

BEST PRACTICE: FLORENCE, ITALY



Key Challenge

Spatial and temporal concentration of visitors.

Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Laws and regulations; Digital solutions.

Case Classification

Type of Destination | Urban

Territorial Level | < NUTS 3

Size of the Tourist Area | 102.4 km²
(3,514 km² Metropolitan area)

Population | 361,619 (984,386
Metropolitan area) in 2022

Type of Tourism | Cultural; City.

Tourism Organisation | Multilevel
management of tourism (Municipality,
Metropolitan City, Region)

Main Stakeholders Affected | Local
residents; Tourists; ALL tourism service
providers; Local businesses.

Additional Challenges Covered |
Deterioration and congestion of
infrastructure; Insufficient or declining
tourism acceptance; Displacement and
marginalisation of the local population;
Measurement and monitoring of
sustainable tourism.

Context & Background

Tourism is one of Florence's main economic sectors. More than 20% of all employees in the Tuscany region were employed in the tourism sector (2019). Florence, known for its rich cultural heritage, recorded stable growth in tourism. Seasonally well-distributed arrivals in 2023 amounted to almost 3.93 million (around 5.3 million in the metropolitan area) and overnight stays to around 8.9 million (just under 12.75 million in the metropolitan area).

Key Challenge

The concentration of millions of visitors per year in the 5 km² UNESCO World Heritage Site of Florence has led to a gradual deterioration of the social and infrastructural structure of the centre. Many residents have left the centre because they can no longer adequately provide everyday services. Visitors are also no longer able to have an authentic experience during their stay and the attractions are constantly overbooked.

Implementation of Solutions: The aim is to reduce visitor pressure on the centre while distributing visitor numbers across the town and surrounding villages to ensure more balanced tourism flows and thus a better visitor experience.

SOLUTIONS

- *Multi-level territorial and cross-sectoral tourism management* coordinated by a *Steering Board*, to manage tourism more effectively. This Steering Board is composed by the DMO, Chamber of Commerce, the University, the Municipalities, tourism companies and other commercial partners, and meets monthly to develop common strategies, regulations and tools for tourism management (homepages, applications, data analysis).
- *The Urban Mobility Plan (UMP)* ensures comprehensive intelligent mobility. Among other things, the transit points for coaches were linked to trams, railways, motorways and the associated parking areas, and the number of electric buses and the network of cycle paths were expanded.
- In June 2024, the [#EnjoyRespectFirenze campaign](#) was launched to promote the use and enhancement of the UNESCO area and to convey to visitors how enjoyable and yet fragile the urban ecosystem is. In addition, travel guides, such as the “Lonely Planet”, were influenced to include lesser known but equally worth seeing places in the travel guide.
- An [interactive website](#) has been created, also compatible with other institutional systems (regional, national), containing over 2,000 georeferenced points of interest that present many of the lesser-known places and attractions throughout the metropolitan area, with Florence as the starting point. The “[FeelFlorence](#)” mobile application monitors crowds in real time and offers personalised alternative suggestions and tips, creating user profiles to better respond to users' needs (article selection and nudges).
- The [Smart City Control Room](#) aggregates and shares data (e.g. from official statistics, internet, social media, credit cards, mobile phones) between the city administration, public utilities and public service providers on a common data platform. Knowing the characteristics of visitors makes it possible to make tailor-made suggestions for activities implemented by the “Feel Florence” application.
- *Management of opening hours* through, for example, extended opening hours including “night opening hours” (e.g. [Uffizi](#)) or coordination of opening hours between attractions.
- To preserve the city's character, a new *regulation of the municipality* was introduced to discourage uncontrolled commercial development and to incentivize the coordinated opening of new food and beverage stores.

Replicability potential: High (requires strong political will and stakeholder collaboration).

Cost & funding source: The financial resources come from both national grants (e.g. PON Metro) and the municipal budget. Costs also arise from the personnel involved in the activities, who belong to both the municipality and private organizations.

Success Factors & Barriers Regarding the Implementation

Success Factors: Continuous and efficient cooperation of all relevant stakeholders at different territorial levels; Continuous monitoring and analysis of data as a basis for decision-making.

Barriers: The different layers and levels of administrative responsibility, which require extensive cooperation, coordination and communication.

Results and Impacts

- Increase in the total number of visits to www.feelflorence.it (+53% from June 2023 to June 2024).
- Increase in downloads of the FeelFlorence app (+7,000 in 2024 compared to 2023).
- After the activation of the FeelFlorence Pass system in June 2024, there were more than 1 million new Wi-Fi connections in the city.

Takeaways

- Maintaining the quality of life and uniqueness of the city is crucial for residents and tourists.
- To maintain the city's attractiveness as a tourist destination, it must be managed sustainably to preserve its own life and unique character.
- Networking and co-operation between the different levels and sectors are crucial for the successful implementation of measures and actions.
- Discussion and understanding of monitoring results among all stakeholders is important for decision-making.

Useful Links

- [Destination Florence](#) | Comune di Firenze
- [Smart City Portrait Florence](#) | Be smart city

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