

HOT HOTEL

Portrait Firenze

FLORENCE



“What’s in a name,” asks Juliet in Shakespeare’s tale of star-crossed lovers, “A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Although this tale takes place not in fair Verona, but fair Florence — Firenze to locals — the sentiment rings true: create something special enough and the name doesn’t really matter.

Italian shoe designer Salvatore Ferragamo found his calling aged nine when he made a pair of heels for his sister. Then, in 1927, he founded the eponymous and enduring brand.

When it came to extending its famed hospitality into the world of luxury hotels, Ferragamo, unlike other Italian fashion houses (Versace, Bulgari, Armani), chose not to rest on the laurels of its name, creating instead the Lungarno Collection.

The Portrait sub-brand, a portfolio of elegant hotels that pay homage to the cities they’re located in, began in Rome and in 2014 expanded into Florence, home to the Ferragamo Museum and business headquarters.

Words
Tim Heap

The Portrait experience starts before I’ve even packed my case. After making a reservation, guests are sent a questionnaire to fill in, detailing preferences including pillow type, breakfast choices and even whether you’d like the curtains drawn or not during the turndown service.

Idiosyncrasies out of the way, the Tuscan capital beckons.

After a late flight, a smooth and quick check-in is a blessing, and I’m soon in the plush comfort of a riverside suite, complete with separate living room and kitchenette. Enjoying my Florentine fantasy, I ignore the late hour and pour a glass of Prosecco to sip while relaxing on the balcony and admiring the view of the famous Ponte Vecchio.

Eventually succumbing to fatigue brought on by the long day followed by the alcoholic nightcap, I slip into bed and sink into a deep slumber.

Waking to a bright and warm October morning, my breakfast in Caffè dell’Oro offers a perfect start to

the day and, as expected following the pre-arrival questionnaire, I’m left wanting for nothing. Food and drink is served throughout the day, with a lazy buffet brunch option on Sundays.

With the Portrait my base for the weekend, it’s easy to explore the city’s many attractions, from making cantucci biscuits at a family-run bakery or taking a tuk-tuk out to the suburbs for views of the rolling Tuscan hills, to strolling over the Ponte Vecchio at sunset and gazing up in awe at the vast Duomo cathedral.

Before leaving the city, I’m invited to try a calligraphy masterclass with Betty Soldi, whose fair hand is responsible for captioning the Ferragamo archive photos that line the hotel’s walls.

At first embarrassed by my sloppy handwriting, by the end of the session I’m writing my name with a flourish and seeing it in an entirely new light.

Maybe there is something in a name, after all. ☺

lungarnocollection.com