



destination UPDATE ITALY

ROME

HOTELS & CONFERENCE VENUES

Rome Cavalieri, Waldorf=Astoria (formerly the Rome Cavalieri Hilton): This 5-star property

is very stylish and has beautiful views of the city. There are 2 restaurants; The Giardino dell'Uliveto has a very Mediterranean

ambiance and offers Italian and international specialties as well as à la carte lunches and dinners and hot & cold buffets. The second restaurant is "La Pergola"; the hotel's three-Michelin-star restaurant, situated at the Roof Garden. It has a beautiful wine cellar and a very elegant cocktail bar, with fantastic views over the Eternal City. The Lobby Bar has live piano music in the evening and is also open all day long, which makes it the focal point of the hotel and a place to be seen. In addition the hotel has a Health & Fitness Bar, which is open during the summer months.



The rooms at the hotel are 'Deluxe' and 'Executive' with either a Rome view or Mediterranean Park view. Those staying in the Executive Rooms will have access to the Executive Floor Business Centre, which is open daily from 7.00 a.m. to 11.00 pm and offers

complimentary, magazines, Satellite Television, business and secretarial services, free local telephone calls and concierge services. In addition, there are a variety of beautiful and luxurious suites including The Penthouse, which is a suite that can be extended to a connecting bedroom or private Gym and features a dining area with bar. The sitting room contains Karl Lagerfeld furniture and the Penthouse also has a beautiful bathroom with Jacuzzi, wine cellar and a wide staircase with sliding glass ceiling opening on to private roof garden with whirlpool Spa overlooking Rome.

There are a variety of high-quality meeting spaces at the hotel with seating capacity from 20 up to 2,000. These spaces exist within the Garden Lobby, Main Lobby and Roof Garden areas. The Salone dei Cavalieri for example is one of the finest venues in Italy. Elegantly furnished with beautiful wooden floors and antique tapestries, in contrast this versatile room is also ultra-modern and is equipped with state-of-the-art technology. Its lack of pillars allows the space to be divided into four independent rooms. Alternatively, the Salone dei Cavalieri can be used as a plenary session area linked with nearby breakout spaces. This particular venue offers ease of access complete with a 5.90 metre high (19.35 feet) ceiling, a fixed stage and a convenient location on the lower ground floor, allowing for great flexibility.



Hotel St. Regis Grand (Starwood) was named on Condé Nast Traveler's 2005 Gold List. It has recently gone through a restoration and offers the best in services and amenities, which also include the Caroli Health Club, located on the 5th floor.



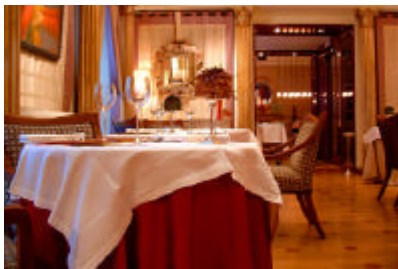
The hotel offers 161 Guest Rooms and 23 suites. The Guest Rooms feature large marble-tiled bathrooms with marble vanities, custom cabinets containing a mini-bar and dark wood writing tables. All of the rooms have unique personalities and are elegantly decorated in a combination of Empire, Regency and Louis XV styles. This hotel also offers a 24-hour butler service.

There are 13 meeting spaces each with the latest technology and the largest meeting space is 276 sq.m

The magnificent Salone Ritz can host up to 540 guests for receptions. This is the original ballroom and has been restored to its legendary glory. The Sala Venezia is perfect for hosting a high profile board meeting for up to 24 delegates and is also equipped with the latest technology.

As celebrities and heads of state often use the hotel, a private diplomatic entrance with its own parking area, foyer and elevator is available when security and discretion are required.

The hotel also has a Business Centre, which is available 24 hours a day and offers services such as copying, faxing, computer access, Wi-Fi and secretarial services as well as other technological services which are available on request.



The Vivendo Restaurant (pictured to the left) at the St. Regis Grand Hotel has been twice nominated as the best in Europe by Zagat. The restaurant serves fresh Mediterranean cuisine and the décor here is contemporary with a 1940s feel. Intimate dinners for up to 14 or receptions for up to 30 can be arranged in the wine cellar Di Vino. In addition the newly remodelled 'Le Grand Bar' has become a focal point of Italian society and has been named the best

bar in Rome by Newsweek Magazine.

