

ARareWorld.

THE TRAVEL INTELLIGENCE JOURNAL



Anguilla

ZEMI BEACH HOUSE
FOUR SEASONS
BELMOND CAP JULUCA
CUISINART
MALLIOUHANA

Belmond Cap Juluca

MILAN

Four Seasons Armani Bulgari

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

ARAREWORLD'S READERSHIP base was established in partnership with some of the world's most respected financial institutions. We were previously a publication available by invitation only, and only recently opened ourselves up to the generally curious.

There was really not much reason for being so private, other than privacy itself. We are all now very pleased to welcome these new readers, who themselves are still some of the best-traveled individuals we've ever met.

And there is plenty of reason to be open in distribution. There is much interest surrounding the world of luxury hotels, whether for planning the year's upcoming sojourns, a one-in-a-lifetime sort of trip, or just engaging one's own sense of curiosity and aspiration. We welcome them all.

Safe travels,

Matt Wollman
Chairman & CEO

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Photograph above courtesy of Bulgari Hotel.



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ABOUT US

Welcome to ARareWorld, the innovative Global Travel Intelligence Journal. Within these covers lie opportunities to discover new places and experiences that you may not know about; honest, candid and unbiased reviews of the best hotels, resort, and travel experiences in the world; and access to our unique and valuable offers from the world's most accomplished and respected destinations, brands and specialized service providers. Our mission is simple—to deliver the facts as we see them to our carefully selected base of subscribers with the utmost integrity and professionalism. We share your values and we discharge our responsibility to enhance your life with one priority in mind—you—the discerning and sophisticated traveler.

FROM THE EDITOR

WELCOME TO the April 2019 edition of ARareWorld!

There is much to discover in the world, yet even after over 10 years of combing the planet for the very much luxury hotel experiences on offer, we’re still having to repeat certain destinations for one reason or another.

We have visited the feature destination for this issue, Anguilla, on more than one occasion, the first time being when we dedicated an entire issue to the island in 2010. We’ve made our way back to Anguilla once again for this April 2019 edition, as all of the resorts there have recently reopened since being damaged by the monumental hurricanes of 2017. Four of the five reviews in this issue are repeats of the past, with post-hurricane updates. One was a first-time review for us, as it’s actually a relatively new property.

There’s plenty of new discoveries coming down the pipeline...

This is also not our first time to Milan, though we it is our first time reviewing these particular three hotels. We’ve previously visited the city to offer a somewhat incomplete portrait of its numerous hotel offerings, but with this most recent visit, our archive now includes all of the fashion capital’s most meaningful five-star addresses.

Not to worry, though. The rest of 2019 will not be so full of repeated destinations or properties. There’s plenty of new discoveries coming down the pipeline, including a full exploration of South Korea’s top luxury hotels, and a deep dive in to the English Countryside.

Thank you again for your continued readership. It’s a pleasure to travel as your unofficial advance team on this journey never-ending. Look for your next issue of ARareWorld in May, when we will be delivering stories of the newest additions in the Maldives and Dubai, as well as a design update from one of DC’s most attractive hotel addresses.

Travel safe,

Patrick Waechter

Managing Editor



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ZEMI BEACH HOUSE

Set apart and private.



WE'VE BEEN anxious to return to Anguilla to check out the island's recovery in the aftermath of Hurricane Irma in 2017. Most of the high-end resorts we'd so enjoyed on past visits had taken the damage-forced closings as an opportunity to remodel.

Our first stop was to one of the least damaged: Zemi Beach House, a lovely boutique property on the northeast side of the island, away from the rest of the high-end resorts. Staff had boarded the structures well enough to prevent substantial interior damage to the 65 keys. The worst beating was to the resort's rich tropical landscaping, but it's well on the road to recovery.

We were checked in painlessly at the reception building, then ferried via golf-buggy past the striking spa, which occupies a 300-year-old wooden Thai building. Once inside our fourth-floor Premium King room, we realized our building, number four, is on the crest of a steep hillside, with a full view down across the resort to the fine white sand and turquoise water of Shoal Bay East.

The bedroom in our category is attractive, though not particularly remarkable—but the bathroom is. Look up, and there's a cone in the ceiling rising to a skylight. We loved the ceramic basket-weave tiling on the wall. The towels are plush, the robes comfy, the Malin + Goetz amenities gentle enough on sensitive skin, and the rum bath salts terrific. Our only objection was that once in the stand-alone tub, there was no table or shelf—for, say, a book, a phone or a towel.

We arrived on a Wednesday night, which is Caribbean BBQ Night at the all-day dining spot 20 Knots. Translation: buffet only. We found the offerings none too appetizing, even though the tables were in the sand and the music was lovely. The fine-dining restaurant, Stone, and the Rhum Bar are open only on weekends.

The only dining option (other than room service) was Bohio Bar & Lounge. The open-air lounge is beautiful, with soft lighting and romantic views across

the dramatically lit main swimming pool. We ordered grilled octopus, which was flavorful, but a bit chewier than we're accustomed to. Also, the service was odd. We began with a waitress who was enthusiastic and helpful, but midway, a taciturn waiter took over.

