

ESCAPE

Italian ICONS

Discover timeless Italian luxury at these four swoon-worthy hotels, each hailing from a different century

By Paul Rubio



COURTESY OF GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO

GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO,
LAKE COMO



THE ULTIMATE CELEBRATION OF ALL THAT IS FLORENCE, RELAIS SANTA CROCE BOASTS PERIOD FURNITURE AND ARCHITECTURE, AS WELL AS SECOND-TO-NONE VIEWS OF THE CITY.



RELAIS SANTA CROCE, FLORENCE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The capital of Tuscany is best known for Renaissance-era art, culture, architecture, and palazzi, so what better way to experience Florence than overnighting in a place that embodies this illustrious past? Part museum, part hotel, and all fairy tale, Relais Santa Croce is bejeweled in frescoed ceilings, wood-paneled walls, and period furnishings that reflect its original grandeur as Palazzo Ciofi-Jacometti, the former residence of Marquis Balducci, treasurer to the Pope.

Now, as part of the exclusive Baglioni Hotels & Resorts collection, the eighteenth-century palazzo has been updated to house 24 rooms and suites, as well as the amenities commanded by today's traveler. That being said, the 1700s charm has been dutifully preserved and is most palpable within the living room-style Sala della Musica. Here, guests can time travel to the late Renaissance, surrounded by museum-quality sculptures and three-dimensional walls from which classical musicians once played. Maximize it all with an *aperitivo* (or two) during the evening piano session, followed by a dinner of refined Tuscan fare at the in-house restaurant, Guelfi e Ghibellini.

Be sure to request one of the suites overlooking Basilica Santa Croce, the largest Franciscan church in the world and burial place of such Italian illuminati as Michelangelo, Galileo, Rossini, and Machiavelli. Beyond Florence's standard must-see sights—all a short walk from the hotel—take advantage of some highly curated activities exclusive to hotel guests, like a hands-on perfume-making class at Florence's *maison de parfum*, Aquaflor Firenze. (baglionihotels.com)

THE LOBBY OF THE GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO IS A STUDY IN BELLE ÉPOQUE GRANDEUR. SPEND YOUR DAYS AROUND THE GARDEN'S FLOWERS POOL (RIGHT) AND EVENINGS AT L'ESCALE TRATTORIA & WINE BAR (BELOW).



GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO, LAKE COMO
TWENTIETH CENTURY

Think Lake Como, and several things come to mind: villa-strewn hills, Italian aristocracy, the James Bond movie *Casino Royale*, actor George Clooney, the town of Bellagio...and Grand Hotel Tremezzo.

Since 1910, the grand dame of Italy's most famous lake has been entertaining well-heeled travelers and international glitterati. Occupying one of the lake's most enviable locations, with prime views of Bellagio and the Grigne mountains, the Art Nouveau-imbedded Grand Hotel Tremezzo impresses at first sight. From beach level, take the gold-and-glass elevator to the lobby and arrive in a world of Belle Époque opulence, dripping in gilded accents, red roses, and personality-driven spaces, like the colorful and art-laced Sala Musica. A similar romance graces the property's accommodations, even in the modernist-skewed rooftop suites added on the heels of the hotel's centennial.

At this distinguished hotel, guests can anticipate balanced days of fun in the sun, leisure, fine dining, and lake exploration. Perfect your tan on the sands of Tremezzo's private beach, along the perimeter of the Instagram-worthy floating pool, or on a chaise lounge near the garden's Flowers Pool. Relax at T Spa, soaking in the lakeside vista from the sheltered infinity pool or with a tried-and-true ESPA treatment. Pair contemporary Italian cuisine with more than 350 regional Italian wines at L'Escale Trattoria & Wine Bar, which was remodeled and reimagined in 2017, or enjoy a more formal dining experience at La Terrazza Restaurant, with dishes by Italian maestro Gualtiero Marchesi. At some point during this luxuriating, hop on the hotel's Venetian motor launch for a tour of Lake Como's natural beauty and man-made attractions, including celeb-frequented villas and frozen-in-time fishing villages. (grandhoteltremezzo.com)



COURTESY OF GRAND HOTEL TREMEZZO

to the unexpected color patterns and decor chosen to complement the nineteenth-century architectural framework.