Hotel Westin Excelsior (Starwood): Since 1906, The Westin Excelsior, Rome has hosted celebrities, statesmen and artists visiting the Eternal City. The hotel, which was named on Condé Nast Traveller's 2006 Gold List, enjoys a prime location in the celebrated Via Veneto district.



Since its multimillion pound renovation, the signature Villa Cupola is the largest suite in Europe and its grand style is reflected throughout the hotel in the opulent furnishings of the recently remodelled 287 guest rooms and 32 suites.

Villa Cupola, the largest suite in Europe, extends over two full floors and 11,700 square feet and is available with up to six bedrooms, a dining room that seats 10 and a private fitness room, sauna, steam bath, Jacuzzi and sun deck. There's also a boardroom and private 8-seat theatre with wide screen and teleconferencing facilities.

There are 7 meeting spaces available and 10 venues encompass 14,000 sq ft of meeting space with rooms suitable for as few as five or as many as 1,000.



Used for large events, the Winter Garden, Borghese and Ludovisi rooms can be combined to host receptions for up to 1,000 guests. For business travellers there is a 24-hour Business Centre available, which is equipped with such essentials as High Speed Internet Access and offers computer rentals, faxing, copying and secretarial services.

The Doney Restaurant offers Mediterranean cuisine and a grand buffet is available for lunch and an à la carte menu both for lunch and dinner. The restaurant is positioned along the upscale Via Veneto and has been recently remodelled with pale marble floors, stone walls and light wood finishes.



The hotel's main Bar - ORVM (pictured to the left) has a modern and elegant art deco style. In addition there is live piano music available, which gives the bar a more modern edge in contrast to the classical and refined ambience of The Westin Excelsior. The h Club is very modern, as its image was reinvented for the new millennium with a black and red geometric interior, big polished pots and warm lighting and has now become the hotspot for Rome's elite to meet.

The hotel has a new 3,200-square-foot health club complete with treatment rooms, sauna, Turkish bath, Jacuzzi and indoor pool.

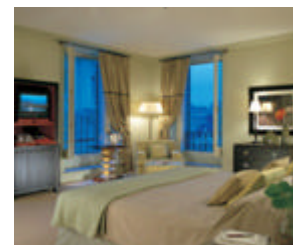
Hotel de Russie is a luxury five-star Rocco Forte property and is located in the heart of Rome, between the Spanish Steps and Piazza del Popolo on the Via del Babuino. Many of Rome's key attractions are within easy walking distance of the hotel, including The Vatican City, with St Peter's and the Sistine Chapel, Piazza Navona and the Trevi Fountain.



Hotel de Russie is the most unique luxury hotel in Rome with stunning features such as its extensive terraced gardens, (very rare in central Rome) which provide a tranquil oasis amidst the hustle and bustle and where you can dine alfresco or enjoy a peaceful stroll. It also has one of the few Butterfly Oases, created in collaboration with WWF, which is located in the Secret Garden. The 'de Russie Wellness Zone'

comprises of a hydropool, jacuzzi, sauna, Turkish steam bath, beauty treatment rooms and a gymnasium.

The Hotel de Russie features 89 guest rooms (of different types) and 6 luxurious suite types, (29 suites in total) all of which are extremely spacious and offer stunning views of the city and the gardens at the hotel. The top four suites are the Nijinsky, Picaso and Popolo, all situated on the top floor (sixth) and the Vaselli Suite, which is situated on the fifth floor of the hotel.



All rooms and upholstery at the Hotel de Russie feature very delicate and tranquil pastel shades. There are various types of bathrooms, each featuring a marble or marble mosaic and each design ranging from the classical to the contemporary. In addition in each guest room broadband service to the internet is offered.

The hotel's cuisine is Mediterranean and its Chef - Nazzareno Menghini, places emphasis on using local produce and the very best Italian ingredients to produce a sumptuous menu. The Stravinskij Bar is open from 9am until 1am; for lunch a buffet is available, during the afternoon traditional tea is served and during the evening, cocktails such as the 'De Russie Martini' are served with caviar, which can be enjoyed whilst listening to live music in the gardens.

RESTAURANTS SAMPLES

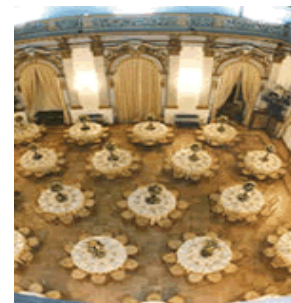
Tucci Restaurant is located on the famed Piazza Navona and is the place to go for delicious Italian and Roman dishes. House specialties include the home-made cannelloni, the veal piccata with mushrooms and many other superbly prepared succulent dishes are recommended. Don't miss the chocolate truffle (ice-cream)!