We were pleased to find turn-down service had left warm chocolate chip cookies, which we enjoyed on the balcony to the sound of waves. After a long soak in the



...the staff's affection for Zemi was contagious.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ZEMI BEACH HOUSE

tub, we had a wonderful sleep in the comfortable bed.

Breakfast was a turn for the better. We found the quality of the pastries and the buffet miles better than the barbecue offerings. It made us all the more disappointed we'd had no chance to try Stone.

After breakfast, we headed to the spa, which has five treatment rooms marked by rustic doors and gleaming wood floors. There's a choice of relaxation areas and a pool fed by a waterfall that's kept to body temperature. You can visit the juice bar, or take yoga classes on a large terrace. The white marble hammam is the largest in the Caribbean. To complete the wellness picture,

the nice-sized fitness center is equipped with Precor equipment and views.

Service on the whole was very good. Housekeeping was efficient and a few requests for extra items were taken care of promptly and with charm. Mark, the night manager, who'd actually taken us to our room on check-in, was always around to make sure things were going well, and the staff's affection for Zemi was contagious.

Our favorite service story for Zemi was a bridal party that decided to walk down the beach to Gwen's, a nearby reggae bar. Apparently Gwen's serves lethal

rum drinks, and the hotel hurriedly placed security men along the beach to make sure none of the rum-enthused guests tried to jump into the ocean (which was very rough that night) on their way home. We'd happily return here. ●●●●

Zemi Beach House

Anguilla

General Manager: Paolo Paia

zemibeach.com

@zemibeachhouse

DOS & DON'TS

DO come for one of the best beaches in the Caribbean. It's not often you find such a white expanse of fine sand, and reefs are right off the shore.

DO consider a suite. Some have plunge pools, all have kitchens, and the décor is a bit Caribbean, a bit Balinese.

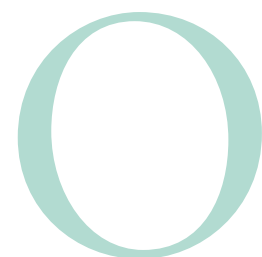
DO consider that Zemi is an approximately \$30 one-way taxi ride away from Anguilla's more famous restaurants, which can be an annoying extra cost.

DON'T miss a visit to the spa, and make a reservation in advance during the high season. It's too special to miss.

DON'T worry about Zemi's steep hillside. Buggies are plentiful and the buildings have elevators.

FOUR SEASONS RESORT AND RESIDENCES ANGUILLA

Prime coastline.



OUR SECOND STOP, the Four Seasons, suffered only moderate damage. The complex of cement international-style buildings were too strong for even the intense winds of Irma.

We'd last visited the property when it was a Viceroy. The lobby is still arrestingly beautiful, airy and modern with continuous views to the Atlantic. Alright, we thought. Good start. We were checked in comfortably ensconced on a sofa, then ushered to our One-Bedroom Ocean-View suite in a building conveniently close to everything.

We found the décor of the suite's living room generic hotel room, a let-down after the lobby. In fact, our main issue with the resort was that it could be lifted up and placed anywhere; the architecture,

while modern, is fairly pedestrian and hardly reflects its site. That said, the suite was comfortable and we enjoyed the large hot tub on the balcony. The bed is so comfortable we don't actually remember closing our eyes.

It was late afternoon when we arrived, so we went straight for a swim and a sundowner at the infinity-edged Sunset Pool, set on a cliff between two bays. Service there was prompt and good-natured. For a wedding party who'd ordered champagne, the waiter



from the lounge marched straight-faced into the pool, chest-deep, to deliver it.

That night, we dined at Cobà, the fine-dining restaurant perched on rocks over crashing waves. The setting is magical, but dinner was surprisingly mediocre, as was the service. Our waiter seemed far more interested in guests at another table. Breakfast is also served at Cobà, and we made the mistake of trying the buffet, which ranked among the worst in our travels—scones like hockey pucks, tired pre-beaten eggs poured from a large container at the omelet station... a must to avoid. The next morning, we ordered from the a la carte menu (which no one had offered us the first day) and had a delicious poached egg on avocado toast.

We checked into the spa for a massage, where our masseuse, Wayne, was excellent. When he's not busy in the spa, he offers guests short shoulder massages by the pools or on the beaches, so we'd already become fans. The two-floor, 17-treatment-room seaside spa has beautiful views, but there were doors slamming and odd noises throughout. After the treatment,



we were summarily guided back to the changing room. No offers of a relaxation area, no tea, no extra pampering.

We had lunch at the Half Shell Bar on Barnes Bay, which is lined with the resort villas. Eureka! Delicious fresh local food, and a fun staff. We happily spent the afternoon on the beach there, and instead of dinner, stayed for the small bites offered at happy hour, after which we returned to our suite and cranked up the hot tub.

We didn't have a chance to try the Mediterranean-themed Bamboo Bar & Grill, which is on the Mead's

Overall, the resort has seen a vast improvement since transferring from Viceroy to Four Seasons.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS RESORT AND RESIDENCES ANGUILLA



Bay side—a gorgeous beach—with the residences and the Sea Center.

