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THE WEEK RECOMMENDS

Palazzo Durazzo Suites in Genoa: a palatial gem in northern Italy

Live your Italian dream in this astonishing and recently restored palace in the heart of the city



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(Image credit: Palazzo Durazzo)

BY NICK HENDRY PUBLISHED APRIL 25, 2024



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Turin.

Those savvy few who do head down to this charming port city will be glad they did. You'll find exquisite medieval and Renaissance architecture here, delicious cuisine (after all, this is the birthplace of pesto – a fact celebrated proudly and often), and a tradition of hospitality that goes back more than 400 years.

At that time, Genoa was the banking capital of Europe, with important visitors from all around the world arriving to seek finance from the city for their latest ventures. The most wealthy families of the time were instructed by the city's ruler to construct grand palaces capable of hosting these dignitaries at a moment's notice. More than 40 Palazzi dei Rolli – Palaces of the Scrolls – were inaugurated and kept running 365 days a year, just in case a ship came into the harbour carrying an entourage big enough, in both size and stature, to warrant their use.

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One of these was the Palazzo Durazzo, built in 1624. Overlooking the port and resplendent with a gold-painted façade gleaming in the sun, it has now been restored to that former glory, and its original purpose.



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Why stay here?

Now known as Palazzo Durazzo Suites, and in the care of a descendant of the family who built it, this building is a magnificent place to stay. Emanuela Brignone Cattaneo, wife of the owner, and the architect responsible for the restoration of many other Genovese palaces, has overseen a complete restoration. The result is a breathtaking edifice with jaw-dropping details around every corner, giving guests a true taste of the splendour of Renaissance aristocratic life.



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(Image credit: Palazzo Durazzo)

Entering the property from Via del Campo brings guests into a gargantuan entrance hall, with soaring ceilings and the standards of the family proudly displayed on the walls. An epic central staircase leads to reception (don't worry, there's also a lift, in case the journey has left you weary) with staff on hand to take your bags up and guide you to your suite. In mine, light flooded through the enormous veranda windows which opened to a balcony with a view of the ancient harbour.

A massive, extremely comfortable four-poster bed sat at its heart, behind which an elegant bar (stocked with wines from the family estates, naturally) was hidden, as well as the door to the expansive bathroom (stocked with full-size Diptyque products).

The shower was huge, even by luxury hotel standards. But despite all these high-end amenities, the real star was the ceiling: almost preposterously high and decorated with an intricate fresco representing the four rivers that criss-cross the



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Eating and drinking

At the centre of the hotel is a large and extremely welcoming lounge bar.

Cocktails, that (award-winning) family wine, and snacks are served here, alongside a vast array of other drinks. The room's high ceilings are brought closer by the addition of a mezzanine space which can be used for more discreet meetings.



(Image credit: Palazzo Durazzo)

Breakfast is served in another light-filled room towards the front of the hotel, facing south over the harbour. Among the usual staples of a continental buffet is the city's famous pesto – told you they celebrate it often – which at first may feel out of place, but once you taste it all scepticism about its inclusion will melt away. It is said that the terroir nearby makes the basil taste better – this may or may not be true, but the pesto is certainly delicious. Liberally smearing it on some freshly baked bread was not my usual idea of a breakfast treat, but it did not disappoint.



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Via Garibaldi, mere steps away from the Palazzo Durazzo entrance, is lined with more of the Palazzi to visit – including one at [Via Garibaldi 12](#) which has been rather inventively converted into a luxury homeware store – and there is an impressive supply of ornately decorated churches to visit with art collections to marvel at.



(Image credit: Garsya / Getty Images)

Meandering through the narrow medieval alleyways will fill countless hours, as you stop at vintage shops, or simply whenever you detect the scent of the famous basil. If you wish to roam a little farther afield, you can charter the hotel's boat to take you the short distance along the coast to Portofino or Cinque Terre.

The verdict

The accommodations at Palazzo Durazzo are, well, palatial. It's evident that careful attention to historic detail has been paid throughout the restoration, and the scale of



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owners' knowledge of, and passion for, the city is evident, and gives the impression that this truly is a luxury hotel from which to visit Genoa, not just a resort that happens to be within the city limits. And therefore the purpose for which this extraordinary place was created, four centuries ago, is truly being fulfilled once more.



(Image credit: Palazzo Durazzo)

Nick Hendry was a guest of Palazzo Durazzo, where rooms start from €450 (£390); palazzodurazzo.com.

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