



OUR MAN ON THE GROUND TRAVEL AND LIFESTYLE

GLOBAL TRAVEL AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE

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SEARCH ...

Above And Beyond Service At Hotel Savoy Florence

June 1, 2017 Our Man On The Ground Hotels 0

Hotel Savoy Florence Suite

There are not many hotels that send a man on a bike to collect clients. But that's what happens when I stay in the Hotel Savoy in Florence, Italy. Raffaello cycles on a chic fifties-style bicycle to come and find one very lost client (that's me) stranded somewhere near the Mercato Centrale. He cycles in front of me in his thick black morning suit jacket, leading the way stylishly to the hotel. Rule one: if you are sane, don't try to drive into the maze of pedestrianized streets that make up the centre of Florence. Rule two: if you do take a car on your trip, stay at the Savoy and ask the angel Raffaello to come and rescue you and take you back to the hotel.

Ah! The hotel. It would be hard to get more central than this location without taking up residence in the Uffizi Museum. If you don't fancy sleeping in the aforementioned art institution with Botticelli's Birth of Venus looking over you, the Savoy offers something equally central and far more comfy: it's located on the Piazza della Repubblica, between the Duomo and Ponte Vecchio and the River Arno. First impressions? The lobby is small but perfectly formed and full of smiley, professional staff and B&B Italia chairs and Cassina armchairs. Anywhere that has B&B gets my vote. Plus anywhere that has a concierge team like theirs gets my second vote: I pestered them in advance of arriving, when I was there and after leaving. *Grazie mille* Alessandro, Ruggero, Marco, and Roberto.

Hotel Savoy Facade

I'm shown to my glorious quarters: the Repubblica Suite. It overlooks the piazza with its massive arch engraved "L'antico Centro della Cita". This is where they held the Mercato Vecchio in ancient times, and it was the heart of public life. I have the Column of Abundance directly opposite my window – and, frankly, who could ask for more? Better than any Column Of Lack, eh? (Other rooms and suites have views of Giotto's Bell-Tower, Brunelleschi's Duomo Cathedral and vistas over characterful hand fired red tile roofs.)

My fawn suite has splashes of lime and leaf green and turquoise, and patterns with Florentine motifs. I'm tempted to pack the fab curtains – with their three different fabrics sewn together in bold horizontal blocks – into my suitcase. But I settle instead on flicking happily through the Everyman's library of books – from Dante to Bienvenuto Cellini – that I find on my shelf.

Hotel Savoy Duomo View Room

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Singin' In The Rain is a Musical

'Would you like our unpacking service?' asks the bellman, who has appeared nanoseconds after my arrival. I look at my tiny suitcase, bursting with one pair of leggings, thankfully no curtains, and not much more. Maybe he could peel me a grape instead?


The hotel has been styled with panache by Olga Polizzi, interior decorator and sister of owner Sir Rocco Forte. The feeling is more private house than corporate vibe. Much of it was refurbished at the end of 2016, and la Polizzi goes big on the Florentine spirit and the city's interest in fashion. There are photographs of shoes, wire shoes in Perspex boxes, a picture of Andy Warhol's shoes, and hats as decorative items dotted around the hotel. There's also an eclectic mix of vintage furniture (carved Tuscan pieces and the like) alongside contemporary pieces.

 [Restaurant Irene Breakfast](#)

In the evening I enjoy a meal in Irene Bistrò, a creation of uber chef Fulvio Pierangelini – a man whose cooking I'd follow anywhere. Indeed I have stalked Fulvio and his saucepans from Sicily to Florence, and am planning Rome next, (OK Fulvio?). Irene Bistrò is contemporary, low-key and delicious – think healthy re-workings of Tuscan classics in local and seasonal ingredients. Inside, it's all 50s-retro chic; outside, if you sit on the terrace to eat, you get all the piazza action. A test of how *delizioso* the restaurant is, is that locals fraternize it. And that I return the following day – and, reader, it isn't a freebie. There are must-taste dishes like lemon and parmesan *stracciatella* soup and Tagliolini with fava bean and fresh Tillo's sheep cheese. Plus wines from local vineyards. And attentive service.

