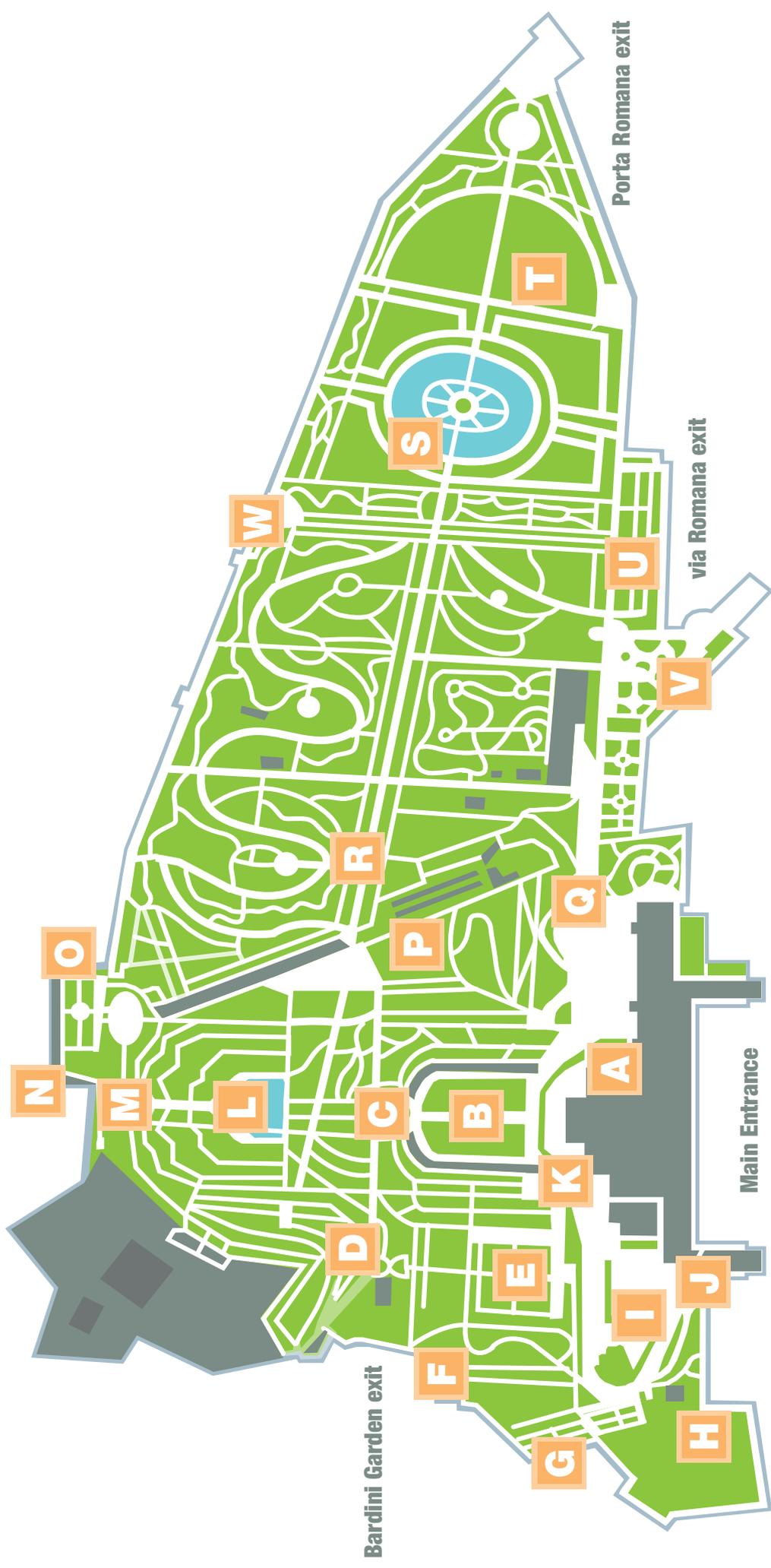


# The Boboli Gardens



# Boboli Gardens Tour

A Florencewebguide tour of one of the most beautiful gardens in Florence

*Explore the woodsy labyrinth of Boboli with this map and detailed explanations of the garden's highlights. Please note that the letters on the map serve as markers and do not indicated a consecutive route to follow. To give an indication of distances, walking at a leisurely pace from letter H to letter T takes about 20 minutes. Enjoy Boboli!*

A

## Pitti Palace (circa 1470)

Home of the Pitti family, then the Grand Dukes of Tuscany and King of Italy.

