

Award winning artists and authors Keith Svagerko and Sydney Svagerko traveled to Florence, Italy to capture the city's amazing charm in a travel guide created from a kid's view. This kid's guide helps children prepare for a trip to Florence, Italy and provides tips for grown-ups, too. Filled with descriptions, photographs, original drawings and activities, this guide will educate and engage children while building anticipation for their trip. Sydney says, "This is Florence for kids!"

**Sydney Travels to Florence: A Guide for Kids – Let's Go to Italy!**

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*Sydney travels to*

# FLORENCE

A Guide for Kids



*Let's Go to Italy!*

Written and Illustrated by

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## ARRIVING: THIS IS FLORENCE FOR KIDS

### A City Along the Arno River



Old bridges, large domes, leaning towers, narrow cobblestone streets, ringing bells and the birthplace of countless contributions to the modern world—this is Florence for kids! Get ready to gaze in wonder at this city along the Arno River where creativity and imaginative thinking have influenced the world for centuries. Florence is known for its historical

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importance in the arts, architecture, literature and science. Nestled along the banks of the Arno River, you will find this enchanting city to be mysterious, exciting and fun!

We *love* Florence for its beauty and charm, its art and its most amazing history. While we think other cities in Italy are super cool, we believe Florence is one of the neatest places in the world. We are not the only ones; more than eight million people visit Florence each year. Unlike Venice, you will not find many boats here. Instead, you will find the place where, in a unique period of history now known as the *Renaissance*, great inspiration, creativity and imagination greatly influenced the future of the world. Here, beside the Arno River, in the shadows of massive domes, you can walk along the same street plans walked by Roman soldiers. These same streets were also walked by well known writers, political figures, artists, and scientists from Florence's past including **Dante**, **Machiavelli**, **Botticelli**, **Michelangelo**, **Leonardo da Vinci**, **Raphael** and **Galileo**. Many influential and famous

people lived here along the Arno River. Even the explorer **Amerigo Vespucci**, the person for whom America is named, was from Florence. Would you believe you can see and explore some of the same places they all enjoyed while living in Florence hundreds of years ago? You can also stop by the one important place where they were baptized and see the churches they attended as children. You really can visit history in Florence! If you don't know who these people are, don't worry—you will after reading this guide. You are going to be amazed by this small yet beautiful city and the amazing artists, scientists, architects, writers and thinkers who once called Florence home. When you walk along the winding cobblestone streets of Florence, it is like stepping into a time machine and travelling back hundreds of years ago. *Get ready for time travel!*

## **Back to the Future**

Have you ever imagined going back in time? What would it be like living in a time with no telephones, televisions, video games, computers, cars, or even electricity? Five hundred years ago, when Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo lived in Florence, people had none of these! They did, however, have technology, just not like the technology we have today. We call people from this city Florentines, and their technologies were built and powered differently from ours in modern times. Different does not mean simple! In fact, the Florentines developed some complex technologies that enabled them to achieve some outstanding and amazing accomplishments.

One such Florentine was **Filippo Brunelleschi**, or Pippo, as his friends called him. Pippo was the genius who designed and directed the building of the huge dome of Santa Maria Fiore, the cathedral of the flowers, known simply as the "Duomo." This magnificent dome stands about 30 stories high! The

building of the dome took many years to complete and required Pippo to devise and construct advanced machines made of wood, ropes and pulleys, all powered by oxen, to lift tons of material high above the ground. He was the first person to build a huge dome since Roman times. Pippo traveled to Rome to investigate and study the methods the early Romans had used to build the Pantheon.

Pippo's creative and brilliant accomplishments gave inspiration to other Florentines to develop new technologies to accomplish things. After people saw the completed dome in Florence, they had great confidence that amazing things could be achieved through new inventions and technologies. In fact, the early technologies of the Florentines inspired the development of modern day technologies.

Pippo is also recognized as the first artist to understand and explain the use of perspective in drawing. Perspective means that the picture drawn on paper, or painted on a wall, appears three dimensional and has the appearance of depth.

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Another inventive Florentine you may have heard about is **Leonardo da Vinci**. Da Vinci is perhaps best known for painting the *Last Supper* and the *Mona Lisa*. However, the creative da Vinci was also a scientist and inventor. He was a multi-talented person who imagined, drew plans for, and wrote about many kinds of new ideas that would lead to inventions hundreds of years later such as the airplane, the bicycle, and a parachute.

