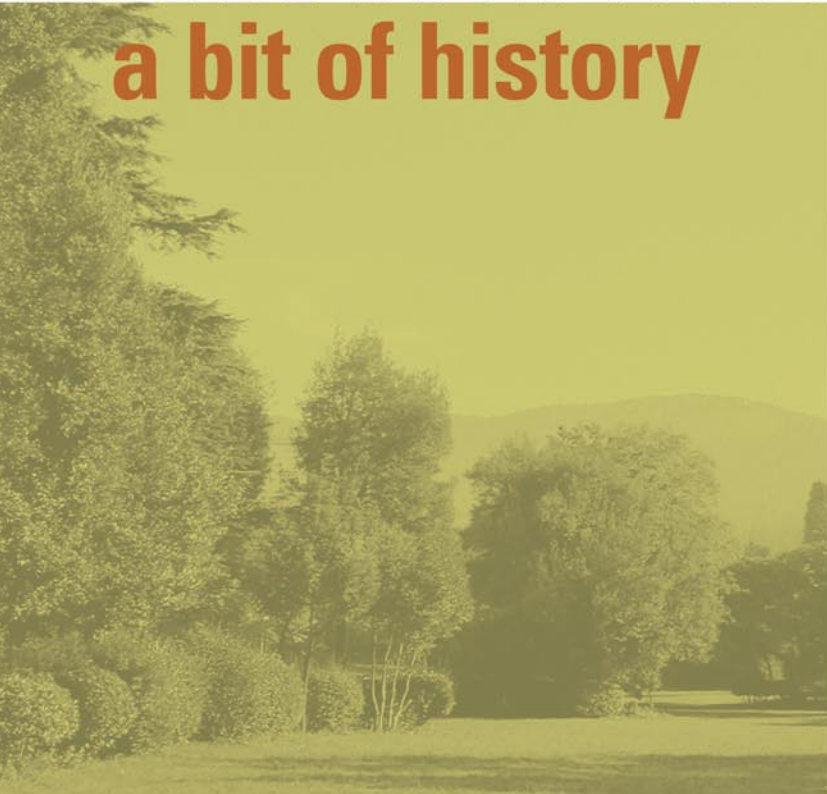




# Sesto Fiorentino

**a bit of history**



## SESTO FIORENTINO: A BIT OF HISTORY

It is not the first time the Comune of Sesto Fiorentino has promoted or printed an illustrated brochure that is also a guide to the city. It is not the first time that in publications of this kind the history of Sesto has been revisited. But in this occasion there is a very positive piece of news. In fact, for the first time, this little brochure has been made with the contribution and the collaboration of the Michigan - Duke - Wisconsin Study-Abroad Program, which for years has resided in our precinct and with which a fruitful collaboration, in recent times, has grown.

Not by chance did we consider an English-language brochure, created as a valuable aid and support, which we hope will be useful, not only for many American students who every year complete an important leg of their educational journey in Sesto Fiorentino, but also for all those who, in the increasingly-integrated panorama of the Florentine area, wish to familiarize themselves with and deepen their understanding of the life and history, the past and present of our community and of our city.

**Gianni Gianassi**

*Mayor, Sesto Fiorentino*

**Comune di Sesto Fiorentino**  
*Ufficio Staff del Sindaco*  
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In cooperation with



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The city of Sesto Fiorentino extends 49 km<sup>2</sup> and contains nearly 47,000 inhabitants. Northwest of metropolitan Florence, the city is situated in the Bisenzio lowlands closed to the north by the nearby Apennine Mountains, of which Monte Morello represents the highest peak at 3,110 ft. It is easily reachable the A1 and A11 highways and connected by rail lines to Florence and Prato in addition to the neighboring Amerigo Vespucci airport.

Its name is of medieval origin and derives from the distance from Florence to the city, placed at the “Sesto Miglio” or sixth mile along the Via Cassia. Archeological excavations tell us however that the territory has been inhabited for generations with depositions dating back to the Mesolithic, Neolithic through the Bronze and Iron Ages.