Service ran from hot to cold. For the most part, we encountered truly charming, amusing staff anxious to please, but we also found indifference and apathy, particularly at Cobá.

The 35-acre Four Seasons is only 180 keys, but it's spread out on its point and across the coastline in such a way that it feels like a much, much larger hotel. We found it, all told, a bit impersonal. That's not to say it doesn't have everything, including a really impressive kid's area and program (including fountains the kids can ride bikes through), two beaches, beautiful pools and landscaping, and rooms with all the bells and whistles.

Overall, the resort has seen a vast improvement since transferring from Viceroy to Four Seasons. As far as we could tell, the other guests were happy, but it just didn't have that level of Four Seasons service to which we've become accustomed. No one anticipated our needs. Requests were met cheerfully, but that we had to ask for what should have been intuitive service was a let-down. It's something we hope will change. ●●●

Four Seasons Resort and Residences Anguilla

Anguilla

General Manager: José Adames

fourseasons.com/anguilla

@fsanguilla



DOS & DON'TS

DO consider taking one of the 31 villas, which range up to five bedrooms. The décor is far more stylish (more what you'd expect from Kelly Wearstler, who designed the resort interiors when it opened as a Viceroy). They also have dedicated staff, along with privacy, your own pool and your own sliver of beach. It's a whole different world from the rest of the resort.

DO have at least one lunch or happy hour at Half Shell, and talk to the staff. They're warm and full of humor.

DO stick to the a la carte menu at breakfast.

DON'T miss a single sunset at the Sunset Pool. It's an experience. And return for excellent sushi and other Asian dishes at the open-air Sunset Lounge, which is very beautiful.

DON'T fail to visit the beach at Mead's Bay. It's not obvious, on the residences end of the resort. It's Barnes Bay you see from the Sunset Pool, but Mead's is a world-class beach.

BELMOND CAP JULUCA

A legend reborn.





BEFORE BELMOND stepped in, the white Moroccan-themed Cap Juluca, which had long been regarded as one of the best resorts in the Caribbean, had taken a precipitous downhill turn that was driving away even its most faithful return guests. Belmond put 15 months and \$121 million into the property with top-to-bottom renovations. Work had just begun when Irma hit, but after a short recovery, the project continued. Now, once again, the 108-key Cap Juluca is a bastion of luxury.

We arrived shortly after the official opening, so not all the venues were open, and there were still workers busily replanting the gardens and finishing off a few villas. Even still, we were duly impressed. We were greeted warmly, quickly checked in, and shown by our butler to our Beachfront Junior Suite.

Gone are the outdated white tile floors, replaced by stylish black tiles. The spacious rooms in this category have a sofa, a dining table, and a terrace with lounge chairs, an outdoor dining space, and a comfortable couch for reading. The bathroom is flooded with light by a glass wall to a solarium (although it's not possible to enter), and the soaking tub fits two. We did have trouble opening the sliding doors to the terrace. Eventually, we gave up and exited through the front door and taking the beach path to the terrace.

Often at hotels with butler service, once you've been greeted, the service vanishes unless you have a specific request. Our butler, a cheerful young woman, checked in each day to see what we needed, and voluntarily showed up to ferry us via golf buggy to our spa appointment.

Take the path from your building to the long, glorious beach, and you'll find your own lounge chairs

As the sun sets and the lights come on throughout the villas and the restaurants on the point, the white domes and arches take on an air of mystery.



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF BELMOND CAP JULUCA



and umbrella waiting for you; no jousting for chairs here. Watchful attendants provide towels and coolers with water. Service stations are spread out along the beach so that even when the resort is full, service should be prompt. As the beaches on Anguilla are open to the public, excursion boats do dock in the bay, but most of the time, the beach feels completely private, with lovely views of St. Martin's mountains.

At night, Cap Juluca is intensely romantic. As the sun sets and the lights come on throughout the villas and the restaurants on the point, the white domes and arches take on an air of mystery. Maundays Club is lovely for sunsets, although most people remain rooted on the beach for the display.

We had a drink at the bar at Cip's, where the F&B manager from sister property Cipriani's in Venice was training the team. We went on to dinner at Pimms, which was a bit disappointing; the new executive chef, who comes from the Jean Georges Vongerichten restaurant at the St. Regis Bora Bora, was presenting a short temporary menu as he awaited provisions.

Breakfast is served at Cip's, with views across the bay and beach. Everything at the buffet was good, although most of the guests were ordering a la carte. There doesn't seem to be an a-la-minute egg option at the buffet and no one staying at a resort of this level wants eggs from a warming tray.

Our only quibble was with the decision to pack the Arawak spa and fitness center in one of the beachfront villas. The result is a mere three treatment rooms and a cramped room with TechnoGym equipment, meant to be enjoyed by guests of all 108 keys. It's beautiful, but is clearly an afterthought, not a destination.

In general, we were impressed by the service, especially considering how short a time Cap Juluca had been open, and were really pleased by the new décor. We look forward to returning in the future to experience everything in full swing. ●●●

Belmond Cap Juluca

Anguilla

General Manager: Tiago Sarmiento

belmond.com/capjuluca

@belmondcapjuluca



DOS & DON'TS

DO make your spa appointments far in advance. The paucity of treatment rooms might leave you disappointed if you wait.

