

# **Preliminary Architectural Study Trip for the Olbia Workshop Florence & Siena Edition 2025.8/28~2025.8/30**

## **Introduction**

We participated in a workshop held on the island of Sardinia, Italy, in September 2025. Starting one week before the workshop, we conducted an architectural study trip. The group consisted of six students, two faculty members, and one tutor, and we visited three cities: Rome, Florence, and Siena. Guided by Professor Hori, a specialist in architectural history, and Professor Aitani, who is highly knowledgeable about international architecture, we were able to learn a great deal.

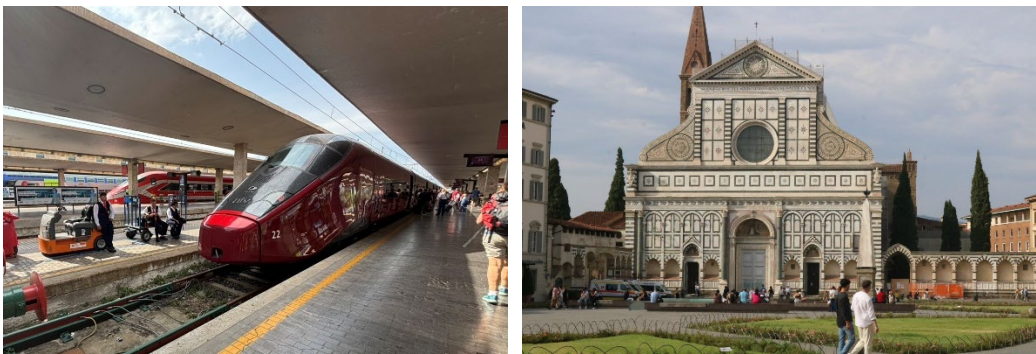
### **<Table of Contents>**

- 1. Overview of the Architectural Study Trip**
- 2. Hotels We Stayed At**
- 3. Day 1 — Florence City Center**
- 4. Day 2 — Siena City Center**
- 5. Special Section — Cuisine in Florence**
- 6. Conclusion**

# 1. Overview of the Architectural Study Trip

After completing a three-day architectural study trip in Rome, we traveled on August 28 from Rome's central terminal station to Florence by the high-speed train Italo. Upon arrival, we checked into Hotel Roma Firenze and began exploring the city center of Florence.

On the morning of August 29, we conducted architectural site visits in Florence. In the afternoon, we took a bus to the nearby town of Siena, where we walked around and explored the historic city center.



# 2. Hotels We Stayed At

We stayed at a hotel called Hotel Roma, a chain hotel mainly operating throughout Europe. The hotel faced the square in front of the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella, an area bustling with tourists and locals from morning until night. The square was filled with street musicians, children playing with balls, and vendors selling various goods—creating an atmosphere quite unlike anything in Japan.

Breakfast was served buffet-style, and every morning we enjoyed more than ten varieties of croissants along with Mediterranean fruits!



### 3. Day 1 — Florence City Center

After arriving in Florence and checking into our hotel, we first visited the Florence Santa Maria Novella Station. Firenze Santa Maria Novella, completed in 1935, is considered a representative work of Italian Rationalist architecture and stands as a symbolic example of public architecture from the Fascist period.

The station was designed by Gruppo Toscano, a group of young architects led by Giovanni Michelucci, whose proposal was selected in a 1932 design competition.

What makes this station particularly notable is that, although it was built under Mussolini's Fascist regime, it continued to be highly valued even after the fall of the regime in 1943. The architectural intent and design quality of Gruppo Toscano were recognized as having significance beyond their political context, allowing the station to remain preserved and in use. While many examples of Fascist architecture received negative evaluations after the war, Santa Maria Novella Station has continued to be maintained due to its architectural purity and harmonious integration into the urban environment.



After crossing the square, we headed toward Ponte Vecchio. Ponte Vecchio, one of Florence's most iconic historical structures, is known as the oldest stone bridge spanning the Arno River. Its most distinctive feature is the row of shops built directly on the bridge. In the late 16th century, under the rule of the Medici family, goldsmiths and jewelers were installed on the bridge. As a result, the structure transformed into an elegant and vibrant commercial space—a tradition that continues to this day.