The Etruscans followed, establishing themselves in the area by draining and cultivating the lowlands, leaving us splendid tombs and other evidence of their presence. The first permanent settlements in Sesto proper were the work of Roman colonists (recently discovered in the remains of a villa), but in fact the true city center was consolidated



only in the Middle Ages with the construction of several churches in the area where the first groups of inhabitants would gather. In particular it was around the ancient Pieve di San Martino, dating back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century,

that a modest village formed, comprised of groups of scattered inhabitants, the primitive nucleus of the future city. Only once it had entered into the jurisdiction of the Florentine Republic





settlements and residents; in addition many patrician families built their country residences in the region and invested in creating or at least acquiring agricultural farms.

Predominately dedicated to agriculture, the city underwent a profound shift in its economic and social life when, in 1737, the Marquis Carlo Ginori inaugurated the Manifattura di Doccia porcelain factory. The factory evolved into an important ceramics industry, involving the large majority of Sesto residents and attracting others from elsewhere. In short, Sesto Fiorentino was rising to become one of the most important centers of ceramics in Europe as well as developing into truly a modern city, marked by this a profound boom of industrial activity.

From the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward Sesto, (which only

did Sesto enjoy steady development, after which it remained a feudal property for the rest of the Middle Ages. The Republic began reclamation efforts of the swamps and wetland areas that stimulated a progressive increase in the number of

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[1] Palazzo Comunale

[2] Palazzo Pretorio

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[3] A view of Sesto Fiorentino

[4] Vittorio Veneto Square

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[5] Park of Villa Solaria

[6] Pieve di San Martino



in 1869 began to add the qualifying “Fiorentino” to its name) distinguished itself with a great social uprising that gave life to the Society of Mutual Aid, Cooperation, Cultural Association and Recreation. The Society instilled in its citizenry a strong social and civil conscience, still strong today, that ushered in 1899 the first socialist mayor of Tuscany, Pilade Biondi. At the end of the Second World War, during the Resistance, the hillsides around Sesto were hiding places and centers of activity for partisan fighters. Sesto paid a heavy blood tribute for the Liberation cause.

In the years following the war, the region was involved in a spirited social rebirth, characterized by rapid urban and economic expansion. Between 1961 ad 1981, Sesto Fiorentino had become one of the principle emigration destinations from Florence and also one of the most dynamic communities in the Florentine area. Despite consistent development, at first artisanal and industrial and now increasingly in the service industry, Sesto has never forgotten its green roots and bears a deep respect for preservation of the wetland of the plains to



the hills of Monte Morello.

Sesto’s recent expansion, combined with that of other neighboring cities, has enabled the establishment of a broader and more unified urban and economic setting. And over the course of the years the ties that bind Sesto Fiorentino and Florence have become ever stronger, both by solidarity as neighboring communities and by increasingly similar cultural identity.





# THE ETRUSCAN TOMBS

## La Mula and La Montagnola

Of recent archeological findings, the most suggestive and fascinating were constructed from Sesto's Etruscan tombs: La Mula and La Montagnola.

Fashioned like the great Greek Tombs at Tholos, a plagiarism typical to the northern Etruscan nation, and dating back to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C., archeologists discovered in these tombs adornments in glass, ivory, bronze as well as gold and silver foil.

In particular the Tomb of La Montagnola, discovered in 1959, provides us with one of the most important Etruscan architectural monuments, not only for its structural characteristics but also for its excellent state of preservation.

### Addresses:

La Tomba della Montagnola  
Via Fratelli Rosselli, 35  
*Currently undergoing restoration.*

La Tomba della Mula  
Via della Mula, 2  
*Situated within a private residence, the tomb is visitable only through arrangement with the current owners.*

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[7] The Etruscan tomb  
La Montagnola

[8] A view of Sesto Fiorentino  
(near archaeological site of La  
Mula and La Montagnola)

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[9, 10] The Museum of Doccia  
[11] Casa del Guidi (Museum  
of the Peasant Culture)



# THE MUSEUMS

## Il Museo e la Manifattura di Doccia

The porcelain factory and museum. The Museo di Doccia retells the Manifattura's historic production of majolica and porcelain.

The museum possesses nearly 7,000 works displayed in chronological order beginning with the first pioneer efforts in the 18th century and finishing with a hall dedicated to the works created between 1923 and 1930, when the architect Gio Ponti was the artistic director of the Manifattura.