DO consider one of the new pool suites or private pool villas. The Jonquil Suite, for instance, has both a pool and a jacuzzi, perfect if you like a little privacy.

DO take into account, if you have mobility issues, that there are stairs to upper-level rooms, as well as in the main building. Golf buggies, however, are plentiful for transportation around the resort.

DON'T expect snorkeling in the bay. It's best to take an excursion or charter a boat, particularly to Prickly Pear Cays, two small islands. Remember that it hasn't been long since Irma, so the coral is still recovering.

CUISINART GOLF RESORT & SPA

Looks Greek, feels French.



ANGUILLA

Unless privacy is a strong concern, eschew the seven villas and choose instead one of the 91 keys in the ten beachfront buildings or atop the main building.

CUISINART TOOK quite a hit in the storm, and one of the casualties was its much-written-about hydroponic greenhouse. The resort's white Santorini-style architecture (complete with a blue dome) remains, but Irma was the impetus for a complete remodel.

The entry is dramatic white-on-white with whimsical marine details, blue artwork, and continuous views across the pool to the sea. The former lobby bar has been transformed into the chic KazBar, serving tapas to jewel-toned seating areas with fuchsia lampshades hanging insouciantly over the bar.

We were checked in quickly, and since we'd arrived early and our room wasn't ready, we opted to have lunch at Mosaic, the new open-air, all-day dining venue. Lunch was delicious, and we were escorted to

our Beachfront One Bedroom Suite the moment we were done.

Gone are the clunky furnishings of yore. The new décor is light and airy: pale cerused wood floors, curved, sleekly modern cream-colored sofas in both the living room and bedroom, round glass coffee tables, chrome-framed chairs, white desks and cabinets and white walls. With the turquoise sea outside, the effect is striking. The one-bedroom suites have substantial balconies and come with a walled solarium and outdoor shower.

CuisinArt also has seven villas with up to five bedrooms, but most are garden-view, and feel oddly unfinished despite the new Roche-Bobois furniture, which is dwarfed in the large rooms. Unless privacy is a strong concern, eschew the seven villas and choose instead one of the 91 keys in the ten beachfront buildings or atop the main building.





PHOTOGRAPHS BY ENVISIONWORKS, INC. COURTESY OF CUISINART

We had dinner at Santorini, the restaurant at the 18th hole of the Greg Norman-designed golf course. The Portuguese Chef de Cuisine Francisco Pico is quite talented. Executive Chef Alan Larch oversees an interesting selection of tastes, from Mediterranean to Japanese to Caribbean. We had sashimi at Tokyo Bay, which was also very good with romantic views of the lighted fountains along the reflecting pools that lead to the beach. And we loved our lunch at the Beach Bar & Grill, where we had calamari and shrimp with a spicy red sauce. All-in-all, food at CuisinArt is a definite draw. The Reef, CuisinArt's sister hotel, offers additional choices for meals, and you can actually walk down the beach to a couple of local restaurants.

The beach itself is gorgeous, with fine, creamy sand and views of St. Martin. CuisinArt's padded lounge

chairs are plentiful, and the moment you show up, you're provided with plush towels and a cooler with water. The attendants are on point, but don't push you to order.

We rounded out the stay with a visit to the 27,000-square-foot spa, where you can literally spend a whole day. After an expert massage, we were provided with tea in the semi-circular relaxation area with ocean views. We didn't get a chance to use the fitness center, but it's large, and equipped with brand-new TechnoGym machines.

Service was generally excellent. When we first reached our suite, we noticed there were no bedside lights (the new ones hadn't arrived yet), but when we expressed dismay, someone arrived with two within a few minutes. The employees seemed happy, and I was told by a housekeeper that during the whole period the resort had been closed for repair, the staff was paid. Many of them worked on the restoration.

We enjoyed CuisinArt even before the renovation, and have many fond memories of previous stays here. This was the best yet, and we'd happily return. ●●●

CuisinArt Golf Resort & Spa

Anguilla

General Manager: Stephane Zaharia

cuisinartresort.com

@visitcuisinart

DOS & DON'TS

DO bring the kids. There's a deliriously colorful new waterpark for the small ones, and plenty of activities for the tweens and teens as well.

