

The Italian local

Live like a Tuscan in this urban escape that combines its Renaissance origins with 1980s Postmodern design.

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Story by Mary Gray

It's close to sundown on a Friday at the buzzy Hoxton hotel in Florence (qantas.com/hotels/hoxtonflorence) and I've spent most of the afternoon parked in a snug armchair in the street-facing lobby bar, typing on my laptop. Florentine workers take calls or coffee breaks while enthusiastic hotel guests map out their evening plans over beers. When the bilingual barista Davide pops over to clear my long-finished cappuccino from the table and bid me goodbye, I take it as a sign to close all tabs – at the counter, on the screen – and move into weekend mode.

Daniela, a friend who lives in the neighborhood – Piazza della Libertà, the northernmost point of central Florence – wanders in for our reservation at Enoteca Violetta, the low-lit wine bar one room over from the lobby. Here, the crowd skews local and the wine list cosmopolitan yet niche. We're in the mood for cocktails so I settle into our plush semi-circle booth and order a mescal-rich reinterpretation of a Bloody Mary.



Heiko Prigge



Julius Hirtzberger (opposite). Heiko Prigge

The strengths of “The Hox”, as it’s affectionately known, are in day-to-day moments like this – the after-work aperitivo, the mid-morning pick-me-up for visitors who have been sightseeing since 7am or the nightcap at Alassio, the onsite Italian Riviera-inspired restaurant, where the fritto misto transports me briefly to the seaside.

Rather than focusing on bucket lists and hyper-luxury, this stay’s clear intention is to build a blended community of holiday merry-makers and neighborhood regulars, lending a “third space” vibe to the communal areas. At the heart of it is a garden terrace flanked by two polar-opposite structures: a prototypical Renaissance palazzo, replete with an airy outdoor loggia, and the Branzi Building, a Postmodern complex designed by Florentine architect Andrea Branzi in the 1980s, the sleek façade of which looks like fancy Venetian blinds turned sideways. Plus, there’s a three-bedroom house for six guests available.

My room in the “Renaissance half” of the hotel tips its hat to Tuscan tradition with touches such as marbled-paper-inspired lampshades, yet it’s anchored by a distinctly millennial-pink headboard on the king-sized bed. The Branzi Building playbook, on the other hand, is all geometric motifs and sharp, dramatic lines. Together the two structures hold 158 rooms and having the keys to one is really the only thing separating The Hox’s guests from the locals. That, of course, is by design. ✎

