

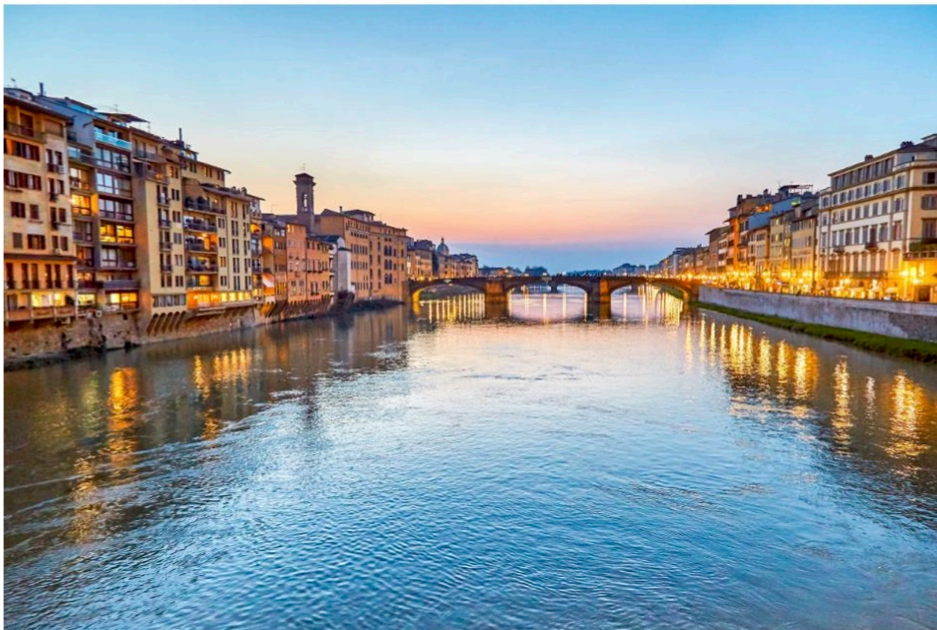
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## IL Tornabuoni: New Luxury Hotel Set To Open In Florence, Italy



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Travel



Ponte Vecchio in Florence, Italy. GETTY

As lockdown restrictions and travel bans begin to slowly ease up, many hotels and resorts throughout Italy are planning to reopen over the summer. In Florence—one of the country's major tourism meccas—a

brand-new, five-star property will be welcoming guests for the first time in September, 2020.

The new [IL Tornabuoni](#) hotel, housed in one of the oldest palazzos in the heart of the city's historic center, will offer 62 newly renovated rooms and suites. The interior design by Milanese architect Andrea Auletta promises to be colorful and eclectic, emphasizing a palette of different jewel-like hues on each floor. Some rooms overlook a private courtyard.

The hotel is the latest venture under the Italian-owned [AG Group](#) brand, launched in June 2019. The group's President and Founder Andrea Girolami brings not only unbridled energy and enthusiasm to the new opening but also a twenty-year background in hospitality and tourism. The rapidly growing AG portfolio also includes boutique, four-star properties in Rome; Boutique Journey, a tour operator/DMC; a hotel consulting and revenue management firm; a chain of gourmet bistros; and a collection of luxury retreats for senior citizens.

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"The launch of IL Tornabuoni was originally scheduled for April 2020 but due to Covid-19, we postponed the opening until early fall when tourism is expected to recover more fully and the restoration will be complete," says Mr. Girolami.

“Of course, the timing of the global pandemic was a challenge but we have turned the postponement into a positive. Our team has remained connected with one another over this hiatus, sharing ideas and discussing details to improve the guest experience, and making sure our opening would be that much better,” he says.

Mr Girolami named Fernando Pane to the position of General Manager, overseeing operations at IL Tornabuoni. Prior to this appointment, Pane was the resort manager at the iconic Hotel Il Pellicano in Porto Ercole.

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Forbes.com spoke with Mr. Pane to learn more about plans for the new property:

### **How will IL Tornabuoni differentiate itself from other 5-star properties in Florence?**

**Fernando Pane:** We will focus on providing attentive and authentic service, making sure that each guest’s stay—as well as their experiences in Florence— is memorable.

No detail will be overlooked, and elements of surprise and delight will be a must. Our IL Tornabuoni Ambassadors have been thoroughly trained and are ready to offer the best of Italian hospitality.

Of course, a sophisticated city like Florence has its share of five-star hotels but many recently opened ones are small, independent properties with 8-10 rooms at most. They can’t offer the same range of services, food and beverage experiences, and activities that IL Tornabuoni is going to provide its guests.





One of the tastefully decorate guest rooms at the hotel Tornabuoni IL TORNABUONI

## Can you summarize the history of the building, Palazzo Minerbetti?

**FP:** The palazzo has a rather long history, so forgive me. Its name comes from its first owner, Andrea Minerbetti, who in 1470 acquired a portion of the street, Via de' Tornabuoni for a series of construction projects. The palace had been in his family for a decade prior to that.

The Minerbetti family line ended in 1771 and in 1793, the building passed down to the Santini family and then the Buonvisi Montecatini of Lucca family. Around this time, the Palace transformed from a private home into accommodations, first as the Inn of Il Pellicano and later the Inn for the Regiment of England.

