

Art & Culture in Florence: A Transformative Learning Journey

Instructor & Course Designer

Dr. Mohsen Veysi

Email: mohsenveysi@gmail.com | Website: mohsenveysi.com

Course Logistics & Registration

Finisterra Travel

Email: info@finisterra.ca | Website / Registration Link: [Florence Art Tour](#)

Course Description

Discover Florence, the cradle of the Renaissance, where art, history, and daily life come together in piazzas, churches, and museums. This immersive program combines **14 hours of pre-travel online learning** with **12 days on-site**, giving participants the tools to engage deeply with the city's masterpieces while developing both sketching skills and art historical insight.

Before departure, participants will explore Renaissance art and practical sketching techniques through engaging online lessons. In Florence, the classroom expands into museums, streets, gardens, and surrounding landscapes. Each day blends cultural discovery with hands-on creativity, offering the rare chance to study art where it was made.

A dedicated course blog will provide lesson summaries, links, optional readings, videos, and resources to enrich learning throughout the program and beyond.

This is not just a trip—it is a **transformative learning journey**, where art, history, and lived experience converge into a deeply personal and creative adventure.

Objectives & Outcomes

By the end of the course, participants will:

- Deepen their understanding of Renaissance art history in its authentic Florentine context.
- Recognize key artists, themes, and innovations of the period.
- Develop observation and sketching skills in a relaxed and supportive environment.
- Create a personal sketchbook inspired by museums, piazzas, gardens, and churches.
- Understand how an immersive, living experience can enrich both personal and artistic perception.
- Connect emotionally and intellectually with artworks through direct, on-site experience.
- Leave with a deeper appreciation of Florence as both a historic and living city of art.

Requirements

This course is **suitable for all levels**. No prior experience is necessary, though basic drawing skills or familiarity with art history can enrich your experience. The heart of the course is learning through **direct, immersive engagement** with Florence's streets, museums, and public spaces.

Certification

Participants who complete both the online pre-trip preparation and the on-site course will receive a **Certificate of Completion**, acknowledging their engagement with Renaissance art history and hands-on sketching practice in Florence.

Please note: this certificate is not an academic credential or professional certification, but a recognition of participation and learning in this unique program.

Optional Post-Trip Exhibition

We anticipate organizing a small online or Vancouver-based exhibition where participants may share and celebrate their work. Participation is optional, and details will be shared closer to the date.

Optional Post-Trip Project: Artist Book

Participants are invited to create an **artist book** documenting their Florence experience. This can include:

- Sketches, drawings, or paintings made during the course
- Photographs of Florence, museums, streets, and landscapes
- Found objects, tickets, brochures, or newspaper clippings
- Any other personal artifacts from the journey

The goal is to capture the memories, artistic exploration, and learning from the trip in a creative, tangible form. Completed artist books can be:

- Shared digitally on the course blog or website
- Exhibited online or in-person (e.g., in Vancouver) as a collective showcase

This project is **optional** but provides a unique way to reflect, preserve creative work, and connect with fellow participants.

For inspiration, see examples of artist books:

- [Smithsonian Libraries – Artists' Books](#)
- [National Museum of Women in the Arts – Artists' Books](#)

Optional Textbooks and Resources

Art History:

- Gardner's *Art Through the Ages: A Global History*, 15th Edition, by Fred S. Kleiner
- Website: [Smarthistory](#)

Drawing:

- *The Urban Sketching Handbook: People and Motion*, by Gabriel Campanario

- *The Urban Sketching Handbook: Architecture and Cityscapes*, by Gabriel Campanario

Additional resources, including lesson summaries, links, videos, books, documentaries, and optional readings, will be available on the **course blog**.

ONLINE Pre-Trip Preparation & Course (14 hours)

Art History: Introduction to Renaissance Art in Florence (7 hours)

- Late Medieval & Early Renaissance (1200–1300): 2h
- Renaissance (1400): 2h
- High Renaissance & Mannerism (1500): 2h
- Review & Q&A: 1h

Objectives:

- Gain understanding of the Renaissance with a focus on **Florence's key artistic developments**.
- Recognize major artists, styles, and innovations.
- Prepare for on-site exploration and observation.

Drawing & Sketching Techniques (7 hours)

- Urban Sketching – Perspective: 2h
- Landscape Drawing: 2h
- People in Motion: 2h
- Review & Q&A: 1h

Objectives:

- Develop foundational drawing skills for urban, landscape, and figure sketching.
- Build confidence in translating observation into personal sketches.
- Prepare for immersive, hands-on drawing sessions in Florence.

