

**Client:** Portrait Milano  
**Source:** Condé Nast Traveller  
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# WHERE TO STAY

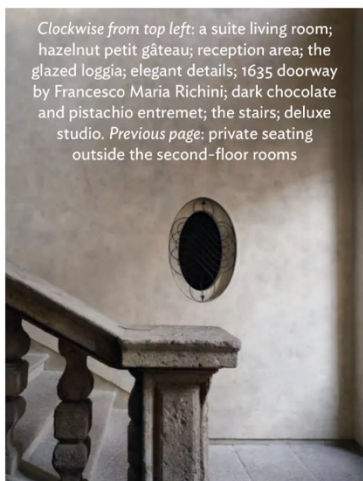
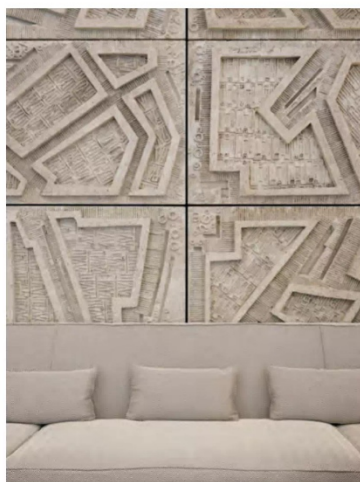
INSIDER REPORTS ON THE BEST SPOTS TO BED DOWN. EDITED BY LYDIA BELL



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*Clockwise from top left: a suite living room; hazelnut petit gâteau; reception area; the glazed loggia; elegant details; 1635 doorway by Francesco Maria Richini; dark chocolate and pistachio entremet; the stairs; deluxe studio. Previous page: private seating outside the second-floor rooms*



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A GRUBBY MORNING MOON LINGERS over the baroque colonnades of Milan's new Piazza del Quadrilatero like the ghost of the city's old image. The sky is a crisp blue, swept clean of the smog and dull cloud of business that once hung over the forward-looking Italian design capital. Pale beech leaves create fairy lights over Liberty-style Napoleonic and rationalist palazzos by the Luigi Rovati Foundation, one of the new museums contributing to Milan's post-Brexit emergence as one of Europe's most well-connected culture and lifestyle hubs. After the clean-up initiatives of 2015's World Expo, a new sustainable metro now speeds in minutes from Linate Airport to the central Quadrilatero della Moda, the shopping district of cobbled streets and stone balconies like opera boxes that covers more than a square mile.

"After decades of self-improvement, Milan has gone from a city known for business to an important global reference for quality of living," says Leonardo Ferragamo, the Florentine responsible for the new piazza, who is the founder of the boutique Lungarno Collection of hotels, as well as the chairman of his late father Salvatore's eponymous fashion house. His ambitious restoration of an archiepiscopal seminary is the third instalment of his Portrait brand, admired for its impeccable Italian heritage, leather-smooth Tuscan craftsmanship and locations just an elegant stride from Italy's high-fashion promenades. The collection, founded in 1995, also has a monopoly of curated four- and five-star hotels along Florence's Arno, an extension of the Salvatore Ferragamo headquarters where Ferragamo's father hosted his Hollywood clientele.

### FOR PORTRAIT, EVERY CITY HAS ITS OWN LOGIC. HERE, THAT IS THE SEMANTICS OF MILANESE HISTORY, ART AND DESIGN, REBORN THROUGH FLORENTINE CRAFTSMANSHIP

Commissioned in 1565 by Archbishop of Milan and future saint Charles Borromeo, the baroque religious college also mirrors the story of Milan. It became a barracks under Napoleon and a hospital during World War I, was bombed in WWII and then restored by Piero Portaluppi, who updated nearby Piazza San Babila along with architect Gio Ponti, two modernist forces who shaped mid-century Italy. Portrait, with its concept of privileged access to a city from a fantasy "home", has always foregone overt Ferragamo branding in favour of an inclusive celebration of Italian achievement. In Rome, it's the Dolce Vita era; in Florence, the heyday of the Pitti Palace and haute couture. "In Milan, it's a tribute to entrepreneurship and design," says Ferragamo. "The new way the city looked to the future after the war, when the energy of Italy exploded." In this spirit, Portrait also aims to create "a new destination for the Milanese", with a ground-floor lifestyle hub in the seminary courtyard, the new public piazza and a pedestrian cut-through across the Quadrilatero.