We then headed to the Florence Cathedral, the Cathedral di Santa Maria del Fiore, timing our visit to coincide with the sunset. After climbing the long staircase inside the double-shell dome, we were rewarded with an incredible panoramic view of the city.

The cathedral, often regarded as the origin of Renaissance architecture, was completed in 1436, 140 years after construction first began. Its most defining feature is the massive dome at the top, designed by Filippo Brunelleschi, a masterpiece that revolutionized architectural engineering of its time.





After dinner, we continued exploring the city at night. The atmosphere of the Ponte Vecchio felt completely different in the evening and after dark. Piazzale Michelangelo, which is usually crowded during the day, was much quieter at night, creating a refreshing and serene atmosphere. We even rode the carousel there.



## 4. Day 2 — Florence & Siena City Center

On our second day in Florence, we headed early in the morning to the Laurentian Library (Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana), which is attached to the Basilica of San Lorenzo. The library was designed by Michelangelo Buonarroti, who is known as the successor to Filippo Brunelleschi and a master of the Renaissance period. The staircase at the library's entrance is particularly iconic, and we all took some cool photos there. Upon leaving the library, we noticed a single white wall directly in front of the exit. It is said that this wall was intentionally placed to prompt visitors to reflect on what they had learned inside the library. I felt that this design demonstrates how architecture can transcend mere function or decoration and evoke a deeper, more spiritual experience.



After leaving the library, we passed through Piazza della Signoria and headed to the Basilica of Santo Spirito. Piazza della Signoria is a historic square that has long served as the political and civic center of Florence. Formed at the end of the 13th century, it is surrounded by important buildings from the time of the Florentine Republic, including the Palazzo Vecchio—now used as Florence’s city hall—and the Uffizi Gallery. This square has historically functioned as a place where urban power structures and artistic spirit intersect, forming the core of Florence’s political and cultural life. With Professor Hori’s explanations, we were able to learn many details that simply visiting the site would not have revealed!



Next, we visited the Basilica of Santo Spirito, which left a strong impression with its textured, uneven façade. Designed by Filippo Brunelleschi in the mid-15th century, the church is characterized by its Latin cross-shaped floor plan. In contrast to the simplicity of its exterior, the interior contains forty semicircular chapels arranged symmetrically around the main nave, creating a harmonious and balanced spatial composition.



After lunch, we took a bus and traveled for about an hour to Siena. Our first stop in Siena was Piazza del Campo. The name “Campo” means

“field” in Italian, referring to the fact that this area was once a pasture before being developed as the city’s center. Known as “the world’s most beautiful square,” it was a lively and pleasant space filled with people. The square has a distinctive shell-shaped, fan-like layout that gently slopes toward the Palazzo Pubblico, the city hall. This shape and slope naturally guide the gaze of those gathered in the square toward the palace’s façade, emphasizing the presence of the city’s governing institution. Compared to Rome, Siena features many buildings with simple façades and public spaces, allowing us to enjoy a completely different urban atmosphere.



## 5. Special Section — Cuisine

As a special section, I would like to introduce some of the delicious food we ate in Florence and Siena!

Apart from the breakfast buffet, we had the freedom to choose our meals, so each student explored the city to find dishes they wanted to try, and we ended up enjoying a wide variety of Italian cuisine.

Personally, the most memorable and delicious dish was the bone-in meat I had in Florence! There were many options for cooking style and seasoning, making it a completely new and exciting experience for me.



## 6. Conclusion

The architectural study trip to Florence and Siena was an extremely valuable and stimulating experience. During the trip, we often had time to explore on our own, and the freedom to move around Europe independently felt very refreshing. There were many moments when we struggled with transportation or could not understand Italian, but we managed to overcome these challenges by asking for directions in English and communicating through gestures, ultimately reaching our destinations. Exhausted from thoroughly enjoying the one-week study trip, we then headed to Sardinia—a memory that still makes me smile. Overall, it was a fulfilling journey filled with laughter and unforgettable experiences!