that?

Francesca Ermini:

Well, let's say that there are many perfect days you can have in Florence. I mean, I know that the city of Florence, you can really experience that in one day, just to pick and have a sense of its beauty and maybe focusing on something of particular interest. Or you can stay awake and you can see every day, believe me, something extraordinary, something worthy of a front page of any guidebook to another city in the world. And I'm not exaggerating, it's really like that, I can prove it to you. But let's say that when you really have one day, a real full day at your disposal, and not only, I mean for first timers, but not only it's always nice to maybe to see a few of the very well known highlights, maybe, but there are so many, as you were saying, hidden priceless gems that I think that that's what I usually like to show. So maybe if it's always easier to meet people in a place that there is central and it's honestly very beautiful to start, I like to start talking about my town from the main religious area, which means the Duomo, the cathedral. And if you start early, that's another secret. But let's say if you start 8:30 - 9 maximum, you will find the city still half asleep.

Francesca Ermini:

So it's nice because you can really start understanding what was Florence when everything started changing. And maybe having a nice coffee in one of these historic places. Or then we can wait to the next stop, which for me, for sure, would be one of the places I like always to see - it's the area of Santa Maria Novella, maybe find there is very small, little family-run bar where you can taste the coffee, I mean served with a smile, because we say it's not a good coffee if it's not served with a good smile. And together with a Budino di Riso, maybe one of our so nice alternatives to the croissant in the morning. We like a lot these kind of

things, so that could be a nice way to start. And on the area of the Santa Maria Novella, it's not only the gorgeous church, we can talk about all the greatest artists and architects, but there's a pharmacy, which is another fabulous thing where it's really worth, I think to have a look and maybe buy something. Because this is a very special place where they are still producing, according to the ancient tradition, recipes of the Dominican friars, medicines and beauty products and all these kind of things.

Francesca Ermini:

And the atmosphere of the place. When I enter there, I always think about this place where used to be the chocolaterie of Florence in 1700, during the Grand Tour, it was the meeting place of all different communities having their drinking their chocolate. Because at the time the bars that didn't exist, not yet. So it's really amazing. And then from there, this is only on the way to my favorite place. What I would like always to suggest people to do is to literally the beaten tracks and find areas such as Ognissanti. There's a very beautiful church called the All Saints - Ognissanti church. People they go to there in order to visit the Vespucci family chapel.

Francesca Ermini:

So talking about historical facts, of course, Amerigo Vespucci, or to see the tombs of the famous artist, the painter Sandro Botticelli. But for me, these incredible old church, one of the oldest, honestly important. So we talk about 13th century, even if then transformed completely throughout the centuries in a fantastic, unique, baroque decorated church. For me, the atmosphere when you enter there. So usually in this special silence, or someone sometimes playing the organ. And then you arrive at the end of the aisle and you will be surprised, just turning a little bit, your head to your left, you see an incredible, beautiful work by Giotto crucifix, 14th century, which for me is the quintessence of spirituality. And when I say that, believe me, I'm used to work with people coming from all over the world, different cultures, I'm really talking about pure spirituality, not only a religious symbol. And when you see these crucifix and this cross that the artist had the genius idea to paint, not brown as usual, but blue - a lapis lazuli, blue color, which is so intense, giving us at the same time this idea of death and salvation.

Francesca Ermini:

I mean, pain and hope at the same time. You lose all sense of time and space. And you find really one of these magic moments that I say it's hard to be found somewhere else in the world. It's really amazing. This is one of the place where I like to take people because we can learn and discover so many things. The Sinopias, this beautiful refectory, the Last Supper by Ghirlandaio and so on. But it's really the atmosphere what is really changing everything. According to my opinion, my way of looking at this thing

Katy Clarke:

It is so beautiful and people just walk past, don't they? They're just walking past out the front, not going in. They don't know.

Francesca Ermini:

Actually talking about a one-day, a full-day experience. It's a privilege already for many people because unfortunately, maybe they spend only few hours and they only walk in between the cathedral and the old palace, which is nice. But of course, you lose a little bit the music of the place, as I would say. And for sure, another place where you can really feel a different kind of atmosphere is the Oltrarno. A nice thing would be to cross the Arno River, to go across the other side, the southern side of the river, what we call Oltrarno, and visit this church of Santo Spirito, which is a very special Renaissance, 100% Renaissance church designed by Brunelleschi, nothing less for the Augustinian friars. And where Michelangelo had his experience, the first experience of as anatomist, dissecting bodies and all these things. And where he left a very special present to these friars, a crucifix, a wooden crucifix, unique in Michelangelo's work. Another example of these three Florence at the end of 1400s.

