

Did you know that Florence used to be surrounded by high defensive walls?

Built over the centuries to defend the city, following its various expansions and contractions. Today, just a small portion of the last walls remains (the southern part, in the Oltrarno area), but fortunately the doors and a few towers still exist. Here is the list of the doors that can be seen in town (clockwise, starting from the north) and a few tips about where to spot the “invisible” ones!



A PORTA SAN GALLO

The door is located in the south part of the busy **Piazza della Libertà** (Freedom Square); facing another huge monument, the Arch of Triumph. The construction of the door began in 1285, as shown by an inscription, and the keys are today conserved in the Florence Historical and Topographical Museum (which is currently closed).

B PORTA ALLA CROCE

This monumental gate of 1284 (perhaps designed by Arnolfo di Cambio) is now in the middle of **Piazza Beccaria**. The name comes from the cross that was once in this area, indicating the place where, according to tradition, San Miniato, the first martyr of Florence, was beheaded. The door used to be higher but, like almost all the other gates and towers in the city, was lowered during the siege of 1529-1530, to make it less vulnerable to gunfire.

C TORRE DELLA ZECCA

This was the tower that used to “close” the eastern part of the walls. In the sixteenth century, **it was lowered, like the other doors**. It used to be connected to a series of buildings, among these was the *Zecca fiorentina* – the Florentine Mint – where the city’s “golden florins” were coined (the three floors of the tower are expected to house the Museum of the Florin in the future). To the Torre della Zecca is also linked the dream of the Florentines to someday pass under the Arno! In fact, a few narrow corridors start from the underground floors of the tower and one of them (now flooded) is said to pass under the river; to the other side of the city.

📍 *Lungarno della Zecca Vecchia*

D PORTA SAN NICCOLO'

It was the door/tower from which the southern part of the city walls began; it was built in 1324, during the work for the last set of walls, and it's one of the most beautiful and best preserved (and recently restored) doors in town. Unlike the others, it was not lowered in the sixteenth century and thus is the only door that retains its **original height** (however, the battlements were added in the nineteenth century). 📍 *Piazza Giuseppe Poggi (Lungarno B. Cellini)*

E PORTA SAN MINIATO

This door of the 1320 is inserted in one of the few well-preserved sections of the wall and this gives it considerable charm. It has a completely different structure from that of the other doors, lacking the tower. The wooden door is a recent copy of the original one.

📍 *Via San Miniato - Via del Monte alle Croci*

F PORTA SAN GIORGIO

A small door from 1324 (lowered in the sixteenth century, following the suggestion of Michelangelo, who was at the time in charge of fortifications) in one of the most beautiful, greenest and lesser known parts of Florence. The door has a bas-relief of the fourteenth century in the lunette of *St. George slaying the dragon* by Andrea da Pontedera (it's a copy; the original is located in Palazzo Vecchio) – and a *Madonna and Child with Sts Leonardo and George* by Bicci di Lorenzo, on the inside.

📍 *Via San Miniato - Via del Monte alle Croci*

G PORTA ROMANA

Built in 1326, it was an important point of access to the city as it still is today. The **two large wooden doors are originals**.

📍 *Piazzale di Porta Romana*

H PORTA SAN FREDIANO

The door was part of the sixth set of walls of the city and was built between 1332 and 1334 based on a design, attributed to Andrea Pisano. It was probably the most majestic door, but was lowered in the sixteenth century, like the others. Among all the doors, this is the one in which the **original wooden door**, including the bolts, is best preserved. On the outer wall, the iron rings to tie the horses are those of the time. Above the arch, on the side facing the city, you can see the crest of Florence.

📍 *Borgo San Frediano - Via Pisana*

I * HIDDEN DOOR

TORRINO DI SANTA ROSA

It marks the point where the fourteenth-century walls stopped, continuing ideally in the river. It was also known as the “Torre della Saggina” (Tower of Garbage): in this area, outside the walls, garbage and carcasses of dead animals were abandoned.

📍 *Lungarno Soderini - Lungarno di Santa Rosa*

J TORRE DELLA SERPE

A few meters from Porta a Prato, is a tower that was built on the spot where the walls formed a corner, guarding a small door used by the military to access the walkway. The “Serpe” (serpent) was a famous head-guard.

📍 *Viale Fratelli Rosselli*

K PORTA AL PRATO

It is now basically converted into a traffic-island and yet is one **of the oldest doors** of the city among those still remaining (1285, with subsequent lowering, of course). The name is derived from that of the forecourt, once called "Il Prato" (The Field), because it was not paved and was used for the cattle market.

📍 Viale Fratelli Rosselli - Piazzale di Porta al Prato

L PORTA A FAENZA

A fourteenth-century door that can be identified by looking the **Fortezza da Basso** from the outside (it was incorporated in the fortress during the first half of the sixteenth century).

★ Finally, the most hidden of all:

if walking along Via del Proconsolo (between the Duomo and Piazza San Firenze) you note a circle "drawn" in the road: stop! You are in front of one of the circular towers of the very first defensive walls of Florence (15-30 BC): under the circle are, in fact, the foundations of the tower, which were recovered during road works and then covered up again.



Doors of Florence MAP

