

TRAVEL

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Florence

Travel Editor **Andrea Petersen** on where to shop, eat and stay in this center of Renaissance art.

■ **Where to shop:** In between visits to the Uffizi, the Accademia and the city's myriad glorious churches, duck into Florence's quirky shops. While Via Tornabuoni hosts the big names in Italian fashion, such as Versace and Prada, the side streets offer more unique gifts. *Dolceforte* is a tiny sliver of a shop selling chocolates, olive oil and other goodies (Via della Scala, 21; Tel. 055-219-166, www.dolceforte.it). Alberto Cozzi proffers gorgeous handmade paper products, including journals and picture frames (Via del Parione, 35; Tel. 055-294-968). Leather shops abound in Florence's outdoor markets, but quality can be uneven. Scuola del Cuoiò, a leather school located in the 15th-century dormitory attached to the church of Santa Croce, sells impeccably made leather purses and wallets (Piazza Santa Croce, 16; Tel. 055-244-534; www.leatherschool.com). Across the river Arno, Madova gloves makes buttery-soft versions in snazzy colors such as bright purple and red (Via Guicciardini, 1/R; Tel. 055-239-6526; www.madova.com).

■ **Where to eat:** Enoteca Coquinarius is a hip, friendly spot near the Duomo serving delicious salads and



The **Ponte Vecchio** straddles the Arno river. Jewelry shops line the bridge.

pastas. Try the ravioli with pear (Via delle Oche, 15r; Tel. 055-230-2153). Trattoria Zà-Zà is fun and raucous with communal tables and traditional Tuscan fare (Piazza del Mercato Centrale, 26r; Tel. 055-215-411; www.trattoriazaza.it). If you're in need of sustenance during a Via Tornabuoni-area shopping bender, stop at Amerini. Popular with locals, it serves delectable lunchtime sandwiches and pasta (Via della Vigna Nuova, 63r; Tel. 055-284-941). There's no shortage of gelato in town, but *Vestri*, a sweet shop in the Santa Croce neighborhood, serves some of the tastiest. The chocolate with pepper is unusual—and delicious (Borgo degli Albizi, 11r; Tel. 055-234-0374).

■ **Where to stay:** Residenza Johanna 1 is a cozy bed and breakfast located within a residential building. It is within walking distance of the Duomo, but far enough removed to be a quiet respite from the crowds. Rooms—some with

canopy beds—are spare, but comfortable (Doubles from 95 euro including tax and breakfast; Via Bonifacio Lupi, 14; Tel. 055-481-896; www.johanna.it). Located in a small, tranquil piazza steps from the madness around the Ponte Vecchio, Gallery Hotel Art has 74 sleek, minimalist rooms and a popu-

lar restaurant featuring sushi. Some top-floor suites have expansive views of the Palazzo Vecchio and Florence's red roofs (Doubles from 320 euro including tax and breakfast; Vicolo dell'Oro, 5; Tel. 055-27-264000; www.lungarno-hotels.com). The lavish Four Seasons Hotel Firenze is opening this summer in two restored palaces from the 15th and 16th centuries set in an 11-acre garden. The hotel will have 117 rooms and a full-service spa (Rooms from 500 euro; Borgo Pinti, 99; Tel. 055-262-6250 or 800-332-3442, www.fourseasons.com/florence). In the stunning hills of the Chianti region, less than one hour from Florence, Villa Bordini is a 12-room inn with lovely gardens, a pool and a chic restaurant. Be sure to book a "deluxe" room or suite to snare a view (Rates vary, Greve in Chianti; Tel. 055-884-0004; www.villabordini.com).