

## MUSEO NAZIONALE DEL BARGELLO

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Museo Nazionale del Bargello

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The Museo Nazionale del Bargello is the first National Museum of Italy situated since 1865 in the Palazzo del Podestà, one of the oldest buildings in Florence, begun in the mid-thirteenth century to host the *Podestà* and the *Capitano del Popolo*. In 1574 the palace was transformed into a jail, becoming the gloomy fortress where the “Bargello”, the “chief” of police imprisoned criminals and traitors. During 3 centuries the Palace was a prison, but in 1858 restorations begun, thanks to the discovery – on July 1840 - of the portrait of Dante Alighieri, the greatest Italian poet, painted by Giotto in the *Podestà*'s chapel. He is depicted in profile wearing his typical hat and long red robe, in a crowd of spectators looking at “Paradise”. In 1865 when the palace was ready to host the first Italian National Museum, with masterworks from the Medicean collections, later increased with bequest of famous private collections by Louis Carrand, Costantino Ressa and Giulio Franchetti.

The Bargello is today one of the most important museums of sculpture and decorative arts in the world, with Renaissance masterpieces by Brunelleschi, Donatello, Verrocchio, Desiderio da Settignano, Michelangelo, Della Robbia, Cellini, Giambologna; it also hosts wonderful collections of weapons, ivories, textiles, medals, seals, majolica and paintings. Since many years the Bargello stages international exhibitions, often in cooperation with other European and American museums.