### Address:

Viale Pratese, 31 (tel. 055 4207767)

*For more information:*

[www.museodidoccia.it](http://www.museodidoccia.it)

## Il Museo della Civiltà Contadina

The Museum of the Peasant Culture. An Ethnographic collection boasting 370 objects originating from the region of Sesto Fiorentino that traces peasant culture and the use of textiles in domestic practice.

### Address:

Via Veronelli, 2 (tel. 055 446071)

**You can visit Sesto Fiorentino, also starting from Florence, through a tourist itinerary called Firenze City Sightseeing. More information at:**

[www.firenze.city-sightseeing.it](http://www.firenze.city-sightseeing.it)



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## THE VILLAS

The Villas described here are all private, except for San Lorenzo al Prato. The visit is possible only during special events, advertised by flyers. A visit outside of these occasions must be arranged directly with the owner.

### Villa Guicciardini Corsi Salviati

The Villa Guicciardini Corsi Salviati represents one of the most interesting examples of Florentine Architecture of the 18th century. Constructed in the 1400's and intended as a noble country residence, the villa has undergone a long series of restorations reflecting the tastes and styles of various epochs.

The villa contains several famous frescoes and pieces of furniture, but the crown jewels are its gardens, with flower beds, woodlands, water basins, fountains and large greenhouses conserving collections of botanical treasures. Still the property of Count Guicciardini, the villa is currently the home of a program of international study facilitated by the University of Michigan, while the limonaia of the villa hosts the Teatro della Limonaia, a theatre known for its innovative and experimental programming.

**Address:** Via Gramsci, 456

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[12] The garden of Villa Guicciardini Corsi Salviati

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[13] Chiesa di San Romolo a Colonnata



## Villa Ginori

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Placed beneath the hills of Monte Morello, the Villa Ginori was constructed in the 13th century but wasn't acquired by the Ginori family until 1525, which they expanded and furnished with a large park. The importance of the building derives, however, from the construction of the Manifattura di Doccia, founded by Carlo Ginori in 1737, that led to the development of a true industrial infrastructure until after the Second World War when the factory was moved away from the villa to its own site. The area of the old factory transformed itself into a modern residential complex, amidst which survived the spectacular 16th century villa that in stages was restored and designated to host city's new public library.

**Address:**

Via delle Porcellane, Via della Fabbrica

## Villa Paolina

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The villa owes its name to Paolina Bonaparte, in honor of her husband, Camillo Borghese who partially restored it in 1820 in a neo-classical style. Today it is still fully furnished with Imperial style furniture, canopied beds, antique French wallpaper and well-preserved library rich with precious artistic objects. The distinguishing characteristic of the building is its iron cable wire, supported by a steel cord and suspended above the street, that connects the villa to the park located in the hills above.

**Addresses:** Via di Castello, 104

## Villa San Lorenzo al Prato

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The Villa San Lorenzo al Prato is by far one of the most evident traces of Medieval

architecture in the area. The remains of a good six towers, together with a small church and the villa itself comprised an important defensive complex dating back to the 12th century. It seems that the towers were dismantled by the Ghibelline faction after the victory of Montaperti. The heart of the complex, including the largest remaining tower, was gradually restored and now boasts a central courtyard and loggia dating to the 15 century.

**Address:** Via Scardassieri, 47 (*please contact the Civic Centre: 055 4217477 to visit*)

## Villa Stanley

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Despite arguments about its early origins, the villa's founding is generally agreed to date back to the 16th century. The residence, with its grand gardens, swimming pool, horse grounds and surrounding park, were the property of an important Florentine family and later of the Russian count, Muravieff. At present it is used as a hotel.

**Address:** Viale XX Settembre, 200

## Villa Gerini

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Situated beneath the Villa Ginori, it is characterized by a turret with Medieval origins and moreover by a beautiful park complete with a pond. During the Second World War the Villa was the site of a great tragedy, still commemorated today. A teacher and the twenty-three children of a kindergarten class, (the so-called "Little College) sheltered within the villa were all killed during a bombardment.

**Address:** Via XX Settembre, 259

## Villa Solaria

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With ancient origins, the Villa Solaria belonged to several important families, the Torrighiani to name one. It has been completely restored and today is occupied by a Senior Health Center. Its large ring-shaped park is open to the public.