B

## Obelisk and Basin at the center of Amphitheater

The Egyptian obelisk is dated 1500 BC. It was brought to Rome from Egypt in approx. 70 AD and from Rome to Florence in the Boboli gardens under Pietro Leopold, Grand Duke, in 1790.

The granite basin was added in 1840. The basin goes back to ancient Rome circa 200 AD where it used to be part of a thermal bath complex.

The amphitheatre is located where the hills of Boboli used to be. The stone to construct Pitti Palace was dug out of this hill and the hole which was left was turned into this horse-shoe shaped amphitheatre during the building of the palace.

C

## Original ancient Roman statues dated circa 200 AD

With the amphitheatre to your back: on left, Septimius Severus (a Roman emperor); in center, Roman magistrate; on right, Demetria (the Greek goddess of the harvest and fertility).

D

## Coffeehouse (Kaffeehaus)

Built circa 1780 on order of Pietro Leopoldo, the Coffeehouse is a pavilion in Rococo style with a glass-windowed dome flanked by terraces. Social coffee drinking (as well as the drinking of hot chocolate) was something new in the mid-1700s and the Grand Duke had the Coffeehouse built to take part in this new trend.

E

## Ganimede lawn and fountain

The sloping lawn in front of the coffee house is named after Ganimede, a figure from Greek mythology. At the center of the second part of the lawns is a fountain and statue of Ganimede, the beautiful Greek boy, with an eagle.

F

## Small Goats Grotto (circa 1570)

A small grotto decorated with stalactites which includes a marble basin and depictions of goats (animals considered regal and a symbol of virility). This grotto was the forerunner of the much more famous and larger Grotta del Buontalenti and was, in fact, also designed by Buontalenti in honor of Joan of Austria, Francesco I de Medici's wife.

**G****The Gardens of Madama and Jupiter**

Two small gardens of flower beds surrounded by geometrically cut hedges. On the left is the Jupiter garden with a statue of Jupiter (Giove) by Baccio Bandinelli (1556).

**H****Grotta del Buontalenti (circa 1590)**

Built on order of Francesco I de Medici by Bernardo Buontalenti. Michelangelo's four original unfinished 'Prisoners' sculptures were initially placed here until 1924 when they were transferred to the Accademia.

Two columns mark the entrance of the grotta and on the side of each column is a niche with two statues by Bandinelli, Cerere and Apollo. At the center of the upper-façade the very famous Medici coat-of-arms can be seen.

The grotto is impressive due to its mix of artistic forms: architectural, sculpting and painting.

Originally the cave had impressive water-work displays (which are no longer in function today) and has several examples of statues, bas-reliefs and frescoes by first-rate artists (Michelangelo, Bandinelli, Vasari (who had begun the original design), Giambologna).

Grottos were an important part of Italian gardens in the 16th century. The aim was to recreate the semblances of a real cave using constructed stalagmites and stalactites, images of animals and wall murals to replicate the sky and nature, and water-works to resemble the dampness of a real cave. The Buontalenti Grotta is a prime example of this fashion.

**I****Daci Prisoners statues (2nd century AD) brought from Rome to Boboli**

Two very large statues which are peculiar due to their dark body and white faces. The Daci population were taken over by the Romans (circa 100 AD) and these statues show 2 prisoners (note their hands in a position of surrender). The 'Prisoners' were sculpted in red porphyry and white marble.