Considered to be one of the finest palazzos in Florence, it was known as the Hotel of Europe until 1918, frequented by wealthy foreigners and

dignified guests including the great American writer Henry James in 1869.

Between 1990-1996, the entire building was restored by actor Brizio Montinaro and renamed the Tornabuoni Beacci Hotel prior to its recent closing for a major refurbishment and its upcoming incarnation as IL Tornabuoni Hotel. The renovation has taken more than a year.



Fernando Pane, GM of IL Tornabuoni  
IL TORNABUONI/ STEFANOSCATÀ

## What type of clientele do you expect to draw?

**FP:** As we are located in the heart of Florence—where art mixes with fashion, food and design—the leisure market will certainly be our primary target. Of course, IL Tornabuoni is designed to appeal to every type of guest, including business travelers as well as families. We are fortunate to have a number of larger family rooms and connecting rooms.





## **Everyone comes to Italy to eat and drink. Can you describe the food and beverage program at Il Tornabuoni?**

**FP:** Our food and beverage program is the proverbial cherry on the cake. IL Magnifico Bistro and Café will be situated on the ground floor and La Terrazza on the 4th floor will offer a spectacular view of Florence. Both will be accessible to guests and the public, as will all our dining locations.

The once-in-a-lifetime L'A-peritivo at sunset and Lucie, our gastronomic restaurant will offer an intimate atmosphere for food lovers, also not to be missed.

Nothing is left to chance. We have created a complete list of “Happenings” both at the property and elsewhere in the city to engage our in-house guests and also to ensure local Florentine residents to feel at home here, such as Champagne afternoon tea, special Saturday brunch, special events in our wine cellar, La Cave, and fun family activities.

Our Executive Chef is a strong believer in the authenticity of food and incorporates traditional Italian culinary techniques into his dishes to enhance seasonal ingredients. The final touch: IL Dolce! At IL Tornabuoni, cakes, pastries, croissants and more are a sensorial experience and will fully satisfy anyone's sweet tooth!

## **And a champagne bar in the land of Prosecco?**

**FP:** Andrea Girolami has an incredible passion for bubbles, as do I. His vast selection of champagne will be available in our private wine vault

in La Cave, a multi-sensorial room available to guests where wine and champagne are the protagonists. It may seem unbelievable to have such a place in Florence, but we are very happy to say this will be our reality. No worries though, Italian Spumante and Prosecco requests will always be welcome and available on the menu as well.

### **What is the COVID situation like in Florence, at present?**

**FP:** Fortunately, Tuscany was not as badly affected as other regions of Italy. Of course, even though the past few months were an emergency, I have to say it was well managed by the regional government. Now, Florence is gradually getting back to normal but as you can imagine, tourism is a key factor in our recovery.

Lots of restaurants and bars are suffering due to the economic crisis. It will definitely take some time, but we all hope to see Florence return to its best very soon, welcoming back tourists to one of the world's most beautiful cities.

### **In light of the pandemic, what changes have you had to make to make guests feel confident about their health and safety?**

**FP:** One silver lining is that the property underwent a complete renovation so we will be opening with a completely new hotel from day one. We have reviewed some structural elements, such as furnishings, window dressings, and other items in order to maintain the chic and sophisticated design, but we also chose materials that are easy and efficient to clean.

Our new heating and air conditioning system is one of the most up-to-date models that guarantees the purity of the air. We are working hard

to implement touchless, digital technology as much as possible to maintain contact with our guests, pre-, during, and post-stays via their smartphone. Finally, our team will be strictly following a safety and cleaning protocol, adhering to all established regulations and guidelines (see below).

I strongly believe that post-pandemic, hotel guests will expect properties to maintain the highest standards of service and cleanliness, but I have to say that won't be too different from the usual 5-star protocols that we had already planned to incorporate. We do feel we will return to "normality" soon and we will keep up to date on changes as they occur.

### **What drew you personally to this property from Il Pellicano?**

**FP:** I worked at Hotel Il Pellicano for six years as resort manager and what an incredible ride it was! While there, I had a chance to grow in my position while meeting guests of remarkable elegance and stature from all over the world. And I worked side by side with a motivated and extraordinary team.

When Andrea Girolami shared the details of IL Tornabuoni with me, I immediately fell in love with the project. And, to be honest, I had wonderfully positive vibes when I met the rest of the property's management team. It was at that time that I decided to make the move and I'm thrilled to be one of the performers in our beautiful symphony at IL Tornabuoni.

### **When will the property begin taking reservations?**



**FP:** September 2020 is coming! [Bookings](#) are already open and we are ready to take reservations. Stay tuned!

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*Note: This conversation has been lightly edited and condensed for clarity.*

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**Travel restrictions and advisories to Italy remain fluid and subject to change. Before you go, see:**

- [VisitTuscany.com SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus Guidelines](#)
  - [COVID-19 Information and Updates for Tourists to Italy](#)
  - [Information on Coronavirus in Italy](#)
  - [U.S. Department of State Travel Advisory to Italy](#)
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