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## With romance in the air, guests might just fall in love with Florence's Grand Amore

by ADAM POTTER

BUSY, INSPIRING and truly romantic; few cities can compare with the intrinsic charms of Florence. A veritable feast for culture lovers, the cityscape's intricate web of corridors effortlessly blends unique architecture with more museums and galleries than one could possibly fit into a single trip.

With its rich tapestry of history, it's small wonder that this captivating hub would rise to become the Cradle of the Renaissance, and its mesmerising draw is as compelling now as it was then.

A tall order therefore for any hotel to match up to but one that the Grand Amore Hotel and Spa meets spectacularly.

Opening a little over a year ago, this boutique hotel could very well be seen as the 'the new kid on the block' in a city crammed with accommodation options. However, a quick glance through its visitors book, filled with rave reviews, would have you believe they've been doing it for years.

With just 11 rooms, the focus is firmly on quality over quantity and the hotel's dedicated 'comfort crew' really do ensure guests get the absolute most from their visit. Upon arrival, over a glass of Champagne, our concierge Pamela took the time to discuss what we might like to see in Florence, made arrangements for museum tickets along with fabulous restaurant bookings. As with any stay, it's the little things that make all the difference; from what flowers you would like in your room to whether you would like breakfast served to your balcony, hand-written notes thanking us for our stay to dainty



The 'Romantic Superior' room

local delicacies waiting in the room upon our return every evening – this level of service and personalisation made the stay a real treat.

Moreover, with marble bathrooms, plush interiors and an in-house spa, this intimate haven is perfectly suited for discerning travellers and couples seeking a long-weekend break to Italy.

Sipping Tuscan wine at cosy hole-in-the-wall bars with the locals in the early evening will have you feeling like a Florentine in no time. For those in the know, the Palazzo Vecchio runs an exclusive 'Secret Passageways' tour to parts of the building normally off limits to other visitors (only one ten-guest English tour runs a day, so visitors should arrive first thing in the morning to book!), and if the need for some hush arises, a stroll across the Ponte Vecchio to the quieter side of the river toward the Piazzale Michelangelo offers a magnificent viewpoint of the city. Halfway up the stone staircase, a quick stop off at the romantic rose garden also comes highly recommended.

Florence is very much a walking city, and being centrally located the hotel is within easy walking distance to all the key sites. Upon exit, the Duomo towers to the left, the Piazza SS Annunziata opens to the right with the world-renowned Accademia housing Michelangelo's David right in front. Much like the city, our stay at the Grand Amore was filled with charm and will no doubt rise to become one of the hottest hotels in Florence. Grand Amore indeed. Visit [grandamorehotel.com](http://grandamorehotel.com)

## A taste of Rome with Riviera Travel

RIVIERA TRAVEL now offers a guided four-hour walking tour that explores more than ten food and wine tastings at some of Rome's most historic and locally loved places on selected dates as part of its five-day Rome tour.

Customers will meet the families who have created foodie treasures for generations, taste fine cheeses and homemade pasta, visit third generation delicatessens and taste wines in a cellar that are 150 years older than the Coliseum.

The operator's five-day Rome tour with Eating Italy extension is available on selected dates and costs from £699 per person including flights, transfers, four nights' breakfast accommodation in a centrally located hotel and guided tours.



WITH VIEWS across the town of Taormina and Mount Etna, Sicilian Places is offering Villa Angela as a new retreat for 2016, with a seven-night stay leading in at £717 per person including breakfast, flights and car hire. As an added incentive, the first 20 bookings made with the operator will see agents receive a bottle of Champagne. Visit [sicilianplaces.co.uk](http://sicilianplaces.co.uk) for more information.

## INBrief

- SuperBreak has added the four-star Hotel Turner in Rome to its portfolio. To help agents promote the hotel, a 'four nights for the price of three' offer is available in March and August. Visit [superbreak.com/agents](http://superbreak.com/agents)
- New from Great Rail Journeys is an eight-day 'Gastronomic Piedmont' option from £1,295 per person. For bookings made before February 29, the company is offering a special low deposit deal of £99 per person. Call 0800-240 4470 to book or for details.
- Opening in spring 2016, Masseria Trapani will be Puglia's newest boutique hotel. It will offer nine suites, a pool and Bijou chapel. Rooms start from approximately £266 per room, per night in low season for a garden room including breakfast. Visit [trapani.com](http://trapani.com)
- Just Sicily has introduced a new website to showcase its collection of accommodation, which includes new properties for 2016. New site features include an upgraded online booking system, a save your 'Favourite' properties feature, an online chat facility, interactive maps and 'Meet the Team'. Visit [justsicily.co.uk](http://justsicily.co.uk)