**J****The Bacchino fountain (1560)**

This fountain is located next to one of the garden's exits (onto Piazza Pitti). It is a sculpture of a fat dwarf named Morgante sitting on a turtle. Morgante was part of the court of Cosimo I de Medici and was supposedly Cosimo's favourite dwarf. The name 'Bacchino' comes from Bacchus, the Greek god of wine, and Morgante is depicted as a tipsy midget.

**K****Bookshop – sells books, gifts, souvenirs****L****Neptune fountain**

At the center of the pond is a statue of Neptune, the god of the sea, by Stoldo Lorenzi which goes back to 1570, whereas the fountain was built for Boboli much later (circa 1775).

**M****Abundance statue**

Giambologna started this statue in 1608 but it was sculpted – for the most part - by Pietro Tacca in 1636. It is said to resemble Joan of Austria, Francesco I de Medici's wife who died quite young in an accident at home. The sculpture is white marble except for the stalk of wheat in the woman's hand which is in bronze.

**N****Porcelain museum**

The small building called the 'Casino del Cavaliere' was built for Cosimo III de Medici (circa 1700) and was used for literary and cultural meetings and discussions. As of 1973 it has been used to house the Porcelain museum which displays the porcelain collections of the past residents of the Pitti Palace.

**O****The Cavaliere garden**

To get to the garden you have to go up a charming spiral staircase which leads onto a lovely terrace overlooking Boboli. This mini-garden within the Boboli gardens is another example of low hedges geometrically arranged which enclose flower beds

(roses and dahlias) which bloom in May and June. At the center of the garden is a fountain with a cherub. This is the 'Fountain of the Monkeys' named after the bronze monkeys set at the fountain's base.

## P

### The Uccellare (bird catching) Lawn

This wide open lawn area has several scattered oak and cypress trees and a broken column in the middle. This is where you can see one of the only contemporary sculptures found in Boboli: an impressive Bronze head by Igor Mitoraj, a Polish artist. This piece remained in Boboli after an exhibit of the artist's was held in the gardens in 2002.

## Q

### Pegasus lawn

A steep sloping lawn with a large granite basin at the bottom and marble statues, including a sculpture of Pegasus. Pegasus is the symbol of the region of Tuscany. This sculpture of the winged horse was made by Aristodemo Costoli in 1865.

## R

### Cypress Lane

A very peaceful sloping path flanked by lines of Cypress trees and many statues leading to the Isolotto. On the right and left of the pathway are several side paths leading to labyrinth-like gardens and botanical areas. Many of these however are often roped off as they are undergoing upkeep and may not be safe for exploring.

## S

### Isolotto (little island)

A large pond surrounded by an elegant plaza. The circular plaza has two walkways taking you over the water basin to the small island in the middle with Giambologna's sculpture, 'Fountain of the Ocean' (circa 1576). Although there is no access to the public to actually walk over these footpaths leading to the center, it is however very impressive to admire the beauty of this arrangement. Each passageway is closed off by a two-columned gate

with Capricorns on top (as in the 'Goats Grotto', an animal symbolizing strength and chosen by the Grand Duke).

## T

### Lawn of Columns

A semi-circular lawn divided into two halves, each with a column of red Egyptian granite in the middle. Part of the lawn is surrounded by tall Platano trees and several marble busts including one of a helmeted Jupiter from Roman times.

## U

### Lemon House

It was fashionable during Medici times to adorn gardens with citrus fruit trees. The climate in Florence however was not suitable for these plants to survive through the winter. The solution was to plant the trees in large terra cotta vases which could then be moved inside – to buildings coined 'lemon houses' - for warmth in the winter. The stucco bas-relief over the main entrance to the building depicts the purpose of the building, with its representation of citrus plants.

## V

### Adam and Eve Grotto (1817)

A grotto with a two-columned entrance. The inside is decorated with mosaics and a fountain of Adam and Eve by Michelangelo Naccherino (1616).

## W

### Mostaccini Fountain

This fountain is a long succession of mask faces which used to squirt water as a way to attract birds for hunting. It goes back to about 1620.