**Address:** Via della Mula, Via degli Strozzi

## Villa Villoresi

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At one time known as the Villa La Tosa. In the 12th century it was a fortress that in the Renaissance came to be transformed into a country residence. Recognized as a national monument, the villa features the longest loggia in Tuscany, which faces a Medieval courtyard and is circled by an Italian garden. Today a restaurant and hotel, its rooms are still embellished by decorations and frescoes.

**Address:** Via delle Torri, 63

## Villa La Mula

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In Villa La Mula we find Medieval construction and a preserved, crenellated tower from the 11th century. The hill on which it presides is in reality an archeological site, where in the last century a precious Etruscan tomb was uncovered and named precisely 'della Mula' for the statue of a female mule found inside. In 1906 the building was declared a national monument.

**Address:** Via della Mula, 2

## Villa di Carmignanello

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Conceived as a summer monastery for the Dominican friars of Santa Maira Novella, the Villa of Carmignanello is the work of an important Florentine architect of the 17th century, Matteo Rigetti, who gave life to

this at once both harmonious and imposing complex. Confiscated from the religious order during the French occupation, it was acquired in 1860 by the Ginoris, who transformed it into a summer home and connected it with the Doccia, the porcelain factory, by means of a street lined with Cypress trees. The monastery's chapel became the private crypt of the Ginori family where they laid precious funerary monuments made in porcelain.

**Address:** Quinto Alto, Castellina Area

## Palazzo Pretorio

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Standing in Piazza Ginori you find yourself facing Palazzo Pretorio, a Medieval building that as of the 1400's was the local seat of the Florentine Republic. Still visible on its façade are the coats of arms of the families that alternated in taking on the public administration. Even afterwards, during the Medici Grand Duchy, Palazzo Pretorio continued to be the seat of judicial authority and local administration, well into the second half of the 19th century, when the government was transferred to the newly constructed Palazzo Comunale.

**Address:** Via Gramsci, 332

## Palazzo Comunale

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Planned by the architect Moriani and inaugurated in 1871, the Palazzo Comunale is the most important architectural work completed in Sesto in the 19th century. The Pilade Biondi Hall, titled after the first socialist mayor in both the city and Tuscany elected in 1899, houses the Collezione Civica that gathers the paintings of several principle Sestese artists: Algero Cantini, Enzo Ceccherini, Piero Nincheri, Ennio Pozzi and Gino Pozzi.

**Address:** Piazza Vittorio Veneto, 1

# THE CHURCHES

## Pieve di San Martino

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With records back to the year 868 A.D., Pieve di San Martino remains the most important church in the area surrounding Sesto Fiorentino, where in its day it formed the original heart of the city. The classical Romanesque structure is complemented by a parsonage, an expansive courtyard and the Capella della Compagnia. The church owes its current condition to a series of restorations and transformations that have allowed the facade to preserve its original Romanesque traces. The church interior, divided into three principle naves, contains a precious cross painted by Agnolo Gaddi (1390), a Madonna with Child from the school of Lorenzo Ghiberti and other valuable frescoes.

**Address:** Piazza della Chiesa, 83 (tel. 055 4487374). **Opening hours:** everyday 6.00-12.00; 16.00-19.00. **Service times:** Mon-Fri: 7.00 and 18.00; Saturday 18.00; Sunday: 8.00, 9.30, 10.30, 12.00 and 18.00.

## Chiesa di San Romolo a Colonnata

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With ancient origins, the church still today maintains some sense of its primitive construction: legend has it that Saint Romulus celebrated his final mass here. Wealthy and noble families named him their patron, such that the church's facade is richly decorated with their family crests, head stones and other inscriptions. But the largest imprint on San Romolo was left by the Ginori family, who enriched the church with an elaborate porcelain altarpiece issued by the Manifattura di Doccia.

**Address:** Piazza San Romolo, 2 (tel. 055 4489618). **Opening hours:** everyday 7.00-12.00;



17.00-19.00 (except for Sundays). **Service times:** Mon-Fri: 7.15 and 18.15; Saturday 18.00; Sunday: 7.00, 8.30, 10.30 and 12.00.

## Pieve di Sant'Andrea a Cercina

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Amongst the oldest of all the Florentine diocese, (dating to 774 A.D.) the Church of Saint Andrew is a prime example of Tuscan, Romanesque architecture. Situated on the slopes facing the hills of Monte Morello, the church's structure has more or less retained its original structure; rich in works of art, the wooden icon of the Madonna with Child has for centuries been the object of devotion.