Sabatini Restaurant (pictured to the left) is one of the oldest and greatest restaurants located in the heart of Rome. The Square of Santa Maria in Trastevere, where Sabatini sits, dates back to the third century A.D. The restaurant has been in approximately the same spot for 1,700 years! Sabatini specialises in fish dishes and venison; however there are many other fine specialties. If you really want to eat a meal that will never be equalled, Sabatini is the perfect choice!

BANQUETING VENUE SAMPLES

Palazzo Brancaccio is the latest Roman Patrician palace and is located on the Oppius Hill, amid a vast archaeological park, which includes Nero's Golden House and the cisterns that supplied water for the naval battles in the Colosseum, as well as ancient plants and fountains. The palace is considered one of the most beautiful in Rome, as it still keeps its charm, with its wonderful and ornate halls. Its top quality service and refined cooking with international and gastronomic specialties, make an evening at Palazzo Brancaccio very special and unique.



Palazzo Brancaccio offers fantastic facilities in which to host meetings, congresses and incentives. It consists of 3 halls (Gala, Arazzi & Angel) which can cater for 290 to 490 people, as well as the Casina del Laghetto Hall for ceremonies and conferences for up to 50 people and other such meeting spaces for a variety of events. All Halls are air conditioned and the venue possesses an Internal Bar & parking for up to 80 Cars.

Villa Miani - Founded as a convent for a Methodist Church in the 1700's, Villa Miani was then acquired in the same century by Count Miani di Angoris, who transformed it into a private residence. The Villa became famous for the sumptuous festivities of the family up until the pre-war years. Still privately owned, the Management of the Villa retains many of the recipes of that era, as well as some uniforms



worn by the waiters serving the Miani family. The Villa has three levels. The ground floor is comprised of five banquet halls. The entrance hall of the second floor is adorned with frescoes of Morgante and throughout the interior one finds portraits of the Miani ancestors and four precious Flemish tapestries, woven by hand.

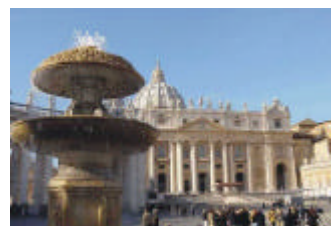
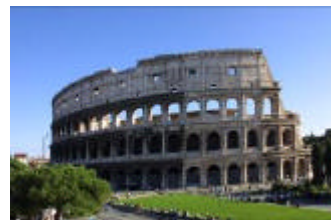
Villa Miani is one of the most beautiful and fascinating locations of the capital. The property has a beautifully kept garden and offers a unique panorama overlooking the city of Rome. The villa may be reached by a private driveway of approximately 1km in length, which cuts through a park.

It is one of the more superior venues in the eternal city for the organisation of major events, such as receptions and conventions for which there are approximately 2000 square metres of interior halls and large outdoor spaces and terraces as well as meeting space available in the garden overlooking the small lake. Despite its secluded surroundings, from the Villa any point of the city below is easily accessible within a few minutes. In this way it preserves its exclusiveness and there is ample space for private parking, together with its spacious entertaining areas, which help to make the venue a perfect setting for large events.

WHAT TO DO

The following sightseeing tours have been recommended as a 'must' by our DMC – **Intercontinental Travel Company**:

- ✍ **Ancient / Imperial Rome Tour:** This tour covers the must sees of Ancient Rome: the Colosseum, Roman Forum, Circus Maximus, Piazza Venezia and much more.
- ✍ **Renaissance Walking Tour:** This opportunity invites you to enjoy the Trevi Fountain, Spanish Steps, Pantheon and more in the heart of vibrant Rome.
- ✍ **Vatican Museums and St. Peter Basilica Tour:** This tour is entirely devoted to the Vatican Museums, where the world's most important art collections of all ages are housed. The major highlights are a visit to the celebrated Sistine Chapel and St. Peter's Basilica.



- ✍ **Museums Tours:** Enjoy one or more of the amazing Museums that Rome has to offer – Capitoline Museums; Palazzo Doria Pamphilj; Borghese Gallery; Villa Giulia Etruscan Museums and more.
- ✍ Besides the many activities available within Rome, so much can be done in the surrounding areas – including a 1.5 hour train ride to **Florence**.

