

GENTRY

HOME



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ITALIAN STYLE

In the heart of romantic Firenze—overlooking the Arno River and Ponte Vecchio, the Portrait Firenze hotel is the chic new address in the history-rich city.

BY DIANE DORRANS SAEKS

Firenze, celebrated home of the grand classical Uffizi Gallery (of Botticelli and Michelangelo fame) recently welcomed an art-filled newcomer, the ultra-private and elegant Portrait Firenze hotel. Modern in architectural silhouette and friendly in demeanor, the Portrait Firenze is a member of the Ferragamo family-owned Lungarno Collection of small luxury hotels. The Portrait Firenze, with its pale ochre-colored façade, is sited in the heart of Florence directly above the Arno River and the Santa Trinita bridge, for centuries known as the location of poet Dante Alighieri's fateful first meeting with Beatrice.

Hotel guests can watch graceful rowing crews gliding smoothly along the placid river. Late at night, from private terraces of the Penthouse suites, travelers may overhear the soft whispers of romantic couples strolling hand-in-hand along the narrow cobblestone streets and across the fabled Ponte Vecchio.

Portrait Firenze, with a comfortable lounge rather than a chilly lobby, has just a select 37 rooms and luxury suites over six levels, including a spectacular rooftop suite and the Penthouse level.

On arrival, guests are welcomed and signed in. The lounge of the Portrait, art-filled and furnished with pale grey armchairs in conversational groups, offers a taste of the style to come. Concierges are there to make bookings, help with directions or a reservation, and then guests are swept up to their accommodations. ➔



Overlooking the Arno from the Ferragamo family's Portrait Firenze Hotel—part of the Lungarno Collection of small luxury hotels.

Opening the door to a suite is very much like returning home. The Portrait Firenze sends guests a very detailed electronic questionnaire ahead of time—seeking information about ideal pillows, snacks, and chocolate favorites, as well as preference in mineral waters and other essentials. These requests are all perfectly in place on arrival. It's even possible to order room-service breakfast in advance, or book a massage long-distance.

Interior architecture and décor of the Portrait Firenze is by Michele Bonan, a Ferragamo friend based in Florence. The suites, most in soft tones of dove grey and white, feel modern and clean-lined, with curvy armchairs and a mid-century Italian feeling.

Suites have a walk-in wardrobe. Bathrooms are lavished with white Carrara marble. Bonan's artfully concealed cabinets open to reveal a kitchenette, a well-stocked bar, a coffeemaker, and all the ingredients for fresh tea or a snack. ➔



The interior design of the Portrait Hotel was done by Michele Bonan. He utilized a dove grey palette and opted for luxurious but restrained furnishings, which exude a richly sophisticated vibe.



The décor is airy and modern with a glance at Gio Ponti-inspired romantic gilded detailing. Bedrooms feel relaxed, crisp, and very fresh. Sitting rooms are spacious and chairs and sofas face the views.

Proprietors, the Ferragamo family, whose historic headquarters and museum are nearby, are a discreet and artistic presence. Thanks to the Ferragamo's rich cultural connections and archives dating back over six decades, private collections of fashion photography, style sketches, Italian art, and hand-crafted antique objects decorate the lobby, hallways and suites.

Guests, especially those who are traveling on business to a fashion or culinary event in Florence, can work at capacious desks in



their suites, or take an early dinner and watch a movie. And the hotel is a scenic five-minute walk to the Uffizi and minutes from the chicest shopping on Via Tornabuoni. Half a block away, the design galleries of Ferragamo, Gucci, Roberto Cavalli, Celine, Prada, and the new Hermès boutique make an excursion very compelling.

The Portrait's unfussy modernity includes tech amenities like high-speed wi-fi as well as super-discrete security.

Historic landmarks like Santa Croce, Santa Maria Novella, and the Duomo surround the hotel, but the rooms, hushed and enclosed, feel like a retreat, a world away. The front entrance to the Portrait is so discreet, it's like arriving at a private residence. Signage is almost invisible and guests disappear inside.

One day a concierge might recommend a 10-minute walk to Santa Trinita church, which opens in the late afternoon. The church interior includes a series of dazzlingly beautiful paintings

by Ghirlandaio with delicate detail and vivid colors. Here, in crowded Florence, it may be blissfully empty save for two elderly priests at a desk quietly arranging postcards.

The Portrait Hotel is also near the very atmospheric Cammillo trattoria, a locals' favorite since it opened in 1945, and known for its friendly atmosphere, ultra-fresh seafood, and white truffles in season.

In the early evening, guests may sip Chianti Classico on the hotel terrace and gaze down at blush pink sunset reflections shimmering on the Arno. The Ponte Vecchio is almost close enough to touch. For in-room entertainment there's also an ultra-flat screen TV, a Bluetooth system for listening to music and watching films, music and DVD libraries, and a stereo system.

In the morning, after a leisurely room service breakfast, it's hard to leave the suite. But the concierge has booked timed tickets to the Uffizi and lunch at Cammillo, and now those Botticelli paintings are waiting. portraitfirenze@lungarnocollection.com •

Bonani expertly mixed Mid-Century Modern pieces with contemporary ones in the guest rooms and public spaces and focused on state-of-the-art fixtures for the exquisite baths.