

The New York Times

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, 2018



The Keys Behind Treasured Stops

What makes a hotel your favorite? *The favorite?* Every traveler has a different criteria: some love grand properties with opulent décor, while others prefer small places with a personal touch. The service, the food, the rooms and the setting usually figure in too. If you're lucky, you've stayed at a handful of hotels that you consider to be exceptional. They're the sort of places you're wistful to leave. Ten travel writers for The New York Times have stayed countless nights at countless hotels. Here, places they love.

ILLUSTRATION BY BEN WISEMAN



OTTANTOTTO FIRENZE

Ottantotto Firenze

FLORENCE, ITALY

It was not a room with a view. Or at least not the view, the famous Florence tableau with the golden lights of the Ponte Vecchio reflected in the slow-moving Arno River.

What first caught my eye at the Ottantotto Firenze, the hotel to which I now compare others, wasn't a pretty panorama (my second-story room overlooked a street). Instead, it was a fireplace: a 16th-century stone behemoth, large enough to spit-roast a wild boar, that had been reimagined as an aristocratic-chic headboard for my plush double bed.

This handsome seven-room hotel, which opened in January in the lively Santo Spirito district, brims with evidence of previous occupants: from a Renaissance-era baker who lived above his mill and bakery to 16th-century nobility who climbed the staircases of pietra-serena, the durable Tuscan stone typical of fine Florentine palazzi. A careful, five-year renovation by Fabrizia Scassellati, a local architect with a talent for historical preservation, introduced modern comforts — bright tiled bathrooms, a tiny elevator, a keypad entry — without disturbing original details, from the wood-beam ceilings to the cotto-tile floors showing centuries of wear. The final touch was the décor, a mix of fine antiques, oddball objets d'art, colorful textiles and contemporary lighting, which made the hotel feel less like a museum and more like the home of a discerning, long-lost Italian relative.

INGRID K. WILLIAMS

Via dei Serragli 88, Florence; double rooms from 119 euros (about \$138) ottantottofirenze.it/en