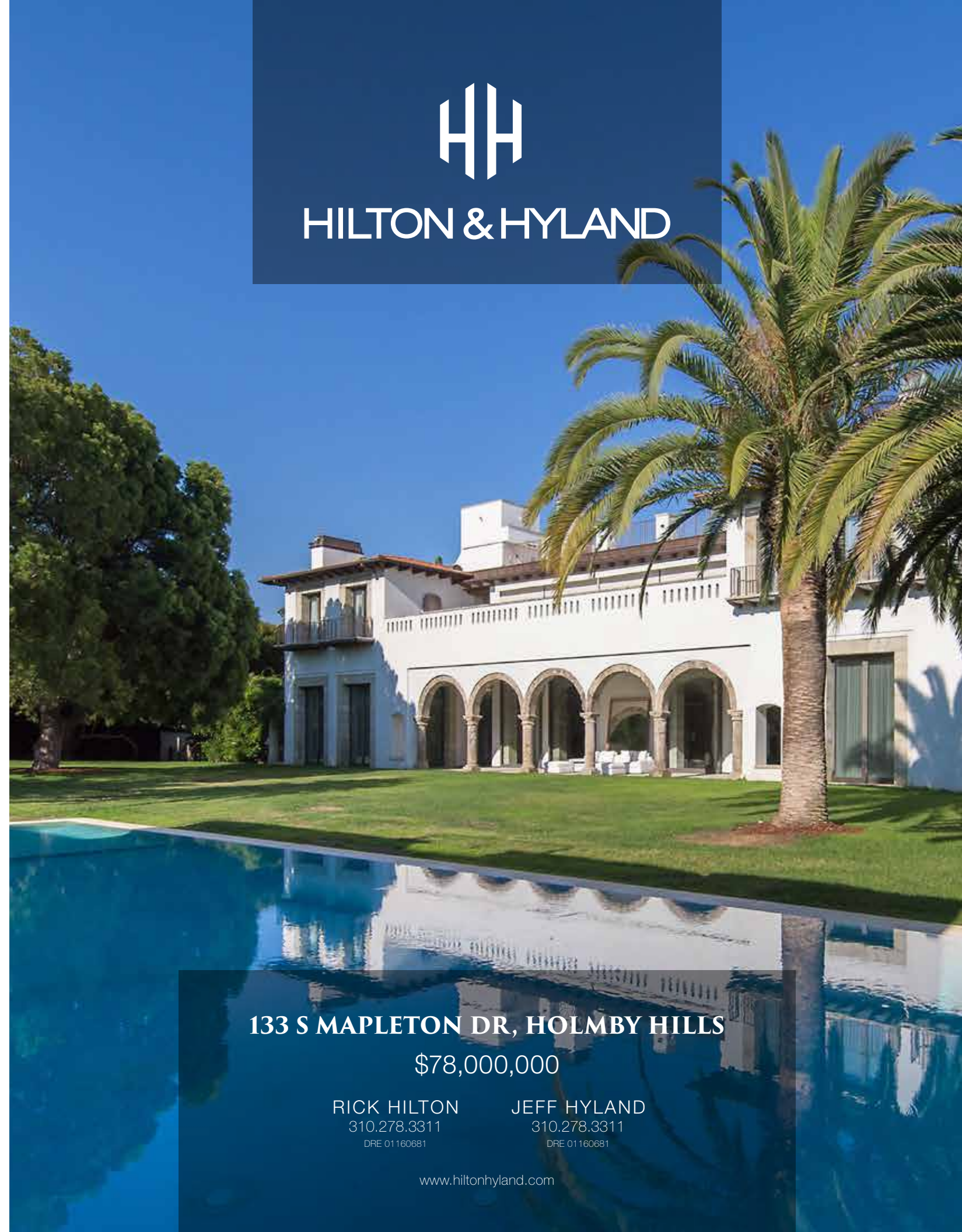
DO book your spa treatments in advance of your arrival, particularly during high season.

DO plan on some golf. The course was extensively renovated after Irma, and it's challenging and endowed with beautiful views.

DON'T book an upper-floor suite if you have mobility issues. There are no elevators.



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MALLIOUHANA AN AUBERGE RESORT

The grande dame returns.



AS ANGUILLA'S FIRST luxury resort, Malliouhana sits atop its promontory between Meads Bay and Turtle Cove with an air of glamor and privilege. This wasn't always so. The resort fell upon bad times and was closed for several years. It reopened in late 2014 as part of Auberge, with stylish and witty décor by TAL Studio and subtle changes to the white Caribbean architecture with Moorish arches. There was a collective holding of breath after Irma hit.

In fact, the resort has restored the much-lauded interiors, while adding a few new touches (for instance, each room now has a mid-century modern chrome chair with black, white and red button-tufted cushions), and new carpets are being custom-made in India. But there's much more afoot, including a sprawling new spa, new beachfront villas on the Meads Bay side, and a new beachfront grill to be named Leon's, in honor of the hotel's founder. Above the grill there will be an event space that can double for cooking demonstrations or mixology classes on rainy days. At the far end of Turtle Cove, a new, very private two-bedroom villa will have its own pool.

We were met by Malliouhana representatives at the airport in St. Maarten, driven to the pier for a 20-minute Calypso ferry ride to Anguilla, and met on arrival for the short drive to the resort. We stepped out of the car and breathed a sigh at the lobby, which opens via tiered mirror-tiled floors down to the sparkling sea. Pardon the cliché, but it's breathtaking. The pastel aqua and yellow walls throughout the resort are crisp and airy, and there's something about the hues that will turn the worst curmudgeon's mood to buoyant.

We were checked in promptly and shown to our Ocean View Premium room in the main building. These



large rooms have seating areas, balconies, and a wall of delightful animal paintings by a Haitian artist. The TV is hidden in a massive, ornate mirror, which is not as successful as it sounds—because of the reflective surface, the picture can only be viewed when the aqua curtains are closed—but that’s a quibble. We loved our room, and its framed Slim Aarons photographs.