Exalted design notwithstanding, Hotel de Russie's greatest asset is its Secret Garden, a sprawling, terraced courtyard, home to restaurant Le Jardin de Russie and frequented by the who's who of Rome. Show off your best daywear while sipping cocktails under a white umbrella-capped table, framed by the lush surrounds. At night, go a bit less form-fitting as the rich gastronomy by legendary chef Fulvio Pierangelini lives up to the hype. (Hello, *tagliolini* with white truffle and ravioli *cacio e pepe!*) After, stroll through the proximate Piazza del Popolo, climb the Spanish Steps, or ditch the map and venture down side streets. No matter which direction, you're bound to stumble upon a Roman ruin you never knew existed. (roccoforeshotels.com)



EVERY ROOM AND SUITE AT HOTEL DE RUSSIE FEATURES A UNIQUE DESIGN, WHILE THE SECRET GARDEN IS THE PLACE TO BE FOR LOCAL-CELEBRITY SPOTTING AND AN EXQUISITE MEAL AT LE JARDIN DE RUSSIE.

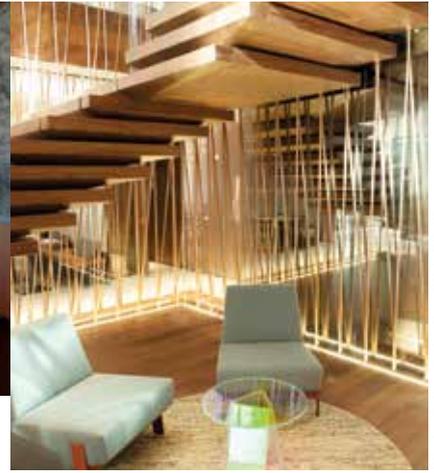


HOTEL DE RUSSIE, ROME
NINETEENTH CENTURY

For repeat visitors, the Eternal City is the ultimate Italian evergreen, with 28 centuries of history packed into a single evolving metropolis. While much of Rome's allure will always lie in its unique juxtaposition of ancient monuments, the city is equally revered for delivering new-fashioned takes on old-world elegance. Case in point: Rocco Forte's Hotel de Russie, a circa-1814 hotel that once catered to Russian aristocracy and has since been reinvented as a glamorous 120-key marvel under the direction of celebrated Italian architect Tommaso Ziffer and designer Olga Polizzi.

Each room and suite here is singular in design, revealing a bespoke expression of old meets new. This union is evident in everything from patterned mosaics etched into marble bathrooms

ESCAPE



AN EPIC AMALGAM OF ITALIAN WALNUT WOOD, COPPER, AND NATURAL STONE, IL SERENO BOASTS 30 STUNNING SUITES, ALL WITH LAKE VIEWS AND OVERSIZED BALCONIES WITH DAY BEDS AND DINING TABLES.

COURTESY OF IL SERENO, LAGO DI COMO

IL SERENO LAGO DI COMO TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

The norm in Italy's haute hotel world is to draw inspiration from the past and relive that glory in the present. So, it's both refreshing and exciting when a luxury property goes rogue—looking to the future to define the present. That's exactly the case at the hyper-modern Il Sereno Lago di Como, a striking all-suite property that's distinctly twenty-first-century Italian chic.

Unveiled in August 2016 on Lake Como's eastern shore, the property dazzles with a

clean-lined, minimalist, glass-and-wood framework and Patricia Urquiola-designed interiors. A vibe-heavy infinity pool lends an element of au courant coastal flair, in the spirit of Il Sereno's sister property in St. Barths. The spa, an adaptive reuse of a century-old *darsena*, or "boat-house," adds just the right amount of European history to the mix. And the property's three custom Cantiere Ernesto Riva boats are available for hire to travel across the lake in high style.

Rounding out the hotel's fast track to fame is Ristorante Berton Al Lago, which gained a

Michelin Star within a year of opening. Milan-based chef and restaurateur Andrea Berton is the brains (and chops) behind the award-winning culinary program that incorporates local products, from lake fish to cheeses, wines, and meats from the nearby mountains of Valtellina, and even risotto from Pianura Padana. Meals can be savored on a floating outdoor terrace, inside the restaurant proper, or under a series of travertine arches that serve as windows to Lake Como. Now that's iconic. (serenohotels.com) ◀◀

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