Intercontinental Travel Company can also arrange for **private tours of the Vatican Museums**, including the Sistine Chapel. A most amazing and memorable experience!

The best thing about Rome ... the activity options are practically endless! The above is just a sampling of the many amazing options Rome has to offer.

OVERVIEW

Rome is a beautiful and vibrant city, full of culture and history. With so many hotels and other properties constantly being modernised, but still in keeping with tradition, this fuse of the more modern and trendy versus the more traditional creates a distinctly classic and classy city with plenty to see and do.

One great advantage when using Intercontinental Travel Company is that they are allowed airside at Rome Fiumicino Airport, which means that they can assist the clients with their bags at baggage reclaim; one less thing for the clients to worry about. When we got to the Hilton Hotel, as we were staying in the Executive Rooms we had access to the Executive Floor Business Centre, which offered complimentary drinks and snacks. As with the assistance with the baggage, this too added value to the experience and gave us peace of mind as we relaxed in a peaceful and exclusive area.

FLORENCE

It is an odd fact that a large majority of organisers have not used Florence as either a conference or an incentive destination.

Despite having top class hotels, outstanding restaurants, superb locations, conference facilities for up to 10,000 people and of course its natural and architectural beauty, Florence is largely ignored.

Perhaps it's because Florence is perceived to be rather "upmarket and expensive". Those who have taken groups to this lovely city have reported a very high level of satisfaction and whilst it is not a cheap destination, value for money can be found by carefully choosing the time of year for travel. (November to March and mid July to mid August).

FLIGHTS

Apart from numerous services to Pisa one factor that will now help is the introduction of a direct service from Gatwick to Florence Peretola airport, which is just a very convenient 15 minutes transfer from the city centre.

Operated by MERIDIANA, a private airline owned by the Aga Khan, their new 79 seat BAE 146 jet aircraft operates a daily service with a flight time of around 2 hours. This new service is a great bonus for smaller groups, as the alternative is to fly to Pisa with a 90 minute coach transfer to Florence. Larger groups will still need to fly to Pisa.

We flew Gatwick - Florence in economy and Florence to Gatwick in business class and whilst economy was acceptable, the food served to us was fairly average. Their business class called Electa Club was excellent, with exclusively designed seats being the most comfortable short-haul seats I've experienced. The in-flight service was quietly efficient and attentive and complimentary drinks are served throughout the aircraft. Meridiana will arrange special group check-in facilities on and off airport and subject to availability they are prepared to sell all 79 seats to groups. One point to be aware of is Florence Peretola airport is very small and the arrival and departure facilities are somewhat limited. The Arrivals area especially is very crowded, even though there were only up to 79 people, and the baggage area is tiny so patience is the key. The airport is however being improved with a new larger arrivals and departure building.

Meridiana also operates excellent and convenient services from Gatwick to Verona and Sardinia.

HOTELS

Hotel Westin Excelsior - sister hotel to the Grand, the Excelsior is larger, with 171 rooms and is situated opposite the Grand and can therefore be used in conjunction with it. The guest rooms have recently been renovated and the property does offer more flexible conference facilities for up to 400 persons.

Grand Hotel - a Starwood hotel, full of grandeur and elegance and situated alongside the River Arno, and close to the ancient heart of Florence, The Grand offers just over a hundred excellent guest rooms utilising silks and brocades and 16th century style furnishing enhanced by 20th century amenities and comfort. The public area however is very small encompassing the lounge, bar, lobby and restaurant all in one. For conferences there are 6 rooms with capacity from 30 - 350 persons and for Gala events the majestic Grand Ballroom is superb. If budgets allow it is an excellent hotel for smaller groups or pure incentive groups.

Grand Hotel Baglioni - is a 5 star city centre hotel, once a palace but now just faded elegance. Character it most certainly has but because of its style the rooms are of varying size. The Baglioni does offer character plus conference facilities in 8 rooms for 10 - 300 persons. The rooftop Ristorante Brunelleschi, apart from offering superb views across Florence is an excellent venue for open air lunches or dinners with entertainment, both formal and informal.

Sofitel - a modern 4 star hotel situated close to the historical centre of the city, once a palace but completely renovated to modern standards it consequently lacks the character of the city which it is so rightly famous for. The 85 rooms are tastefully decorated and for incentive groups looking for modern facilities, close to the centre at a reasonable price the Sofitel could be for you.