Francesca Ermini:

In the Renaissance, Michelangelo so young had many pointer references. I mean, he could have taken inspiration for making his crucifix looking or copying Brunelleschi's beautiful crucifix or the beautiful one made by Donatello. And instead of copying two art masters, he chose his own way. Revolutionary! I mean, people, they were asked to be revolutionary at the time. And the artists are the very protagonists at this time. One that changed not only a style in art, but a way of thinking. So all these things you can still really feel in these places, beautiful cloisters. I mean, it's just amazing.

Francesca Ermini:

And then the Oltrarno is full of little markets. So just outside the church there's the daily market where we can really just buy a piece of cheese or whatever we want and then go maybe to see one of the artists. Because the Oltrarno is where we can really preserve, probably one of the most precious heritage of my town - craftsmen. So they are still there in their beautiful workshops, in little, small, tiny shops and at work. One of my favorite ones is the art etchings. I like a lot to go and see Gianni, but all the others at work, making these incredible, stunning prints using these techniques developed in 16th century. Impossible not to buy one when you're there. Or to go and seal comes Fiorentino.

Francesca Ermini:

There are things, believe me, Katy, that people come in here several times and when I know that, I always ask just to propose something new, maybe. I always ask, have you ever seen the Comisto Fiorentino, the famous Florentine inlay, the hard and semi-precious stones, artwork. Most people, they don't know what I'm talking about. And it's amazing. Behind anonymous wooden doors, then worlds open in front of us with these semi-precious stones and these guys at work making really magic for me. And this is something that I see people, they really look at art in a different way when they can see artists at work. Because we say craftsman, but in Italian is artigiano, craftsman and artista. The root of the word is exactly the same because there are people really making art and that's another very beautiful thing.

Francesca Ermini:

And of course, then the time for a stop for eating something. It's perfect on this side of the river because you have a lot of these small, little places where you can buy just a sandwich or have a pasta or maybe just having a salad, whatever you feel like. Or you buy a fruit sometimes, or an ice cream. That's another way for having lunch. My favorite lunch is ice cream in summer, anyway. It's very beautiful. So. And just to take time, that's another very special thing.

Francesca Ermini:

I think traveling, we always should have a little hour for ourselves, eating something, talking about nothing, just relaxing, enjoying the moment, just to be aware where we are and enjoy it. I think that's very important. And after that, of course, maybe the end of a day like that could be when it's too hot. I would say enter one of the beautiful museums of Pitti palace, like the Palatine Gallery, or for those they have been before, maybe the Boboli Gardens or the Costume gallery there. Or otherwise - now that's the right moment, springtime, as we were saying, the temperatures are still very pleasant. So it's nice strolling through the shady streets, maybe with a hat on, but reaching Piazzale Michelangelo for the very sporty ones. .

Francesca Ermini:

It's... well, we can do that in half an hour, but otherwise an easy Taxi. In 10 minutes we are at the top of the hill and we enjoy one of the nicest views over Florence and Fiesole, the hills all around the Arno Valley. And then after we stop, now that's compulsory, we have to stop a little bit in the iris garden to see the beautiful ones, all colors, it's very special. And then maybe walking down, which is very easy, through the rose garden, that's another special little paradise. We can return to the city at the end of the afternoon and that could be the very right moment then to end up in the Signoria Square. This open air museum with these fantastic statues, decoration of these old Middle Ages castle. Still nowadays, since the Middle Ages, the city hall of the town. And that's the time where we can really say, oh, that was a day.

Francesca Ermini:

That's what I would really do. That would be one of my strolls in this period - my favorite ones for sure.

Katy Clarke:

And it's not actually that long, you know, it's not a long distance really when you think about it. But there's so much in this like tiny pocket of a city that you can see so many things. And I even love at the bottom of the rose garden there in the San Frediano, there's some lovely artisans there too. Jewelry shop. And Alessandro... I can't remember... it's like a museum, this jewelry shop and also the lot of perfume shops there. Yeah, Alessandro Dari. And yeah, the perfume shops on that street too.

Francesca Ermini:

Yeah, yeah, no, but that's why I say, because as you said, that's the other very beautiful thing of my town, I think, because as you said, distances are relatively short. You can really walk few minutes from one very special place to the other one. But on the way, I mean the same itinerary that you can cover in three hours, you can spend one or two days. Depends really the kind of experiences and the time, of course, you have at your disposal. But as you were saying in the beginning, it's very worth it to be honest, to see the Uffizi, the Accademia, some of the very most special museums in the world. And my suggestion, visit them early in the morning when museums open or at the closing time, so just before they close the ticket office, so you can really experience this museum in the right atmosphere, even at the peak of the season. So do it, but choose the right time. And among the beautiful parts of my city that maybe not very well known or know the very first one you have on your to-do list.