The new Executive Chef Jusman So is gifted. Food throughout the resort has wonderful pops of flavor—a

risotto, for instance, with preserved lemons, and branzino on a bed of ratatouille. As a result, Malliouhana is again a food destination.

Service at the beach was good, and though Leon’s was not yet open, we were able to sit at the bar and enjoy tender jerk chicken barbecued only a few yards away. There’s also a nice cocktail menu, and we could imagine that once open, Leon’s will be a big draw. The creamy beach at Meads Bay is nearly a mile

We stepped out of the car and breathed a sigh at the lobby, which opens via tiered mirror-tiled floors down to the sparkling sea. Pardon the cliché, but it’s breathtaking.

long, capped at the other end by the Four Seasons.

Also not yet open during our stay is the new Bar Soleil in the main building, which will be the spot for viewing sunsets. It’s beside the two-tiered infinity



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF MALLIOUHANA, AN AUBERGE RESORT



DOS & DON'TS

DO enjoy Café Celeste, the new fine dining restaurant. The menu is Mediterranean with inspired touches (although you can also enjoy simply grilled filets of fish of the day).

DO consider going in April or after, when the “winter” winds have died down. Of course, there’s no bad time to go to Malliouhana, and the winds are divine, but they turn the sea choppy. During the winds, it’s still possible to swim, but getting out of the surf can be a challenge for even the strongest swimmer.

DO book the spa in advance. It’s going to be popular. In addition to regular Auberge treatments, more Anguilla-related options are being added, along with yoga and Pilates classes.

DON'T miss the tennis, basketball and pickleball courts.

pools—one for adults, one for families—which are lined with striped cabanas and yellow lounge chairs. Service at the pools was excellent. We never wanted for anything, and our chicken pita lunch was delicious.

Housekeeping was also excellent. Our housekeeper, Shirley, was thorough and thoughtful. We’d expressed a desire for milk for our morning espresso, and thought the request had been forgotten until we opened the complimentary minibar and discovered a small jug of milk awaiting us.

There was next to nothing to complain about. The bed was wonderful, and we slept well, waking to the distant sound of a rooster somewhere in the richly landscaped 25 acres. The only damper was the manner in which the locked connecting door allowed sounds to carry from the next room. Our neighbors seemed to frequently disagree. Loudly.

Malliouhana will always beckon us back. It’s an understated place that, once discovered, you may very well wish to return. ●●●

Malliouhana, an Auberge Resort

Anguilla

General Manager: Kapil Sharma

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ARMANI

Beige, but make it fashion.



If having a soothing co-ed spa is high on your list of priorities, this is the ideal choice in town.



THIS WAS THE second opening for Armani Hotels in 2011. The first was in Dubai's Burj Khalifa in 2010. We reviewed that property previously, noting its subdued design palate with rich earth-toned textiles, array of contemporary lounges and dining venues, and intriguing spa. Much of the same can be said for the Milan property. In many ways, the two properties are practically identical.

Milan's Armani Hotel occupies an eight-story rationalist building circa 1937. Much of the ground floor is, perhaps predictably, dedicated to retail space for Armani wares. A small elevator lobby whisks guests up to the seventh-floor lobby. Here, we were given the first real taste of understated chic tonal design that would define our stay.

It was mid-afternoon. The lobby was buzzing, with interesting folks gathering around the various seating nooks of the adjacent Bamboo Bar. The sunlight was filtering dramatically through shutters, casting a shadow. It's a cool scene, and as we were checking in, we felt glad to be a part of it all.

The décor is particularly beige, and so is the vibe. Though not particularly warm, our check-in experience was very professional and efficient. We were on our way downstairs (remember, the lobby is on level seven) to our Deluxe Room in no time.

There are 95 rooms and suites in the palazzo. Though among the smallest in the house, our Deluxe Room was actually quite spacious with a particularly effective use of its 430 square feet. But of course, there is plenty of closet space, and the bathroom is quite something with an inviting tub by the window and a large standalone shower. In-room technology echoes that of the Dubai property, including a video peephole that appears on the television screen whenever someone rings the doorbell along with an option to remotely unlock the door. The minibar is complimentary. The woodsy-scented Armani toiletries are memorable.

Deluxe is ample, but a differential of \$200 give or take earns an upgrade to the Classic Suite category, a proper open junior suite layout spanning 646 square feet. Executive Suites offer a separate living room with an L-shaped sofa, but the smaller bedrooms aren't ideal. Ambassador Suites are larger, over 1,100 square

feet with a living room and a dedicated dining nook. Upwards from there is a big step up in the rate to the duplex Signature Suite with its sleek floating staircase.

The eighth floor of the hotel is dedicated to wellness, including a very decent gym. The main attraction, though, is the spa. The striking main area includes a large emerald-hued jacuzzi with views through shutters over Milanese rooftops. There are also numerous steam and sauna cabins. If having a soothing co-ed spa is high on your list of priorities, this is the ideal choice in town.

F&B options include the more casual lounge Bamboo Bar, and Armani Ristorante for Italian fine dining and breakfast each morning. Breakfast here includes a plentiful buffet of great quality, but the service during our particular visit was a bit on the cold side. We'd have been better off cozying up with room service.

