

# The Concierge

TIPS FOR TOURING HERE AND ABROAD

## An artful makeover in Florence

Hotel Lungarno has a prime location on the Arno River.

FRANCESCA PAGLIAI

The Hotel Lungarno's service is still over-the-top, and its look is still classic

BY DIANE BAIR AND PAMELA WRIGHT | GLOBE CORRESPONDENTS

**F**ollow the dogs! Without the dogs there are no truffles!" Luca Campinotto said as we romped through the woods, trailing his canine trackers. We were on a truffle hunt with Savini Tartufi, world renowned truffle hunters and suppliers. The excursion was arranged by the staff at the recently renovated Hotel Lungarno in Florence, Italy. After the hunt, we enjoyed a multi-course lunch, showcasing the highly sought-after white truffle.

Another day, the hotel concierge arranged a champagne tasting and private viewing at Fratelli Piccini, famous Florentine jewelers, dating back to the 16th century. A dinner on the jewelers' deck overlooking the Arno River could also be arranged, we were told. Private fashion house showings, behind-the-scenes museum tours, tickets to top events, after-hour entrances — you name it, and these folks can likely make it happen. When your hotel is owned by the very well-connected Salvatore Ferragamo family of Florence, arrangements for bespoke guest experiences can be made.

"Nothing is a strange request," the woman at the front desk told us. "We do it with pleasure."

Over-the-top service has always been a priority at this five-star hotel, located on the Arno River, steps from the Ponte Vecchio. But now, after a six-month, multi-million-dollar refurbish, Hotel Lungarno, the first fashion hotel to open in the '90s, shines anew. Loyal guests were skeptical when the property announced its renovation project, worried that the re-do would go too far, robbing the classical property of its traditional character. When the doors reopened, worries vanished. Like a woman who's had a little

work done, this Grande Dame shows off a fresh face, atop good bones. Internationally renowned interior designer Michele Bonan kept the décor classic — nearly retro. Creamy, neutral palettes in the renewed lobby-lounge, overlooking the Arno, are punctuated with nautical blues (we love the blue and white leather chairs), giving a nod to the hotel's prime location on the river, and evoking a luxury, yacht-like atmosphere.

All of the 65 guest rooms and suites, with private marble baths, have been updated, and though they vary in size and shape, they're also classically designed with nautical colors and accents, including blue striped carpeting and blue-and-white checked side chairs. Modern updates include mini iPads, espresso machines, and Bose sound links in all the rooms. Many rooms boast river or city views, some with private decks. Ten rooms have been designed for families, accommodating up to four guests, and two floors of the hotel can be set aside for VIP guests, groups, and multi-generational travelers.

With the renovation came a renewed emphasis on the hotel's restaurants. The re-designed Picteau Lounge Bar is open and airy, with comfy chairs and views of the Arno River. It's fine for a quick bite to eat, featuring an all-day menu of salads, sandwiches, and soups. Save at least one evening for dining at the hotel's signature restaurant, the Michelin-starred Borgo San Jacopo, overseen by Executive Chef Peter Brunel. It's one of the top dining spots in the city, featuring Brunel's updated regional Italian, technically-precise and beautifully-presented cuisine. His all-potato prix fixe menu remains the talk of the town, which includes spaghetti carbonara (potato noodles), fingerling potatoes in clay with lovage and beetroot mayonnaise, potato cream with piglet, langoustines and shitake mushrooms, and potato pralines

with spicy chocolate.

What we found most intriguing about the re-design of Hotel Lungarno is its expanded art collection, one of the largest collections of privately-owned 20th Century art in the world. Some 450 original pieces of art were added to the hotel's common areas and guestrooms, including works by Picasso, Cocteau, Bueno, and Italian artists Cassinari, Guidi, Morlotti, Rosai, Sironi, and Tosi. The art is grouped along specific story lines, and offers a peek into the 20th Century art world. Ask the hotel for a guided tour of the art collection. They will be happy to arrange it! Hotel Lungarno, Borgo S. Jacopo, 14, 50125 Firenze FI, Italy +39 055 27261; [www.lungarnocollection.com/hotel-lungarno](http://www.lungarnocollection.com/hotel-lungarno). Room rates start at 320 euros.

Diane Bair and Pamela Wright can be reached at [bairwright@gmail.com](mailto:bairwright@gmail.com).

All of the 65 guest rooms and suites at the Hotel Lungarno in Florence have been updated.