Grand Hotel Villa Cora - situated in the outskirts of the city, the sumptuous Villa Cora is without doubt for small high budget groups. Each of its 47 apartments are individually decorated and offer sheer quality of furnishings and amenities. The Villa, neo-Renaissance in style, is full of beautiful antiques and is renowned for its grandeur, exceptional beauty and taste. The public rooms are superb, especially the Hall of Mirrors, a wonderful room for a cocktail party, private reception or dinner. Outside the hotel offers a patio area and swimming pool and there is even a Rolls Royce to take guests into the city. Care needs to be taken when booking rooms as there is also an annexe called the Villa Nova which, whilst still very grand, has a more modern feel than the main building.

Villa la Massa (sister property of Villa D'Este Lake Como) - a 5 star Florentine villa situated in 7 acres among the Tuscan hills and overlooking the Arno river just 7 kilometres from Florence. With just 37 rooms this is similar in style to the Villa Cora but without the grandeur. It is a more relaxed, less pretentious hotel that takes particular pride in its friendly, personal service. There are 4 conference rooms, the main room with natural light on two sides, with capacities for 10 - 220 persons. Outside there is a swimming pool and tennis courts with golf and riding available nearby. The property is renowned for its superb restaurant "Il Verrocchio", the best Italian food and wines I have ever tasted. Set in beautiful countryside this is an excellent self contained venue for small conferences away from the bustle of city centres.

There are many other quality hotels available in and around Florence. The above are those we visited, but more information on hotels is available from our DMC - Intercontinental Travel Company.

CONFERENCE VENUES

As mentioned earlier in this report, Florence is a major destination for Conferences and Congresses offering a very wide range of modern and not so modern conference facilities, such as the Centro Affari with 11 halls and seating for 50 - 500 persons and meeting rooms for 15 - 50 persons. Alternatively the Palazzo dei Congressi, which features an auditorium for up to 1000 persons and an amphitheatre for 600 persons or the Fortezza da Basso, once a fortress but now a large facility for Trade Fairs, Exhibitions, Congress, Conference, Product launches etc., with a choice of 17 different areas, all of this in the city centre.

All these centres have full modern state-of-the-art equipment and can also be used for cocktail receptions, lunches and dinners. It is worth noting that the Italian State Tourist Office in London has an excellent publication in English, called Conferences in Florence - a guide to the sites and facilities available including conference hotels.

BANQUETING VENUES

Florence is full of unusual venues for banqueting, cocktails and receptions. Most hotels offer quality venues, as reported above and some of the many museums and historical buildings are available, as are the castles, villas, wineries and palaces. In fact the choice is overwhelming - too many to talk about in this report. The only way to really find out is to visit Florence.

RESTAURANT SAMPLES

Again the choice is tremendous but some of those recommended are:-

Leo in Santa Croce - offers regional Tuscan and Florentine farmhouse cuisine in a casual and relaxed atmosphere.

Al Campidoglio - a very old Italian restaurant, considered as a classic.

Antico Fattore - an authentic and rustic "trattoria" where the menu is verbally presented by the host.

Celestino - is considered to be one of the best restaurants specialising in Italian and local cuisine.

La Loggia - in the beautiful Piazzale Michelangelo; this first class restaurant is run as a co-operative and offers a daily menu of Florentine and classic specialities.

Sabatini - a must for all visitors. Considered a landmark in Florence it specialises in Italian and Florentine fayre.

There are several fantastic restaurants in the city; please contact ITC for more information.

WHAT TO DO

There is so much to do and see in and around Florence, which makes it is very difficult to write about it all. If we were to try and tell it all, you would probably fall asleep. Not that Florence is boring; in fact even a culture cretin like me becomes totally fascinated by its history and architectural beauty. Renowned of course for its classical art, Florence is where you can see original works by Botticelli, Leonardo Da Vinci and Michelangelo in the Uffizi Gallery, while Michelangelo's original statue of David can be seen in the Accademia Gallery. Not everything is cultural; enjoy long, tree shaded avenues, the elegant streets of the old city and the colourful and noisy markets. Florence is very much a visual experience; with its art and culture, amazing historic buildings, castles and palaces compared with its modern shops, boutiques, cafes and restaurants and of course there is the ever friendly Florentine people.