**Address:** Via Dante da Castiglione, 32 (tel. 055 402006). **Opening hours:** everyday 8.30 - 12.00; 14.30 - 19.00 (except for Mondays). **Service times:** only Sunday 11.30.

**Several other churches in the area boast a rich, clerical history.**

Hidden high up in the scenic, southern hills of Monte Morello is the Convent of Castellina, built by the Carmelite friars of Saint Clement in approximately 1500 and restored in 1644. Furthermore let us not forget the Monastery of Saint Dominic, which, occupying a 13th century villa built by the Tosa family, was finally purchased in 1930 from a religious order of Dominican nuns.



## OTHER PLACES OF INTEREST

### Monte Morello

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The vast northern expanse of Monte Morello forms a near circle overlooking nearly 1,700

hectares of woodland above Sesto Fiorentino. Densely covered by fir and pine trees typical to the hills and mountains of Tuscany, the fruits of reforestation efforts over the last century, hidden away in its forests Monte Morello still preserves remarkable testaments to its history: from the villas of noble Florentine families and the pioneer settlements of farmers that colonized the hills in centuries past through the war years the activities of the Resistance. Monte Morello is above all important for its environmental value that gives the metropolitan area its “green lungs” as they say in Italian. The hiking trails throughout Monte Morello are old as the first settlements and currently maintained by the Club Alpino Italiano (C.A.I.). The CAI publishes several pamphlets on the area including an official guide and trail map, in both of which you might find many itineraries for exploring and hiking.

**For further information:** Club Alpino Italiano (Sesto Fiorentino chapter)  
Via Veronelli, 1 - tel. 055 440339 - [www.caisesto.it](http://www.caisesto.it)

### Parco del Neto

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Created in 1852 in the city of Calenzano as a garden to complement the Villa Querci as per the wishes of the Marquis de Boissy, the Parco del Neto forms a rectangle of nearly seven hectares, preserving within a wetland environment of considerable natural value that once was a part of the larger system of basin swamps throughout the Florentine lowlands. Today it remains noteworthy for the presence of gigantic Taxodium cypress trees originally imported from Virginia.

**Address:** Comune di Calenzano, Via Vittorio Emanuele  
(Loc. Settimello) - tel. 055 8874515

### Parco della Piana

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The operation to create the Parco della Piana began in 1997 with space set aside for recreation areas, small forests, ponds and even a campsite. It is possible to visit the remaining wetland areas via a system of paths and boardwalks.



# UNIVERSITY

In March of 2001 a large educational complex, the Polo Scientifico, opened its campus to the benefit of Sesto Fiorentino and its neighbor communities. The campus functions as the seat of the Italian National Research Council, hosts numerous departments from Florence's Università degli Studi (such as Physics, Chemistry and Organic Chemistry) in addition to several laboratories of national significance (amongst them the Center of Magnetic Resonance and the European Laboratory of Non-Linear Spetroscopy) all of which confer high praise upon the institution in the field of scientific research and technology.

**For more information:** [www.polosci.unifi.it](http://www.polosci.unifi.it)

**Address:** Via delle Idee, 24 (055 4571)

# SPORT

Sesto Fiorentino boasts a long-standing passion for sport, fueled by a vast network of sporting societies, associations and agencies that work to encourage sporting activity and promote sports as an important instrument to develop social and team-working skills. As proof of its steady devotion to sports, Sesto contains nearly 60 teams, 40 sporting fields and a total number of over 12,000 participants.

## Sporting fields

### Baseball/Softball Stadium

Viale Togliatti, Via del Risorgimento  
**Comunal Bocci-Drome** Via Leopardi, 65

### "Doccia" Soccer Stadium

Viale XX Settembre, 240

### Danilo Innocenti Athletic Stadium

Via Gramsci, 715

### Community Swimming Pool

Piazza Bagnolet, 2

**Rugby Stadium** Via della Quercia, 37

**Torrini Stadium** Piazza Bagnolet, 1



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[ 14 ] Pieve di Sant'Andrea a Certina

[ 15 ] Parco del Neto

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[ 16 ] Florence's Università degli Studi, the Polo Scientifico

[ 17 ] The soccer match Italia vs. A.S. Sestese Calcio in Torrini Stadium (2006)





activities are joined by the diverse efforts of a number of prestigious cultural institutions in the area:

## Teatro della Limonaia

Occupying the former limonaia of the Villa Guicciardini Corsi Salviati, even if restricted by its cramped quarters, the Theatre makes striking use of its environment. Its standard repertoire leans towards the avant-garde and experimental. Thanks to the “Intercity Festival”, begun in 1988, the Teatro della Limonaia has lent a hand to make Sesto Fiorentino known even outside of Italy. Every year the festival dedicates a program to a different foreign city, hosting troupes of various directors and performers while translating and performing theatrical texts that originated from the city to which the festival is dedicated.

