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Hotel Bernini Palace, A Due Torri Hotel, Florence

28 August, 2020 by **Lawrence Head** (<https://www.thearcadiaonline.com/author/lawrence-head/>)



Florence sits strategically along the banks of the river Arno, surrounded by rolling Tuscan hillsides which bristle with solemn Cypress trees. The city is the regional capital, and at one stage was one of the wealthiest cities in Italy. Florence is even credited by some scholars as being the home to the Renaissance itself, and so was the epicentre of learning, art, economic theory and politics during this medieval period of remarkable rebirth. Florence still retains this palpable aura of cultural wonder and just by getting lost in its winding stone paved streets makes you feel as if you're at the beating heart of something eternally relevant and culturally stimulating. Now Florence is one of the most desirable tourism destinations in Europe, and arguably, the world. It is home to the Uffizi Gallery, which has been collecting remarkable works of art since its establishment in 1581, The Boboli Gardens which were designed for the Medici family and are now touted as the inspiration for many European

court grounds, and of course the much loved Ponte Vecchio bridge. It also boasts a dynamic gastronomic scene and plenty of colourful bars from which to sample rich red rivers of local Chianti.

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It seems only appropriate that when one stays in a city filled with heritage, that one should emulate this in hotel choice; and for this Bernini Palace Hotel is perfect.

Bernini Palace brims and bulges with history and thrilling tales, each room you enter seems to whisper mysterious words of salacious stories from centuries gone by. The building itself dates back to the 1300's when it was owned by the Florentine family the 'Della Peras', who were in turn descended from a long line of the city's political upper echelons who had been handed control of the city. Of course the edifice has undergone updates, additions and face lifts since this time, though one key element remains constant; the building itself is one of Florence's oldest hotels. In fact, in the 17th Century when it was named

'Grand Hotel du Parlemement' it was the only hotel in the entire city to have running water; good news for those arriving on Summer days when the thermometer can easily top a sizzling 40 degrees.

One of the most singular rooms in the whole hotel is now the breakfast room, formerly the 'Sala Parlamento'. This had, at one time, been the seat of parliament when the tendrils of Florentine power extended across the whole of Italy. The impassive faces of great Tuscans gaze down at your bleary eyes each morning as you enjoy freshly squeezed orange juice and scrambled eggs.

The general character of the hotel is majestic from the moment you arrive. Chandeliers, vaulted ceilings and frescos abound and beautiful works of art seem to hang on every wall. The hotel boasts 74 rooms with a range of 12 suites, the majority of these are in a classic Italian renaissance style and mirror the entry foyer and Sala Parlamento on the second floor, whilst 13 are in a more rustic, earthy, Tuscan style. My own suite looked out over the Piazza San Firenze, meaning that the second you fling open the enormous windows you're greeted by a wave of heat and the chattering of people passing below who eagerly make their way across the Piazza San Firenze towards the beloved

Ponte Vecchio. The hotel's rooms are generously proportioned with regal high ceilings and are well stocked with Trussardi bath products, for that extra bit of de lux pampering.

Guests may also enjoy the roof terrace on the fifth floor, which is a welcome oasis of calm and is a cosy sun trap in the later afternoon. It's ideal for a quick aperitif pit stop before supper, and generally speaking is extremely peaceful.

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Another remarkable string to the hotel's bow is its exquisite restaurant 'La Chiostrina' which may be found on the ground floor in a converted, 16th century vaulted cloister which had once been entirely open air. Natural light pours in from above creating a warm, ochre glow on the terracotta tiles which are so quintessentially Tuscan. The menu revolves around a modern take on some much loved regional dishes, with an emphasis on locally sourced ingredients. The end result is a perfect hybrid of modernity with a respectful nod to Tuscan iconic classics. Some stand out options include the smoked swordfish with vegetable caponata as a tantalising antipasti, the 'Pici' pasta (a local thick spaghetti) with duck, green apple and blueberry and finally the filet of sea bream cooked in its own stock with olives and pine nuts. Of course, the tiramisu for dessert is not to be missed.

Bernini Palace Hotel provides an ideal vantage point from which to explore the best that Florence has to offer, it is at the beating heart of the action (ideal for the absent minded like me who frequently need to nip back to their room to collect something they forget). The excellence of the restaurant is only surpassed by the service, which is attentive, welcoming and sincere. It is quite an experience to enjoy one's breakfast whilst fixed by the stare of none other than General Giuseppe Garibaldi himself.

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