

IN-STORE

Starwood fixes St. Regis Florence as part of \$100M renovation plan

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By KAYLA HUTZLER

Starwood Hotels & Resorts has renovated the famed Grand Hotel Florence and rebranded the property as a St. Regis hotel under a \$100 million, multiple-property renovation plan.

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After a 10-month restoration, the St. Regis Florence is now open, complete with a suite designed by Italian fashion house Bottega Veneta. The renovation is part of Starwood's plan to renovate and restore some of its properties in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

"Florence is vibrant, dynamic and one of the most cultural cities in the world, so the location is ideal for a luxury hotel like St. Regis Florence," said Tiffany Dowd, regional hotel inspector at [Condé Nast Johansens](#), Boston.

"Luxury is about the way you feel," she said. "Travelers want to be inspired, and hotels have to work even harder to provide that inspiration while not compromising their brands."

The hotel was formerly under the control of the Starwood Luxury Collection but did not belong to any of its branded lines.

Ms. Dowd is not affiliated with Starwood, but offered to comment as an industry expert.

Starwood did not respond before press deadline.

Italian architecture

Starwood has maintained the hotel's original design by Italian architect Filippo Brunelleschi, who also created the Duomo Santa Maria del Fiore.

Including the Florence property, St. Regis will debut 10 new or renovated hotels in the next six months, according to the brand.

"It is an extremely central part of Italy, of Europe, that drives a lot of fashion [and] a lot of art," said Albert Hererrera, vice president of hotels, destinations and tours at **Virtuoso**, New York. "That's why it's important from positional point of view."

The St. Regis Florence comprises 81 guest rooms and 19 suites.

Every guestroom and suite is named after Italian artists, benefactors or nobility, and each contain a unique display of furniture, paintings and crystal chandeliers.



The brand looked to celebrate Florence and used mainly local artisans, products and design elements to create decorations such as hand-painted Tuscan or Florentine landscapes in each room.

The St. Regis Florence will also contain the Etichetta Pinchiorri, a three-Michel star restaurant.

The restaurant features glass-art ceilings from the 19th century and a hand-blown Murano glass chandelier.



Weaving industries

The fashion and hotel industries blend once again in the St. Regis Florence, where Bottega Veneta creative director Thomas Maier has designed one of the guest suites.

The suite is done entirely in Bottega Veneta's signature palate of soft purples and earth tones to create a soothing, calming atmosphere, per St. Regis.

The suite is furnished in items from the Bottega Veneta furniture collection.

"It is obviously a very distinct style and not like the rest of the hotel," said Virtuoso's Mr. Herrera, who stayed in the suite during the launch event.

"It's obviously a one of a kind designer suite," he said. "I loved the lines and the muted tones of the room."

Indeed, Bottega Veneta will be reaching a prime target market through the collaboration, since guests staying at the hotel are likely able to afford Bottega Veneta products.



The St. Regis is no stranger when it comes to fashion icons.

For example, the brand recently named American designer Jason Wu as its brand ambassador ([see story](#)).

Given Bottega Veneta's understated luxury, the room is likely to intrigue guests.

“Bottega Veneta has always represented understated elegance with a focus on craftsmanship, quality and exclusivity,” Ms. Dowd said. “I expect this new suite will be successful in attracting those seeking this also in their luxury travel experiences.

“Whether it be fashion or travel, luxury should always be a tailored experience, so it make sense that the two industries make exceptional collaborations,” she said.

Final Take

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