## HERE

### FESTIVAL CELEBRATES ALL THINGS CELTIC

Calling all Celtic music and dance fans! To celebrate its 15th anniversary in Harvard Square, the all ages BCM-Fest (Boston Celtic Music Festival) is expanding from two to four days, and will feature programming at The Sinclair in addition to Club Passim (Jan. 18-21). Festivalgoers can enjoy a variety of music, song, and dance from Irish, Scottish, Cape Breton, and other Celtic-related traditions found in the Greater Boston area. Includes traditional crowd-favorites such as the Boston Urban Ceilidh (participatory and social dances with live music); Saturday Dayfest (12-plus hours of traditional to contemporary entertainment); and new options like the Emerging Artists Showcase, Sunday Dayfest, and BCMFest Brunch. Those who want a more immersive experience can partake in sing-alongs and workshops happening throughout the weekend. Tickets per event: \$5-\$30; Passim members: free-\$25. 617-492-7679, [passim.org/BCMFest](http://passim.org/BCMFest)

### BOUTIQUE HOTEL DEBUTS IN NEWPORT

When is a firehouse not a firehouse? In Newport, the answer is simple: When it's the recently opened Firehouse Inn. The Queen-Anne style building, originally a late 1800's fire station, has been converted into a luxurious bed and breakfast with five rooms, each with spa-like bathrooms and plush linens. Your visit always includes a complimentary breakfast



each day — with a signature dish such as crème brûlée French toast or eggs Caprice — prepared by the innkeepers. In room spa services include massages, facials, and body treatments. Located in a convenient downtown location, the inn is within walking distance of the waterfront, shops, restaurants, and historic mansions. Winter rates from \$119. 401-302-3312, [www.firehouseinnri.com](http://www.firehouseinnri.com)

## THERE

### MIDCENTURY MODERN BLOOMS IN PALM SPRINGS

Inspired by the resurgence of the Mid-century Modern movement, the Kimp-ton Rowan Palm Springs Hotel recently made its splashy downtown debut. The seven-story, 153-room urban desert escape is the first full-scale hotel built in the area in decades — with the first and only rooftop pool — and features two restaurants, two bars, and serene views of the majestic San Jacinto Mountains. Light-filled spaces combine a sunny mix of modern-desert ur-

banity with sleek furnishings, geometric patterns, and custom art installations such as a 16-foot macramé owl behind the front desk. A cheerful color palette (blues and greens in the guestrooms and pinks and oranges on the pool deck) are tempered with natural wood, creamy neutrals and white. The hotel is steps away from some of the city's best dining, shopping, art, and other attractions. Low-to-high season rates from \$189-\$289. 800-532-7320, [www.rowanpalm-springs.com/](http://www.rowanpalm-springs.com/)

### LUXURY HOTEL OPENS IN NASSAU

Looking for a warm winter getaway? Luxury lifestyle brand SLS Hotels is debuting its first international venture in The Bahamas, the 299-room SLS Baha Mar hotel, now open within Baha Mar, the \$4.2 billion beachfront resort destination in Nassau. Set along 3,000 feet of white sand beach and crystal waters, the SLS Baha Mar features an award-win-

ning collection of culinary experiences, nightlife venues, and sleek stylish decor. The daily resort fee (\$60) includes access to the beach, shared pools, and fitness center; private roundtrip transportation from Lynden Pindling International Airport; Wi-Fi access throughout resort; nightly turn-down service; non-motorized beach watersports; and more. Additional on-property activities include the Caribbean's largest casino, 18-hole, 72-par Jack Nicklaus Signature golf course, and ESPA spa. Rates from \$385. 242-788-8200. [slshotels.com/bahamar](http://slshotels.com/bahamar)

## EVERYWHERE

### NEW PLATFORM FOR SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL

Sustainable and environmentally-friendly travel are the newest buzzwords in tourism. If you're a traveler who is interested in knowing how to find and plan a trip that embraces this trend, you'll want to check out Galapa-

gos.com, a sustainable travel website launched by Big Five Tours & Expeditions. In addition to reporting on the Galapagos Islands, the website includes 13 countries in Latin America. (With plans to expand in the future to other regions of the world.) Each country is rated on how well and how actively they are pursuing sustainable tourism initiatives, including environmentally-friendly practices, protecting nature, safeguarding cultural heritage, and delivering social and economic benefits to local people. Once you select your destination, a link provides a variety of adventure tours for individuals, groups and families. [galapagos.com](http://galapagos.com)

### KIDS WATER FILTRATION BOTTLES GIVE BACK

LifeStraw Play is a water filtration bottle specifically designed for children. The two-stage process removes bacteria and protozoa while also reducing chemicals and bad taste. Available in five cheerful colors, the 10-ounce leak-proof bottles are easy-to-clean, BPA-free, and feature unique customizable sticker options. \$39.95. [lifestraw.com/products/lifestraw-play/](http://lifestraw.com/products/lifestraw-play/) Those who love gifts that give back to the community will want to know that for every Play purchased, one child in a developing country receives clean drinking water for an entire school year through a program called Follow The Liters. [lifestraw.com/follow-the-liters/](http://lifestraw.com/follow-the-liters/)

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