Francesca Ermini:

But climb the dome of the cathedral if you can. That's one of the things I like a lot. Don't be scared of the 463 steps, but it's really amazing. That's one of the things I like a lot - the Bargello Museum. That's my favorite museum ever with my Donatello and then all the others. Verrocchio, Desiderio da Settignano, Michelangelo, Cellini, and Giambologna Verrocchio, Desiderio da Cignano, Michelangelo, Cellini and Giambologna. Is a triumph of beauty and a new, revolutionary, still very modern vision of the world through art in a special castle. It's like to be back in 1300s, it's amazing.

Francesca Ermini:

And not only for science lovers. Galileo Galilei Museum is fantastic. And not only for family. The Stibbert Museum is a little bit outside the very city center. So maybe you, you need a bus or a taxi, but five minutes together. And the Stibbert Museum is really the dream of a collector who left to the city of Florence a magnificent villa, transforming a medieval castle atmosphere, full of antique armor, precious daggers, scimitars, helmets of every shape and decorated shields. And you don't believe it, but outside of Japan, you find in this place the largest collections of samurai armor in this truly and medieval context.

Francesca Ermini:

It's amazing. Last but not the least, take the opportunity to do a workshop yourself and become artist for one day. That's something so special. I think that you should really experience body and soul of a place. So if you have the time, try to make an experience in an art workshop. That's another beautiful things to be you really the protagonist of your trip.

Katy Clarke:

Ah, it's making the city come to life for you. I love that. And in Melbourne, where I live here in Australia, we have a shop called Il Papiro. There's only 12 shops in the world. One shop here in my city and one shop in your city. It's the same.

Francesca Ermini:

Exactly. It's true, it's true.

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Katy Clarke:

And they do workshops where you do paper marbling, so you make these beautiful marble designs on paper. And I have done that here in Melbourne with my family. And it's something that, that's so great for children actually, and it's easy for them to do. And I recommend that a lot actually because, yeah, you can see that it's not so easy like it might look like splats of paint, but when you see how they do it so that they can use it in various different, like beautiful notebooks and other things, it's very beautiful actually.

Francesca Ermini:

And as you were saying, because usually we like to propose this kind of things to families because of course children, they enjoy a lot, but not only and ask ourselves to be creative and use our hands. It really give the possibility to ourselves to discover a part of ourselves that usually we don't do. So being an artist doesn't mean to create masterpieces of art. It means just to express yourself. And sometimes you discover about yourself much more in one hour doing something with your hands than reading thousands of books. Because traveling, I think is not only discovery, other places is know yourself in a different way. So it's always a great opportunity.

Katy Clarke:

Yes, I think you're 100 right at this time with all this technology, which I do like the technology for some things, but also it's kind of squashing our creativity a little bit, I think. And so when you see these artisans, as you mentioned before, in Oltrano, where they're doing some incredible work, and it requires patience, it requires dedication, it requires thinking about, like a tiny process that is going to take time and if you make a mistake, you need to do it again. And I think that's a very special gift that you can give to yourself, not just for, you know, not just to do an activity, but actually to appreciate the work that goes into something like that.

Francesca Ermini:

That it's true in cities such as Florence, we have the opportunity to do very many different experiences like that. Honestly, for me, one of my... the very most important thing I would like really to wish to everybody, it's really, first of all, travel a lot. I really hope to see you in force, because here you will find me. But as I like to say, wherever you go, live your travels, body and soul, because only in this way you will be able to find the keys to access the magic and acquire those secrets that they are hidden all over around us. So that's my best wish to all of you. Hoping to see you here.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah, absolutely. So lovely. And it is Florence that does have a big magical impact on people, I think, because it is so beautiful and you can see why it inspired so many people. And there's such a gift in the city as well. And like you mentioned, the Stibbert Gallery, which was bequeathed to the city, also, all the collections of the Medici were bequeathed to the city by a woman, no less. And that is...

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Francesca Ermini:

Very true. Anna Maria de' Medici or Anna Maria Luisa, as you prefer to call her. She's the only important woman. She has a statue in the old palace courtyard, so it's compulsory to stop in front of her every day and say thank you. As you said, it's a special place and it's nice to discover it through history, through art and just walking, I mean, so let's be inspired by the beauty and it will be for sure a fantastic day.