We loved the fashionable, relaxing design of Armani Hotel Milano, as well as its superior suite of wellness amenities. Service was exact, and though not particularly heartfelt, maybe that doesn't matter. We would stay again in a heartbeat. ●●●

Armani Hotel Milano

Milan, Italy

General Manager: Mirko Aru

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PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF ARMANI HOTEL MILANO

DOS & DON'TS

DO consider upgrades starting with the Classic Suite, which is essentially a junior suite.

DO come for the spa. The facilities are spectacular.

DO order in for breakfast. The buffet is very good, but the service was quite cold (when not entirely absent) and the library-silent dining room felt quite sterile.

DON'T blindly eschew the entry Deluxe Room category, which is actually quite spacious at 430 square feet.

DON'T expect a third Armani Hotel opening soon. Rumors have been circulating about an expansion to expand to Paris since 2012, but were officially stalled in 2015.

MILAN

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL MILANO

Vow of service.



FORMER CONVENTS are attractive for developers of luxury hotels. Within our own archive, there's the Augustine in Prague, the Santa Clara in Cartagena, the Hotel Monasterio in Cusco, and one of our favorites, Monastero Santa Rosa on the Amalfi Coast. Now we're adding one more—Four Seasons Hotel Milano. There is very good reason for this trend of convent conversion. They are traditionally massive residences with many bedrooms, and the buildings are often constructed classically with lots of character.

Some lament the transformation of these convents into luxury hotels. However, the fact of the matter is, the 15th-century convent that has been transformed into the Four Seasons would be very oddly placed in the Milan of today. Located squarely within the city's most fashionable quarter, where streets and alleyways are dotted with window displays featuring bold and luxurious fashionable tableaux, would be an odd setting to maintain one's vow of poverty. These days, the building is much better off as a Four Seasons.

We arrived at the hotel on foot, having walked over with our rolling luggage from another hotel

in the neighborhood. Even before reaching the entrance, we were spotted by a bellman who scurried down the sidewalk to assume control of our bags. At reception, we were greeted with enthusiasm, including a special appearance from Hotel Manager Emmanuelle Selvaggi, who we'd met just one year before when he was working at the Florence property. It's always nice to see familiar faces, and we love Four Seasons for doing well to keep their best team members in the family.

There are 118 keys at Four Seasons Hotel Milano, 50 of which are suites. It's actually quite difficult to summarize the design style of the accommodations here. There is quite a diversity of aesthetics in this hotel.

For rooms, skip Superior and Deluxe, which are not so inspiring, and keep your sights on the Premium Room category. It has a lovely modern color palate of greens and woods, with classical features including an antique-appearing rug, and a worthy range of space up to 495 square feet.

Suites represent nearly half of the hotel's inventory, and are actually the main attraction here. Juniors and Executives are good for extra space, but our first consideration for something special is the slightly smaller Fresco Suite. Located





It's always nice to see familiar faces, and we love Four Seasons for doing well to keep their best team members in the family.

on the first floor of the building, this junior-type suite offers inspiring historic frescoed ceilings and a

complementary muted classical design style in 570 square feet. The larger ground-floor Cloister Suites range up to 936 square feet, and are marked by their vaulted ceilings, a hallmark of the building's history. The 732-square-foot Fashion Suite is a contemporary one-bedroom layout with lovely details throughout, including statement tile floors and iron French doors in the living room. There is also a small furnished balcony. We also love the top-tier Penthouse Suite, though more for space and privacy than design. A private elevator takes you to this immensely spacious suite, where aesthetics take a backseat to comfort, with muted décor throughout its large bedroom and bath, dressing room, three salons, butler pantry, massive furnished terrace, and numerous other tiny balconies.

The only restaurant at Four Seasons Hotel Milano is called La Veranda, and it's open daily for breakfast, as well as throughout the day. We had a fantastic breakfast here, anchored by a diverse and tasty cold buffet, with hot items delivered from the kitchen. On the morning we woke up here, it happened to be our birthday. We hadn't told anyone, but that didn't stop them from surprising us with a small house-made "Sacher" torte, which we had them box up for later. To be clear, we aren't big fans of the actual Austrian Sacher Torte, which is usually quite dry, but the Milanese Four



PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF FOUR SEASONS HOTEL MILANO

Seasons version was moist and tasty. We devoured it.

All in all, Four Seasons Hotel Milano is not an F&B destination by any stretch. However, La Veranda produces a wonderful execution for hotel guests in need of nourishment, and the service is terrific.

While not a destination for food, the hotel is actually a destination for wellness. The soothing contemporary spa executed by famed Spanish designer Patricia Urquiola (who also designed Il Sereno on Lake Como) was opened in 2012. There is a whole range of fantastic thermal amenities here, as well as an indoor swimming pool for laps and a wonderful two-room fitness facility.

Four Seasons is always about service, and the brand's hotels in this region offer an interesting set of opportunities for experiencing the surrounding region. On the simpler side, the concierge can arrange guided shopping excursions or a day trip to Lake Como's village of Bellagio for a lovely private lunch. For the adventurous, the hotel can set you up with a 1960s convertible for exploring either the hills of Tuscany, onward to the property in Florence, or heading the other way, the southern French coastline on approach to the hotel in Cap-Ferrat.

