

FLORENCE

Five-star hospitality and shopping in Florence's historic center.

BY SHARRI WHITING DE MASI

History combines with hospitality in the city of Florence, where five-star hotels often anchor at ancient piazzas. We visited three properties in the historic center, all of which offer easy access to the notable sites, museums, restaurants and shopping plazas.

J.K. PLACE FIRENZE overlooks the restored Piazza di Santa Maria Novella (here).

HOTEL DE SAVOY'S Repubblica Suite (right) has antique furniture and a contemporary design.



J.K. Place Firenze is the group's flagship property, overlooking the restored Piazza di Santa Maria Novella. We've admired J.K. Place Capri and J.K. Place Roma for their combination of haute design and comfort and J.K. Florence is no exception. What is unique to J.K. Florence is the presence of GM Claudio Meli (claudio@jkplace.com; 011-39-055-264-5181; fax 011-39-055-265-8387), whose exuberant love for his birthplace is contagious. Meli has been GM since the hotel opened in 2003 and is credited with organizing *Firenze, Sì*, a cooperative venture among 12 luxury properties with the aim of promoting the city. His pocket-sized book, "J.K. Essential Guide to Florence," contains his suggestions for shoppers and sightseers.

The boutique hotel has 20 different rooms decorated in neutral and pastel tones and each comes with a remote control called "the soap," which operates the lighting. In both rooms and public areas, there is extensive use of Italian menswear fabrics for upholstery and draperies, resulting in a tailored and comfortable ambiance. Like the J.K. Place hotels in Rome and Capri, this one was designed by Michael Bonan.

There are four Master Rooms, including Room No. 12, which overlooks the expansive piazza. Master Rooms are about 500 square feet and include a full living area with sofa and chairs and a fireplace, as well as the bedroom area with four-poster bed. The bathroom is

large, with tub, shower and separate WC. Guests booking Master Suites are entitled to a private transfer from / to the Florence airport.

The 400-square-foot Penthouse Suite, Room No. 24, is on two floors, with the bathroom upstairs and sleeping area downstairs. From the small terrace (and the bathtub), there is a view across the red-tiled roofs of the city, including Brunelleschi's dome.

The Panoramic Loft Room, No. 22, overlooks the cathedral of Santa Maria Novella and would suit two couples traveling together, as well as a family. On the lower level of the 500-square-foot suite is a spacious living room with a king-size sofa bed. There is a bathroom with walk-in shower on this level. Upstairs there is a bedroom that can either accommodate king or twin beds. There is a second bathroom with walk-in shower.

On the top floor of the hotel is a Duplex Junior Suite, Room No. 21, which measures about 400 square feet. Downstairs is a living area with a sofa bed, while the upper level includes the main bedroom (twins or king) and bathroom with walk-in shower. Most rooms at the hotel have a separate bathtub and shower.

For guests wishing complete peace and quiet, J.K. Place also has rooms and suites overlooking the courtyard rather than the piazza.

The J.K. Terrace on the piazza has both inside and outside dining and the J.K. Lounge is available for private events.



To discuss details, ask about dining, or to make booking requests, contact Angela Berti (angela@jkplace.com; 011-39-055-264-5181; fax 011-39-055-265-8387), operations manager & head concierge.

2016 was a banner year for the 102-room **Hotel de Savoy**, which reigns over the Piazza della Repubblica. The Renaissance Revival

(*Stile Umbertino*) building, built as a hotel in 1893, was among the first in Florence to have electric lighting, central heating and elevators. In 2016, the lobby and all 14 suites were renovated under the direction of corporate designer Olga Polizzi, whose mission is to reflect both the unique location and the Rocco Forte culture. Giancarlo Rizzi (grizzi.

savoy@roccofortehotels.com; 011-390-552-7351) is the new general manager at the Savoy, who joined following stints at five-star properties in Paris and Italy.

Ristorante Irene was also renovated in the last 18 months and offers a sophisticated Tuscan menu designed by Consulting Chef Fulvio Pierangelini and executed by Head Chef Giovanni Cosmai. Dine inside or at a piazza-side table.

Of the 14 Forte Suites, the Brunelleschi (No. 514) overlooks the piazza from the top floor of the hotel. The suite is accented with Polizzi's signature bright colors to complement the primarily white décor. There is a private steam room (also available in the Signoria Suite) in addition to the large marble bathroom and walk-in wardrobe. The suite is about 500 square feet and has a separate living room, with sofa bed upon request, and a large bedroom. Guests who book this suite or other suites are entitled to a one-way private airport transfer.