A visit into the Tuscan countryside is a must, especially to the medieval towns of Siena and San Gimignano. In both cases you cannot get to the centre of each town except on foot; coaches and visiting cars are banned, but the effort is well worth the while. Much of these two towns have been restored to original plans and each has its own special feature. Siena tends to be more commercial and in the main square every year an amazing horse race takes place whereas San Gimignano is more

traditional, less crowded and produces unbelievable cakes, pastries and chocolates, as well as very good wines.

Just outside Siena in the Marciano Hills is the **5 star Park Hotel Siena**. This splendid Tuscan villa has been converted into a luxurious hotel with 69 rooms, a magnificent terrace and gardens, (great for those special cocktail parties, gala events or just plain old lunch), an outdoor swimming pool, tennis courts and 6 hole golf course. Elegant yet relaxed it would make a great venue for a heavy duty conference away from all distractions.

OVERVIEW

Architecturally a beautiful city, Florence will not suit all groups. More conference orientated than incentive it does offer an amazing ability to please whether for a group of 50 or a group of 1000's.

It is more suited to smaller mature groups than younger ones as the night life is very limited and tends to be in the outskirts of the city plus you cannot escape the fact that Florence is a city of culture. To me it had that indefinable feel that immediately puts you at ease whilst it slowly released some if not all of its incredible treasures.

MILAN

Historic **Milan** lies in the centre of a web of streets, within the Cerchia del Navigli, which follows the route of the medieval city walls. The Piazza del Duomo is the hub of the city, a large, pedestrian square that is rarely quiet at any time of the day and most of the city's main sights lie within this area as well as the top designer shops, elegant cafes and lively night scene. The Duomo is the worlds largest Gothic Cathedral and well worth a visit. Almost as famous is the gaudily opulent Galleria Vittorio Emanuele - a glass domed gallery with circular mosaics of the signs of the zodiac beneath the glass cupola - it is considered good luck to stand on Taurus's testicles (OUCH!!!). The main branch of the Galleria leads to the Piazza della Scala and the world famous La Scala opera house. Visits can be made to La Scala but not normally at weekends. Milan in some respects is like London - busy, noisy and bustling with fashionable areas where most of the elegant fashion houses are, historical buildings, modern galleries, elegant hotels, restaurants and cafés and that Italian excitability that adds greatly to the total feel of the city.

Lake Como is just 30 miles north of Milan where lovely lakes dot the land formed by the same glaciers that carved the peaks and valleys of the Alps and which now shield the area from harsh winters and provide a breathtaking backdrop. The town of Como is disappointing and lacking in atmosphere but the lake is really beautiful. Utilising the lake for activities such as cruises, windsurfing, canoeing, waterskiing etc. adds to any conference or incentive programme. With its history dating back to around 100 BC so many different nationalities, such as Greek, Roman, French, Spanish and Austrian left their mark on the area. During the 19th century the lake became a retreat for such great writers and artists as Tennyson, Liszt, Hemingway and Wordsworth - all inspired by the region's sheer beauty.

HOTELS – MILAN

The **Jolly Hotel Milanofiori and Jolly Congress centre** are on the outer limits of the city and the hotel can only really be recommended if you are holding or attending a conference/congress being held in the Congress Centre. The **** **Hotel Milanofiori** offering 255 rooms including 15 suites, is a little 60's in style and decor (not to everyone's taste). Although opposite the Congress centre the hotel has its own small meeting and conference rooms.

The **Congress Centre** is modern, practical and flexible with 3 floors offering rooms with capacities of 15 - 3000 persons. State-of-the-art equipment is available such as real time video teleconferencing and simultaneous translation; in fact everything you would expect from a modern congress centre.

For recreation, nearby the hotel and congress centre are 3 tennis courts and the newly built Forum with swimming, squash, gymnasium etc. and a golf course is just a few miles away.

***** Plus **Hotel Principe Di Savoia**. It reeks of class and is an all-suite hotel. All of the 99 (9 singles) air-conditioned suites are elegantly furnished in Edwardian style and comprise of a bedroom and a sitting room/study equipped with telefax. Meeting facilities are available in 6 rooms, the main room being divisible into 3, for 30 - 430 persons and recently opened is an excellent fitness centre with heated pool, Turkish bath, sauna, massage and gymnasium plus an amazing Presidential Suite with 3 bedrooms, each with their own bathroom, a private dining room, Jacuzzi, steam room, sauna and even its own swimming pool. You might not be able to afford it but at least try to see it. Perfect for that very top, exclusive group.