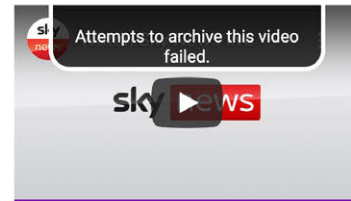
There's a fairground carousel on the piazza and, as dusk falls, roaming minstrels and *carabinieri* make it their home. As the lights of the city illuminate the buildings, the place comes even more alive. It doesn't matter that it's time for bed. Double-glazing and thick wooden shutters in my suite keep any unwanted sounds out of this ultimate city hotel.

 [Suite Repubblica Living Room](#)

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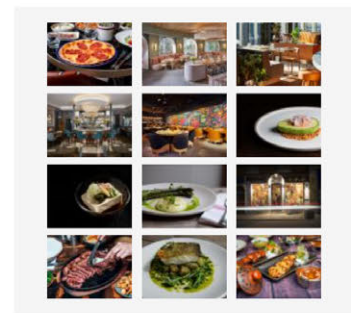
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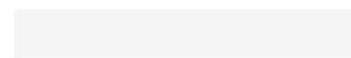
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What else do you need to know about the Savoy? A Really Important Fact as far as I'm concerned is that there's valet parking, otherwise I'd still be circling the Mercato Centrale. You'll catch the likes of the world's premier video artist Bill Viola (*'Il tecnico Americano'*, in the words of the Florentines) and contemporary artist and activist Ai Weiwei staying here. (They both held exhibitions at the Palazzo Strozzi, just nanoseconds from the hotel.) Plus the property was built in 1893 and opened as the Savoy in 2000.

It's also a fashionista's paradise. It's not just that there are some must-have Sergio Rossi shoes in a display case in the lobby. A concierge (Alessandro gets one of my Tip-Top Concierge awards) will organize customized trips to the Gucci or Ferragamo museums. Send you on handicrafts tours to the traditional ateliers like the Leather School and Stefano Berner, for custom-made shoes. To jewellery troves like Cardini in the Ponte Vecchio area. Best of all, though, is to ask him or one of his team to sort you out with two wheels, then hop aboard one of the hotel's cycles: bespoke bikes created by Velorbis, the Danish creator of iconic and classic designer bicycles.

 [Suite Signoria Sitting Room](#)

The bikes are a healthy and green way to discover Florentine life, and best of all, they avoid getting in a car. You can head for the surrounding Tuscan countryside, cycle along the River Arno or visit the squillions of cultural sites. And, obviously, visit the fashion district. The bikes are fitted with a traditionally lugged and brazed hand built frame – which apparently ensures a posture-friendly cycling experience. Whatever. They also have great bells for dispersing tourists, a major bonus as I plough through the throngs on the Ponte Vecchio and pedal past the hordes waiting to go into the Uffizi Gallery. See, I told you the Uffizi isn't a good place to stay, didn't I? But as for the Savoy ...well, that gets a *grande pollice su*. According to Google translate, that means a *big thumbs up*.

The Details:

Hotel Savoy, Piazza della Repubblica, 7, 50123 Firenze, Italy

Tel: +39 055 27351

Website: <https://www.roccofortehotels.com/hotels-and-resorts/hotel-savoy/>

Email: reservations.savoy@roccofortehotels.com

The hotel is a 20-minute taxi ride from Florence Airport and is super centrally located right on the Piazza della Repubblica, beside the Duomo and within minutes of all the top tourist sites. For those of you driving, they have valet parking.

Type of Hotel: 5-Star Luxury Hotel

Number of Rooms and Suites: 102 rooms including 14 suites

Insider Tip:

Go everywhere on their wonderful push bikes. Bag a Duomo View room or Piazza View room. If you've got kids, book their Art Hunt and for adults, [the Medici Experience](#).

Need to know:

Car hire available from holidayautos.co.uk

Price Band: Low season: 495 Euros per classic room (double occupancy) per night including VAT + breakfast.

Reviewer's Rating: 9/10 – but only because it doesn't have a spa

Author Bio:

Caroline Phillips is an award-winning freelance journalist based in London.



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