We will share more about Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael and other remarkable Florentines of the Renaissance throughout this book. We will introduce you to some of their artistic and scientific achievements, as well as how their great paintings, writings, buildings and inventions have inspired the world ever since. We think you are going to *love* Florence! It is an exciting historical adventure. So, get in your time machine and set the date to 59 B.C.; we are heading back to the beginning of this enchanting city along the Arno River—back to the founding of **Florentia** by the Romans!

## **The Roman City of Florentia**

Florence was once called Florentia (pronounced "floor-in-TEE-uh"). It was a Roman camp for soldiers, founded around 59 B.C. as part of the growing Roman Empire. Some believe it was founded by the ruler of the Roman Empire, Caesar Augustus, himself. Caesar may have given this land as a reward to soldiers who fought for him. Florence, or **Firenze** as it is now called in Italian, has been around for more than 2,000 years. There are many different stories about how the place got its name. It may have been named in honor of a Roman general called Florinus, or it may have gotten its name because it was a city that "flourished"— to "flourish" means to do well, or prosper. Some believe it was named after flowers, and for hundreds of years the city symbol has been the lily, as depicted in the fleur-de-lis (you can see a fleur-de-lis on the title page of this guide). We don't know for sure how Florence got its name, but it has been known as Firenze by the Italians for a long, long time.

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The Romans were not the first people to live here along the Arno River. This area near the river was narrow, more easily crossable and near the already well established hill town of **Fiesole**. Before the Romans, people called **Etruscans** lived in this lovely and fertile area. Today, the whole region is called **Tuscany**, after these earlier Etruscan people.

After the fall of the Roman Empire, many cities in Italy declined. People in these cities had a hard time and often struggled just to survive. The times from the fall of the Roman Empire up to the early 1300's are often referred to as the *Middle Ages*, or the *medieval* times. Some places, like Fiesole, did very well and grew during the Middle Ages, but other places did not fare so well after the fall of the empire. Some people refer to this time in history as the *Dark Ages*—but not because there was no electricity! It might be called the Dark Ages because it seems little progress was made in the quality of life for people, and little was written that survives today. Very few people knew how to read or write, and all books were written by hand.

Sometime around the year 1138, Florence became a sort of self-governing **Republic**. That means the people did not have a King or a Queen or other person telling them what laws to obey and generally how to live their lives. A Republic meant that the people of Florence had opportunities to participate in their government. Later, some people began to better understand and appreciate the idea of a democracy, where people have a greater role and voice in their government. While the people of Florence participated in their government without a King, Queen, or other ruling person, they did have wealthy and powerful families that provided leadership—often by force. Competing families fought for power for hundreds of years. It would take a long time for democracy to develop in Florence, Italy, and other parts of the world.

Like all early Roman cities, Florence was laid out along a Roman grid street plan. The center of the original town of Florentia in Roman times was located near where a triumphal arch now stands in the Republic Square. This arch was built when, for a

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few years, Florence was the capital of Italy. Later, the capital moved to Rome. The Republic Square was previously the location of the

market where people gathered daily. Explore this area to see if you can find some colorful horses traveling in a circular path—if you are lucky, you might even get to ride one! The Romans would have never imagined the colorful, musical carousel that rotates in the square today. Swing by for a visit and stand where Roman soldiers once camped.

As Florentia prospered, the people discovered their talents. Over time, the people of Florence became really good at working with wool and silk, and they developed a reputation for banking. Living along the Arno River was very helpful for merchants to send their things to other parts of the world. Across Europe, people trusted the Florentines with their money. In the 1200's, the Republic of Florence

made a gold coin called a **Florin**. People increasingly depended on the bankers of Florence with their money, and the Florin became recognized as reliable and safe money.

One of the wealthy and powerful families in Florence during this time was the **Medici** family. Even the Pope and the Roman Catholic Church trusted the Medici bankers of Florence. Store keepers and other groups of people in Florence formed clubs called "guilds." The guilds became important in the growth, development and leadership of the city of Florence. Together with wealthy families like the Medici, the guilds provided money to artists and architects for the creation of new paintings, statues and buildings. In fact, starting around the mid 1300's, things were really beginning to change in Florence, and the Dark Ages were coming to an end. Florence entered into a new age that would impact places around the world. From the late 1200's to the late 1500's, many of the neat places we can visit and enjoy today were either started or completed. We will share more about this

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exciting time of history later in the book; for now, let's get this adventure started by exploring some of these neat places!



*Sydney Says...*

"Ride the nice carousel in the  
Republic Square!"

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