

## Four Seasons opens two new European properties

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Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul at the Bosphorus and Four Seasons Hotel Firenze

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts has opened two new European properties, both in restored historic buildings: a 19th century Ottoman palace in Istanbul and a Renaissance palazzo in Florence.

Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul at Bosphorus is the company's second property in the city, in an idyllic location on the European banks of the legendary Bosphorus strait. The Hotel reflects both the historic past and modern vibrancy of its waterfront setting, with a contemporary elegance that typifies the changing face of modern Istanbul.

The Hotel has 166 rooms within the original palace building, complemented by two new wings. Light, understated interiors reflect the coastal location, while decorative Turkish touches and traditional artworks reference the Bosphorus setting as the former summer retreat of the Ottoman elite.

Extensive outdoor amenities - including heated pool and whirlpool, bar pavilions and the Wedding Garden - are located along a 190 m (623 ft) waterfront terrace, framed by the Bosphorus and its ever-changing landscape of boats, yachts, cruise-ships and ferries. Beneath the terrace is a 2,100 sq m (22,605 sq ft) spa, sky-lit from above, featuring three hammams (Turkish baths). Function facilities include two ballrooms, which can accommodate receptions for up to 1,000 people.

The Hotel's main restaurant, Aqua, takes its inspiration from the Bosphorus, accenting dishes from Mediterranean, coastal territories with rich, local elements. The restaurant is relaxed and unpretentious, designed to maximise the languid enjoyment of the waterfront location. There is also an al fresco Pool Bar and Grill and contemporary and comfortable Lobby Bar and Lounge.

The Hotel marks a distinct change from the company's first property in the city, Four Seasons Hotel Istanbul at Sultanahmet - a converted neo-classic prison in the heart of the city's Old Town. The service, however, remains unmistakably Four Seasons, offering a seamless continuation of the standards for which the original property is so revered.

Four Seasons Hotel Firenze also opens today, following seven years of meticulous restoration. The Hotel is located on the edge of Florence's historic centre and occupies two protected Renaissance palaces, the 15th century Palazzo della Gherardesca and the Conventino, a 16th century Palazzo, which was once a convent. Between them lies Florence's largest private garden - the 11 acre (4.5 hectare) Giardino della Gherardesca - one of the most beautiful and undiscovered green spaces on the right bank of the River Arno.

The palace's ornately painted and crafted interiors offer guests the rare opportunity to view 15th - 19th century artworks in their original context. Frescoes, bas-reliefs, stuccoes and silk wallpapers have been carefully restored to reveal vivid detail dating back over five centuries.

Original Florentine art and craftsmanship can also be found in several of the Hotel's 117 bedrooms, suites and bathrooms. In addition, each bedroom and suite has individual dimensions and window-sizes and many also showcase idiosyncratic original features such as skylights, staircases, fireplaces and stoves.

The Hotel honours the city's culinary and cultural heritage. Il Palagio, the main restaurant, uses Tuscan ingredients sourced direct from local producers, the two-storey Spa features bespoke natural products created by Officina Profumo-Farmaceutica di Santa Maria Novella (one of the world's oldest herbal pharmacies, dating back to 13th century Florentine monks) and room amenities have been custom-made by Florence-based Lorenzo Villoresi.

The Hotel also has an outdoor pool, fitness centre, library/reading room and vast, sun-lit Atrium Bar.

At the far end of the gardens, the Conventino, (opening in September 2008) provides an arrangement of 37 rooms and suites - a 'hotel within the hotel' - served by its own reception, concierge, breakfast room and business centre. The garden location offers a restful alternative to the main Palazzo building.

The Hotel is the company's second property in Italy, the first, Four Seasons Hotel Milano, is an intimate retreat within a converted 15th century convent, just steps from Milan's couture houses and financial district. Florence will offer guests another location to explore Italy and enjoy the same service standards and hospitality as the long-established and reputable Milan property has.

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