Room No. 301 is a 500-square-foot Classic Suite, which overlooks the Via dei Medici rather than the piazza. The living room is separate from the bedroom. A sofa bed can be provided in the living room upon request. The Suite also has a powder room in addition to a full bathroom with tub / shower. Moreover,



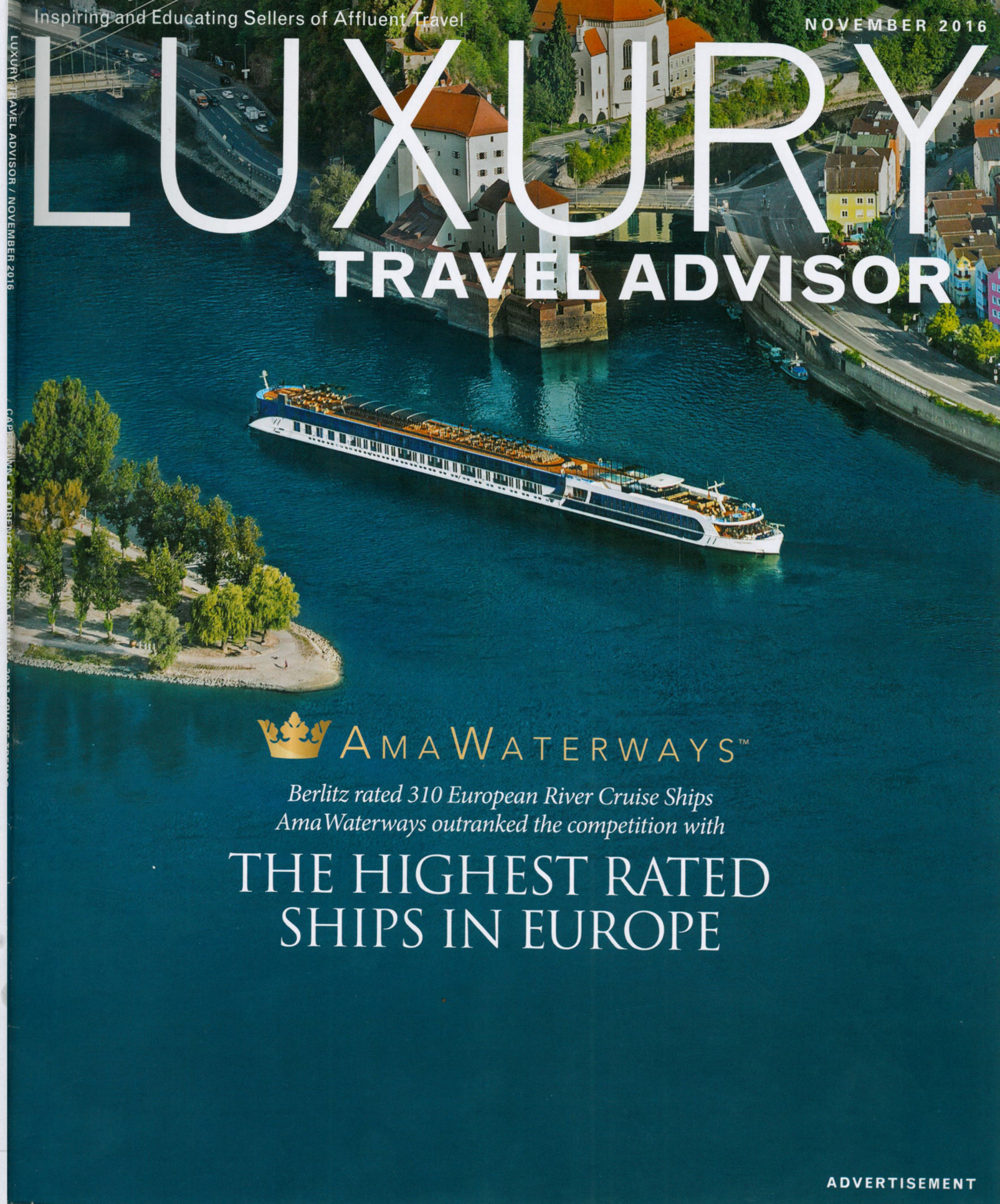
J.K. PLACE FIRENZE'S 400-square-foot Duplex Junior Suite (above) has two levels.

THE PANORAMIC SUITE (here) at Hotel Helvetia & Bristol provides views of the Brunelleschi dome and the Campanile di Giotto tower.

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