**Address:** Via Gramsci, 426  
tel. 055 440852

## Istituto De Martino

Founded in Milan in 1966 by Gianni Bosio in order to document, “the critical conscience and alternative presence of the popular world of the proletariat.” The institute landed in Sesto (at the Villa San Lorenzo) in 1989 at the invitation of the public administration after having been evicted from

## CULTURE

Sesto Fiorentino has been the birthplace of several noteworthy historical personalities, such as sculptor Pietro Bernini (1562-1629), the painter Pietro Salvestrini (1574-1631), the historian Ernesto Ragionieri (1926-1975) the poet Mario Luzi (1914-2005) and the musician Bruno Bartoletti (1926).

The cultural vitality of the city speaks to the active presence of cultural groups and organizations that offers a constant program of events, shows and exhibitions. Their

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[19] Villa Ginori, in restoration, designated to host city's new public library

its original home. Guided since 1996 by Ivan Della Mea, the Institute was expanded by an imposing flaghall (with over 6,000 flags), the fruit of a long collection from all over Italy and containing popular and socialist songs along with photographs, CDs, videos and other forms testifying to the power of popular Italian culture.

**Address:** Via Scardassieri, 47  
tel. 055 4211901

## Scuola di Musica

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Set up in the neighborhoods around Villa San Lorenzo, the Scuola di Musica of Sesto Fiorentino was first founded in 1980. For more than twenty years it has single-handedly formed a Sesto music culture and turned out countless musicians originating from all over Italy. Distinguished by the quality of both its teachers and students, the school is open to those interested in undertaking a rigorous classical study of music at a professional level but also to non-professionals that simply want to deepen their appreciation of music. The school actually contains nearly 400 students who often organize classical and jazz music shows around the Florence metropolitan area.

**Address:** Via Scardassieri, 47  
tel. 055 4200859

## Società per la Biblioteca Circolante

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Founded in 1869 in the wake of a rapid expansion of public library systems, the Società per la Biblioteca Circolante took upon itself to safeguard and encourage literary and educational appreciation in a society still burdened by the weight of

illiteracy. Still today it continues to carry out an important role in collaborating with the public library, organizing language courses, literary conferences, seminars and other cultural initiatives.

**Address:** Via Fratti, 1  
tel. 055 446768 - 055 4496343

## Cinema Multisala Grotta

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The Comune of Sesto Fiorentino initiative has collaborated since 1994 with the Cinema Multisala Grotta in managing the theater's film programming ([www.sestoidee.it/cultura/cinema.asp](http://www.sestoidee.it/cultura/cinema.asp)). Every year from January to April and from October to December the two institutions organize film retrospectives dedicated to directors, actors and cinematic genres. For the rest of the year the theater exhibits a regular program of popular and new releases, typically done in Italian fashion with Italian language dubbing.

**For more information  
and program schedules:**  
[www.grotta.it](http://www.grotta.it)  
**Address:**





## SERVICES AND USEFUL NUMBERS

### Comune di Sesto Fiorentino

Office of Public Relations: 055 4496235

Office of Municipal Police: 055 4496500

Office of Public Protection: 055 445772

### Post Offices

- Via Gramsci, 544 (*inside Esselunga Centro Commerciale*): 055 448521
- Via Alighieri, 44: 055 448221
- Piazza San Romolo, 35 (Colonnata): 055 442003
- Via dell'Olmo: 055 4214511
- Osmannoro branch: 055 300200

Further information about Sesto Fiorentino may be found on the city website at [www.comune.sesto-fiorentino.fi.it](http://www.comune.sesto-fiorentino.fi.it) and on [www.sestoidee.it](http://www.sestoidee.it)

