

# Travel

Page

42

'In the past 18 months a raft of hip, stylish places to stay has opened for business'

Amanda Linfoot tours New England

GETTY IMAGES

Ponte Vecchio, River Arno, Florence



## The 20 best Italian mini-breaks

From palazzos and grand hotels to B&Bs away from the crowds, **Julia Buckley** knows where to stay this autumn

### 1 Riva Lofts Florence

The architect Claudio Nardi reworked his former studio into a hotel for his children to run, here on the Oltrarno side of the river, downstream from Santa Maria Novella. It's a retreat from Renaissance Florence, with vast windows and floating staircases in the rooms and a marble-trimmed pool in the garden. Much of the furniture has been upcycled, such as the theatre-trunks-turned-wardrobes. Riva Lofts is a pretty stroll along the riverbank to the Brancacci Chapel, whose fresco cycles by Masaccio and Masolino are some of the masterpieces of the early Renaissance.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from €150 (00 39 055 713 0272, rivalofts.com)

### 2 JK Place Florence

It's hard to see the entrance to JK Place, and that's not only because the spectacular basilica of Santa Maria Novella overshadows everything else in the piazza of the same name. This super-luxe retreat has a home-from-home feel that starts with the understated entrance and continues through the network of small living rooms up to the rooftop terrace pointed straight at the duomo. The rooms squeeze in fun touches, from four-poster beds to stuccoed walls. Santa Maria Novella is a short skip away, and the Cappelle Medicee at the Basilica of San Lorenzo,



Riva Lofts, Florence

whose grand Medici tombs were sculpted by Michelangelo, is a couple of blocks farther.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from €390 (00 39 055 264 5181, jkplace.com)

### 3 Grand Amore Hotel & Spa Florence

The opulent rooms with their lashings of scarlet velvet may not be to everyone's taste, but it's the service that makes Grand Amore an exceptional place to stay. A pre-stay questionnaire takes care of your breakfast and turndown snack ▶



WhatsApp for out-of-hours queries). There's a communal lounge with an honesty bar, and breakfast includes homemade yoghurt, dried fruit and pastries from a nearby bakery.  
**Details** B&B doubles cost from €80 (00 39 081 1849 5732, houseinnaples.it)

### 16 Romeo Hotel Naples

The kind of person who wanted a cigar room in a hotel would never have visited Naples back in the day; this new hotel is a mark of the city's resurgence. As well as said cigar room, Romeo has a rooftop plunge pool, wellness centre and oodles of luxe touches in the rooms, from floor-to-ceiling windows (some with Bay of Naples views) to racy peekaboo bathrooms. There's a Michelin-starred restaurant as well as a ninth-floor panoramic bar. You're by the port and near the Castel Nuovo, which dates from the 13th century.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from €320 (00 39 081 604 1580, romeohotel.it)

### 17 Byblos Art Hotel Verona

Marina Abramovic, Anish Kapoor and Marc Quinn are among the artists whose work is displayed at this art hotel, which takes its name so seriously that it feels like staying in a gallery. The 15th-century Villa Amista has been turned by Dino Facchini, Byblos's owner, into an outré hotel, where corridors are painted lime, lemon and purple and every stucco is coloured or gilded in the glam ballrooms. Suites get



Savoia Excelsior Palace, Trieste 19

their colour palettes from Byblos collections, while the spa is Pompeii-themed. There's a free shuttle to the beautiful northern city of Verona, 20 minutes away.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from €216 (00 39 045 685 5555, byblosarthotel.com)

### 18 Le Nuvole Genoa

Genoa is known for its Palazzi dei Rolli — 16th-century palaces so lavish that they were entered on to an official roll of digs fancy enough to entertain foreign dignitaries. Some are now banks, others museums, but this one — Palazzo Lamba

Doria — has been converted into an unassuming hotel that pits clean-lined Scandi furniture against frescoes. Here in the *caruggi* — Genoa's warren-like medieval centre — you'll find some of La Superba's most historic businesses, including Verdi's favourite café, Klaiuguti.  
**Details** B&B doubles cost from €110 (00 39 010 251 0018, hotellenuvole.it)

### 19 Savoia Excelsior Palace Trieste

That rare beast — a grande dame that's still grand — sits plum on the waterfront in this northeastern city, the Gulf of

Trieste ever-blue from the windows. Downstairs the decor is as belle époque as the day it opened in 1911. Upstairs the rooms have been modernised with a cool colour palette that refuses to distract from those sea views, and terraces cantilevered over the water in front-facing rooms. A block away is Piazza Unita d'Italia, the frothy Habsburg-built main square hovering on the water, while a ten-minute bus ride up the coast is the fairytale Miramare Castle, built for Maximilian, Emperor of Mexico, shortly before his assassination in 1867.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from €140 (00 39 0407 7941, starhotelscollezione.com)

### 20 Butera 28 Palermo

The Sicilian capital is on the up as a weekend destination thanks to an explosion of new openings and an upbeat feel to the nightlife in the old town. Butera 28 marries old and new as effortlessly as the city itself: a 17th-century gilded palazzo that was the home of Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa, the author of *The Leopard* (and is still stuffed with family antiques on the first floor), but has been transformed into a set of 12 colourful self-catering apartments with a smart, retro feel with sea views in four of them. This area, Kalsa, is known for its nightlife; recover with a morning-after cooking lesson from the owner, Duchess Nicoletta Polo Lanza Tomasi.

**Details** Room-only apartments cost from €80 (00 39 333 316 5432, butera28.it)

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