Day-by-Day On-Site Program

Day 1 – Arrival in Florence

- Arrival and private transfer to hotel in the city center
- Orientation session

- Welcome dinner with local specialties and wines

Day 2 – Walking Tour of Florence & Drawing Session

- **Morning:** Piazza del Duomo, Piazza della Repubblica, Accademia delle Arti del Disegno, Orsanmichele, Tower Houses, Casa di Dante, Bargello, Piazza della Signoria, Palazzo Vecchio, Loggia dei Lanzi, Uffizi Gallery, Torre di Pulci, Ponte Vecchio, Palazzo Pitti, Santa Croce
 - **Objective:** Immerse in Florence's historic center; contextual understanding of city's art and architecture
- **Afternoon:** Lungarno di Santa Rosa – drawing nature and buildings, perspective
 - **Materials:** Pencil on paper
 - **Objective:** Develop observational and perspective drawing skills

Day 3 – Uffizi Gallery

- **Activity:** Art History session at the Uffizi Gallery
- **Objective:** Deepen understanding of Renaissance art with a focus on Florence's key artists, works, and innovations.
- **Materials:** Notebook and pencil (optional sketching for personal observation)

Day 4 – Bargello Museum

- **Activity:** Art History and sculpture sketching at the Bargello Museum
- **Objective:** Explore Renaissance art and develop observational sketching skills directly from sculptures.
- **Materials:** Sanguine or Pencil and paper

Day 5 – Galleria dell'Accademia, Medici Chapels & Santa Maria Novella

- **Activity:** Art History visits and study across three key Florentine sites
- **Objective:** Deepen understanding of Renaissance painting, sculpture, and architectural works.
- **Materials:** Pencil and paper (optional sketching)

Day 6 – Pratolino & Fiesole

- **Morning:** Sketch the Apennine Colossus and surrounding park at Parco Mediceo di Pratolino
- **Afternoon:** Paint the Tuscan hills and Florence skyline from the Monastery of San Francesco in Fiesole

- **Objective:** Observe and capture landscape and sculpture in their natural and architectural context, practicing perspective, watercolor, and pen techniques.
- **Materials:** Pencil, pen, watercolor

Day 7 – Bardini & Boboli Gardens

- **Morning:** Watercolor painting in Bardini Gardens
- **Afternoon:** Pastel sketches of landscapes and sculptures in Boboli Gardens
- **Objective:** Explore Florence's historic gardens while practicing techniques for capturing landscapes, architectural details, and sculptural forms. Emphasis will be placed on combining observation with expressive use of watercolor and dry pastels.
- **Materials:** Watercolors, pens, pencils, dry pastels

Day 8 – Tuscan Cooking Experience

- **Activity:** Hands-on cooking class with a Florentine chef (approx. 4 hours). Learn to prepare traditional Tuscan dishes and enjoy the meal.
- **Objective:** Connect with Florence's culture through its cuisine, exploring the relationship between art, sensory experience, and local tradition.

Day 9 – Chianti Vineyards & Tuscan Landscapes

- **Morning:** Tour a historic winery, taste four signature wines, and enjoy a multi-course Tuscan lunch
- **Afternoon:** Sketch vineyards, stone farmhouses, and cypress-lined hillsides
- **Objective:** Blend cultural immersion and artistic practice, capturing the beauty of Tuscany's landscapes while enjoying its culinary traditions.
- **Materials:** Pencil, pen, watercolor

Day 10 – Pisa Urban Sketching

- **Activity:** Explore the Leaning Tower area and piazza surroundings through on-site sketching
- **Objective:** Develop urban sketching techniques by capturing architectural details, piazza life, and historic atmosphere.
- **Materials:** Pen and pencil

Day 11 – Rose Garden & Piazzale Michelangelo

- **Activity:** Sketch the Rose Garden and panoramic cityscape from Piazzale Michelangelo

- **Objective:** Practice ink wash and pen techniques to capture Florence's iconic landscape and skyline.
- **Materials:** Ink wash and pen

Day 12 – Departure

- **Activity:** After breakfast, transfer to Florence Airport for your onward journey
- **Objective:** Conclude your journey with sketchbooks full of memories and a renewed artistic connection to Florence.
- *Optional: Finisterra can help plan extended travel within Italy (info@finisterra.ca).*

Note: *The program, visits, and locations may be adjusted due to weather or unforeseen circumstances. We will make every effort to follow the planned schedule while ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience. The program is designed to balance structure with flexibility, leaving room for discovery and creativity.*

Supply List

Graphite & Drawing Pencils

- Graphite pencils: B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5B, 6B (soft range)
- Woodless graphite pencil
- Sanguine pencil (traditional red-brown drawing pencil)

- Utility knife or pencil sharpener
- Masking tape

Ink & Pens

- Roll-tip pens (Micron or Artist's Loft), black, preferably in various sizes
- India ink (black or brown)
- Calligraphy pens (optional)

Brushes & Paints

- Watercolor brushes (various sizes)
- Watercolor set (12 colors or more)

Erasers

- Vinyl eraser
- Kneaded eraser

Pastels (Chalk)

- Dry pastels (12 colors or more)

Papers & Sketchbooks

- Sketchbook *or* drawing paper with a drawing board and clips
- Mixed-media or watercolor paper (for ink wash and watercolor drawings)