The seminary's baroque entrance was once known to the traffic-harassed Milanese only for being the preferred spot of Pedro, a homeless man who assisted them with parking. It was stumbled upon by Lungarno's CEO, Valeriano Antonioli, in 2014, but the seminary was adamant that it would never be made into a hotel. It took four years of negotiations, plus a competition, for Lungarno to win the contract. In 2018 architect Michele de Lucchi, of Milan's Memphis design group, began renovations of the four-floor granite structure with La Soprintendenza, the Italian heritage body. The hotel soft-launched last November with the flagship store of up-and-coming leather jeweller Maria Sole Ferragamo, Leonardo's daughter. This is now joined by the first Italian location of the Monte Carlo-founded restaurant Beefbar, as well as a second outlet of Milanese fashion emporium Antonia. There's

also a basement pool with the columned grandeur of a Roman bath, and a spa run by the Italian "bio-hacking" clinic Longevity Suite will follow.

The gauntlet of transforming the monument's interior into a connoisseurial Milanese home was laid at the feet of Florentine designer Michele Bönan, who helped define Portrait's location-tailored vision: "It's like a gentleman with many houses. They belong to the same owner, but every city has its own logic." Here, that is the semantics of Milanese history, art and design, reborn through Florentine craftsmanship. Cardinal-red velvet cushions at once suggest La Scala and Gio Ponti chairs. Lacquer and brass coffee tables recall the rich golds and crushed blacks of Renaissance art at the Pinacoteca Ambrosiana, whose library was founded by Borromeo's cousin Federico. Two modernist paintings subliminally recall Leonardo da Vinci's *Portrait of a Musician*. Education and archives are running themes. The library at Portrait (with doors kept shut as though in a private home) is a comprehensive resource on Milanese architecture, design and fashion, including tomes about Prada and Armani, heroes of Milan's prêt-à-porter revolution. Sleekly lit photographs of design icons, such as surrealist architect Carlo Mollino's 1955 bent-wood coffee tables, hang alongside Salvatore Ferragamo's patents for his modern shoe inventions.

Reached by lifts as studded as travel trunks, the 73 rooms and suites are on the second and third floors, the former with direct access to the loggia, which functions as a stately colonial balcony over the piazza. Past walnut-lined corridors inspired by the city's iconic entrance halls, my

suite is a 920-square-foot modernist Milanese apartment, where black lampshades with bronzed lining throw golden-era light. The Carrara marble bathrooms have the glamour of Art Deco powder rooms; the walnut kitchenette could be a bar on the Orient Express. The coat wardrobe has rattan pocket doors, with leather handles twisted like antelope horns, made by Florentine masters. In the bedroom, a mirrored door can slide over the oval windows, creating complete blackout, and for the emperor bed, dressed in piped Frette sheets, there are seven pillow options. Portrait's young staff offer zippy, American-style service, the "Lifestyle team" securing guides with privileged access, hard-to-score tickets and tables at Norbert Niederkofler's Horta.

Meanwhile, 10\_11 restaurant is all geometric boiserie, with two 39-foot-long bars straight out of the aperitivo golden age. It has been entrusted to 32-year-old Alberto Quadrio, alumnus of Alain Ducasse's and Gualtiero Marchesi's establishments, who turns out sharing plates such as *riso al salto* (saffron risotto) topped with *ossobuco*. A more classically gourmet restaurant will focus on antique feast-day dishes. It's a credit to Ferragamo that he bypassed star-haloed chefs to bet on young talent; it also reflects a youthful Milan, after an influx from London. Portrait's direct and inclusive contribution moves the city on from the old exclusive luxury of the Four Seasons, Bulgari and Mandarin Oriental. Last year Casa Cipriani arrived and the Park Hyatt re-emerged after a makeover, with [Rocco Forte's] Carlton Milano and JK Place to follow. While all these openings are putting Milan on the lifestyle map, few can claim to have elevated the fabric of the city. 

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