

## EASTER IN FLORENCE

Florence celebrates Easter with a bang, literally. On Easter morning, Florence holds a traditional ceremony, the Scoppio del Carro or the Explosion of the Cart, in the Piazza del Duomo between Florence's cathedral and its Baptistery. The ceremony dates back over 350 years, and today the ceremony is celebrated in the way it has been celebrated for centuries.



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flowers, slowly pull the wagon from its warehouse through the streets of Florence into the square.

Once in place, a metal wire is stretched from the cart to the high altar in the cathedral, and a mechanical dove called "La Colombina" is set on the wire. It is a rocket shaped like a dove.



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Within the cathedral, the recital of the Mass begins. Starting around 10am, a priest rubs Pazzino's three flints together until they spark and light the Easter candle; this, in turn, is used to light some coals which are placed in a container on the Cart and the procession delivers the Holy Fire to the Archbishop of Florence before Santa Maria del Fiore, better known as the Duomo. From the cathedral's altar, at around 11 am, when the "Gloria" is sung inside the church, the Archbishop uses the fire to light the dove.



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The dove speeds toward the cart with a whistling sound. The dove suddenly hits the cart, lighting the fireworks and setting off a thrilling pyrotechnic display. The crowd cheers as cart spills over with colorful sparks and billowing smoke, while the square rings with the sound of popping fireworks. The Colombina then returns to the altar. According to tradition, if all of the fireworks go off and if the Colombina returns all the way back to the altar, good luck is ensured for a good harvest for this year as well as for the city and its citizens

### How the Tradition Started

This tradition finds its origins in events that are partly historic and partly legendary. A young Florentine named Pazzino, a member of the noble Pazzi family, apparently took part in the First Crusade in the Holy Land in 1099, where he gave ample proof of his courage. He was the first to scale the walls of Jerusalem and raise the Christian banner. When he returned to Florence, he brought back three flints from the Holy Sepulchre that he received for his act of courage. The three flints are today preserved in the Church of SS. Apostoli.

### References

- <https://www.visitflorence.com/florence-events/explosion-of-the-cart-easter.html>
- <https://www.visitflorence.com/florence-events/easter-sunday-and-monday-in-florence.html>

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