Lesson Four: Zoom in on Italy
Factsheet on Florence

Name in Italian: Firenze
Region located in: Tuscany
Population: 450,000

Historical background

Florence began to grow as a city during the Roman Empire. The Romans were curious about Florence as it lies on the River Arno, therefore allowing trade to improve. Florence developed quickly as a city because of the river, but also because the road links also made trade simpler between Italian cities. Italy has a very famous religious history and lots of decisions about how the church should be run were made in Florence. Leonardo Da Vinci, Michelangelo and Dante all spent many years in Florence and have played an important part in the city's development. Florence was the capital city of Italy for five years, beginning in 1865.

Most famous tourist sights

Florence is one of the most visited cities in the world. People come to Florence to see the famous Piazzas (squares) and the architecture. However, thousands of people visit Florence every year for art. The Uffizi Gallery is very popular. There is a famous viewpoint in Florence which can be seen from Piazza Michelangelo by crossing the famous Old Bridge (Ponte Vecchio). One of the most visited sites is the Medici Chapel.

City economics

Florence relies on tourism to boost its economy. However, Florence is located in Tuscany – one of the most famous regions of Italy. It has many special dishes and drinks which people come to Florence to try. One dish is the Florentine Steak served with Tuscan bread. Florence has one of Italy's strongest economies and has many factories which produce textiles for some of the most famous designers in Milan. The economy of Florence also depends on chemistry, metalwork, glass, ceramics and special jewellery made in a Florentine way.

Other information

There are many dialects within the Italian regions, however it is said that to hear the most accurate Italian, you must study in Florence. Most Italians will agree this is where the Italian language developed.