Some will dismiss Milan's Four Seasons for whatever reason. The hotel doesn't have a reputation for being particularly cutting edge. We understand the reasoning for this, but would still encourage you to give it a chance. Some rooms and suites are more inspiring than others, and all offer access to the hotel's exceptionally personable and friendly service, as well as its fabulous array of wellness amenities. And for fashion shoppers, the location can't be beat. ●●●

Four Seasons Hotel Milano

Milan, Italy

General Manager: Mauro Governato

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MILAN

BULGARI HOTEL MILANO

The start of something good.



BULGARI HOTEL Milano opened in 2004, as the luxury jewelry brand's first entrée into hospitality. Since then, the brand has expanded further with openings in Bali, London, Dubai, Beijing, and Shanghai. We previously reviewed most of the others, but only just now made our way back to Milan for a full review of the original.

It was a very rainy day in Milan on the day we checked in. For this reason, we'd end up staying in the building for the entirety of our one-night stay at Bulgari Hotel Milano. Entering the hotel gates, we were greeted by the 1950s-era building and the lush green of its surrounding gardens, which total over 43,000 square feet. Bellmen approached both sides of our vehicle, offering umbrella escorts to the front door

for each member of our party. Just inside, check in was wonderfully friendly, and quick. We were on our way to our room in a flash. As we passed through the lobby, we encountered numerous framed artworks depicting advertisements and drawings of Bulgari past.

This is not a particularly massive hotel, with just 58 rooms and suites in the house. Starting square footages here are about 375, which is a bit svelte for our taste, even with the weighty masculine décor. Two steps up to the Premium Room, with up to 535 square feet of space, is a most worthy upgrade, including a walk-in closet and a vast bathroom smartly split into differing chambers for use of sharing guests.

Junior Suites are also a worthy upgrade, offering a larger floorplan of nearly 700 square feet in a single-room layout. Superior Suites aren't that much larger, and actually feel a bit smaller than Juniors. Step up

to the Deluxe Suites for a true residential-style one-bedroom suite, the top recommended category for suite guests here. Premium Suites and the Bulgari Suite are just above Deluxe for those seeking the very best in the building. The Bulgari Suite is a vast private apartment, including a massive wraparound terrace overlooking the hotel's gardens.

Room design here is sophisticated, comforting, and contemporary with fabulously luxurious materials. Baths are executed in a combination of marbles, including a black opaque from Zimbabwe and a contrasting white Navona travertine. Wood floors in all keys offer a clean at-home feeling. Color schemes range from earth tones of browns and deep oranges with greys in the lower categories, to pops of burgundy and purple as you move up.

Standard across all Bulgari Hotels, Il Ristorante is the hotel's main F&B destination. The kitchen here is

Though rooted in a brand story we are all so familiar with, this concept does not rely entirely upon the history of a jewelry brand to establish itself as a hotel.

overseen by Chef Nikko Romito, who also looks after Bulgari's restaurants in Dubai, Beijing, and Shanghai, and who has previously earned three Michelin stars for his Ristorante Reale at a tiny boutique hotel in the Italian winelands. At Bulgari Hotel Milano, Chef Romito and his team execute lovely surprising plates. The antipasto in particular is quite lovely as an inventive take on the Italian tradition, offered in two services, hot and cold. In fact, this variation on tradition is really the theme here.



On the lower level of the hotel, the Bulgari Spa is a fabulous wellness destination fit to compete with all the rest, even in its 2004 execution. The focal point of the facility is the emerald-hued indoor swimming pool, which was the site of much commotion with younger guests jubilantly splashing around. Around the bend from there, cabins for steam and sauna were much more serene. There

DOS & DON'TS

DO dine here, regardless of where you stay. With Chef Romito now in charge, there is much to discover at Il Ristorante.

DO veer toward Premium Rooms and up for the right amount of space for living and storage.

DON'T expect a massive fitness facility based upon the Workshop branding. The studio here is very small, though it still has the very best equipment on offer.

DON'T be deterred by the Bulgari branding. There is no laurel-resting here, and only hints of continuity between the brand's jewelry operation and its very first hotel. This is a well-run luxury hotel with heart and soul, and exceptional F&B.

is also the Bulgari Hotels standard Workshop-branded gym with equipment of exceptional quality. However, compared to the Workshop facilities at other Bulgari Hotels we've visited, this one is significantly smaller.

Now having visited the brand's original location in Milan, we fully ascertain just why the Bulgari Hotels brand has been so tremendously successful. Though rooted in a brand story we are all so familiar with, this concept does not rely entirely upon the history of a jewelry brand to establish itself as a hotel. In fact, apart from artworks in the lobby and some books here and there in certain suites, the jewelry brand is really not so much a part of the hotel experience here, or at any of the brand's hotels worldwide. The hotel concept is very much fashionable, but it is also inventive, contemporary, comfortable, and healthy. ●●●●

Bulgari Hotel Milano

Milan, Italy

General Manager: Attilio Marro

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