Katy Clarke:

Yeah. And I think people see a lot of crowds in Florence, and the crowds are sort of concentrated in one spot, aren't they? They kind of go from the Duomo to the Accademia to the Uffizi and then maybe over the Ponte Vecchio, but then they're all kind of in this one spot, which is maybe less than a kilometer square. So if you go out and if you go wandering like Francesca suggested, then you can get away from those crowds. You go into the Oltrano, go to Piazza Santa Spirito and just go to Ognissanti and go to Santo Croce. You know, you can go away from those crowds for sure.

Francesca Ermini:

For sure. And choose the right time of the day, because I know you're on holidays, maybe you don't like waking up too early, but there was a reason why in the past we used to have the siesta, especially during the summer, in between 12. I mean, midday and fall is when it's really the worst, because it's very hot. Of course, you enter the museum, if you like, but it's probably the very most pleasant moments of the day are early in the morning and late in the afternoon. So try to visit the most famous places at that moment of the day. And then, as you were saying, Katy, you need really just to leave the two main streets, Via Calzaiuoli and Via Roma. And then you experience a completely different Florence. And all year long, I mean, not only during the low season, if we can talk about low season in Florence, but of course, November, when these are shorter, or when it's.

Francesca Ermini:

Well, the weather is not so nice, but. But there are many people that come in November because they know they found the galleries empty. So it's the best moment for art lovers. But you have not to wait in November, I mean, so just to plan in a smart way, your time and try not to visit too many places at the same time. So, try to dedicate more time to a place. Don't think, because Florence, it's small, so half a day or few hours are enough, or if you do it, you will see that you will come back anyway.

Katy Clarke:

You can't keep me away, I love it so much. It's such a beautiful place. And I can't wait to go back soon, actually, because I think every one of our listeners knows I had to reorganize my trip, so I might redo a trip that I did before COVID, actually. And I've got a very special memory of Florence from that, because I did get up very early, per your suggestion. I was staying in Oltrano and I wanted to walk in the city when the sun came up. So I walked across the Ponte Vecchio and I was the only person on the Ponte Vecchio when the sun came up. And

that was a very beautiful memory for me. Oh, Francesca, I know everyone's loved hearing you talk about your beautiful city.

Katy Clarke:

How can they stay in contact with you? Or if they want to come on a tour and go exploring with you.

Francesca Ermini:

You can find me on the social media, Facebook, Instagram or just send me a message to my email or to WhatsApp. You know in Europe we use a lot WhatsApp so in this way usually people they find me.

Katy Clarke:

They will find you and we'll put all her Francesca's details into the show notes. So if you want to reach out to her, you can do that too. Bellissima. I love talking with you Francesca and I think Francesca and I have got some ideas about how she can come and talk on the podcast some more, which I would absolutely love. We share some passions for some nature things that I think everyone might enjoy, but Francesca, grazie mille. Thank you so much for coming on to Untold Italy and sharing beautiful Florence with us today.

Francesca Ermini:

Grazie vui. Grazie davvero, Katy. Un abbraccio a tutti - a big hug to everybody. Thank you so much. See you soon in Florence. Ciao.

Katy Clarke:

Grazie mille to Francesca. What a beautiful conversation. Every time I talk to someone who loves this city, I am reminded that there is no end to what Florence has to offer. Francesca mentioned the Ognissanti church, the Bargello, the Giotto crucifix, painted not in brown but in lapis lazuli blue. The Oltrarno craftsmen working behind doors that look like nothing from the outside. A morning outside the duomo before the heat and crowds set in. And the iris garden, which is only open from late April to mid-May. So if you are planning a spring trip, which is an excellent idea - make sure to note that down.

My own memory she brought back was walking across the Ponte Vecchio at sunrise, completely alone. I was staying in Oltrarno at the time and was completely jetlagged. The best thing I did was go for that walk to soak up the magic of Florence and somehow all the tiredness melted away. If you have not walked across the Ponte Vecchio before the city wakes up, I highly recommend it -

As always, you will find all of Francesca's contact details and the places mentioned in the show notes at [untolditaly.com/326](https://untolditaly.com/326).

And if this episode has you thinking about the rest of Italy, we know people like Francesca in cities and towns right across the country who help us create experiences and moments for our clients just like the one she described today.

Let us open the door to your Italy. Next week I'll be answering some traveler questions that have come in from our app users, but until next time, it's ciao for now.