A DAY IN FLORENCE

Florence is at it's finest in May and so easy for strolling around the Historic Centre, visiting fabulous galleries, museums and churches.

The highlights of our stay include our amazing walk with Elisabetta Cappugi, the Art Historian. A few years back when we all met in Piazza della Signoria at 9am on the 14 May near the Loggia we discovered hundreds of people celebrating Dante's 750th birthday. There was a pageant in true Florentine style with a band made up of old brass instruments and drums with those in the procession in costumes from the 15th century, very stirring stuff. When we looked around almost everyone was reading aloud from 'The Inferno', including a group of policemen standing nearby, imagine our policemen at home being involved in such a thing!

Next we visited Orsanmichele, once an open market loggia which was transformed into a church as a vote of thanks for the survivors of the plague in 1348.The top floors were used as a grain store for many years and the outside is decorated with several niches with sculptures depicting the 'Guilds' by artists including Donatello and Verrocchio.

We strolled to the house Michelangelo built, Casa Buonarroti, very early sculptures and other artworks by Michelangelo are on show here also Artemisia Gentileschi's 'L'Inclinazione', a true gem. This palazzo has remained basically unchanged from the 17th century.

Our lunches are usually at the local 'Forno' where a selection of freshly made delights await us every day. The 'Forno' catered for our welcome party and we will remember the excellent savoury dishes followed by a fabulous strawberry tart!