***** **Hotel Duca Di Milano**. Again an all-suite hotel, it is an extremely elegant hotel and yet not quite so sumptuous as the Principe Di Savoia. Its decor is very reminiscent of an English manor house and is very warm, inviting and comfortable. There are 90 air-conditioned rooms (9 singles) plus 3 elegant function/meeting rooms with space for 15 - 130 persons.

On the opposite side of the square is the third Sheraton Luxury Collection hotel, the ***** **Westin Palace Milan** offering 241 rooms. As with all ex Ciga hotels style is everything, attention to detail is second to none and the decor is luxurious. The Hotel Palace offers 11 meeting/function rooms for 20 - 150 persons and guests at this hotel and the Duca Di Milano can use the Fitness facilities in the Hotel Principe Di Savoia.

LAKE COMO

The best known hotel in the area is the ***** **Grand Hotel Villa D'Este** - a wonderful 16th century building, set in its own 10 acre park and situated on the edge of the lake. Quality here is everything and in the winter the hotel is closed for a number of weeks to facilitate its annual refurbishment. Almost entirely self-contained, the hotel offers 2 restaurants, a nightclub, piano and beach bar, its own Sports Club with swimming pools (one indoor and one outdoor pool literally floating on the lake), 8 tennis courts, a squash court, putting green and its own golf course

just 20 kms away. Other activities available are sailing, canoeing, windsurfing, waterskiing, hang gliding or just plain old cruising on the lake.

Care needs to be taken as the 161 rooms and suites do vary in size and decor and are in two buildings, but despite this it is a superb hotel for those looking for sheer quality in a delightful setting. For conferences, meetings etc. there are 8 rooms varying in size from 10 - 250 persons and for those who really want to arrive in style there is a private helipad.

A FEW IDEAS FOR INCENTIVE GROUPS A private fashion show, a night at La Scala and meeting celebrities afterwards, a night out at the world famous Casino at Campione d'Italia, a trip to the Italian and/or Swiss Alps and perhaps include Lugano and the continuous wine tasting (and very good it is too).

VENICE

Nothing can prepare you for your first sight of Venice; it is truly breathtaking.

Venice is built on 117 islands; it has 150 canals and 400 bridges. We visited Venice in December and were blessed with the most beautiful weather, but I think whatever the season or the weather, Venice has a magical quality that appeals to everyone. Most hotels have their own landing stage, so from the airport you just hop on a waterbus or water taxi and it takes you directly to your chosen hotel.

The Grand Canal is the city's main artery which winds its way through the city and you can take a waterbus to visit all the best sights on the waterfront. For a special event why not take a gondola ride through the smaller canals and glimpse the other side of Venice with its tiny bridges linking its cobbled streets.

With a pair of willing feet and sense of adventure you can explore the *real* Venice. The city is divided into six districts or "sestieri". If you get lost, enjoy it. If you start to worry, look upwards, as posted helpfully above eyelevel are signs directing you back to the main tourist areas of the Rialto Bridge and St. Mark's Square.

HOTELS

Our accommodation was at the **DANIELI ******* a "**Starwood luxury collection**". The hotel is part of a very beautiful, ancient 15th century palace of the Doge Dandolo and is located near to the Doges Palace and has a breathtaking view of the lagoon, especially from the Terrace restaurant situated on the top floor. The hotel is only two minutes from St. Mark's Square and shopping area; you can easily reach the various museums, churches and galleries of Venice and the world famous theatre "La Fenice". The total number of guest rooms is 233. The Danieli also features Banqueting rooms with different capacities, suitable for all kinds of cocktail parties, receptions and buffets and there are conference rooms accommodating up to about 120 people.

HOTEL WESTIN EUROPA & REGINA***** Situated only a stone's throw away from St. Mark's Square, next to the Grand Canal, the Europa & Regina has undergone a full and very tasteful refurbishment making it well worth considering in the future. It offers 146 double rooms, 27 singles and 20 suites. The meeting and reception rooms can accommodate up to 180.

HOTEL GRITTI PALACE ***** 15th century "luxury collection of Starwood Hotel". Situated near to the Europa & Regina along the Grand Canal, it is best suited for incentive groups as meeting space is very limited. The terrace overlooking the Grand Canal is delightful and would make an excellent venue for a cocktail party. The hotel has 80 double rooms, 7 single rooms and 6 suites.

HOTEL BAUER ***** situated close to St. Mark's Square on a corner of the Grand Canal. It consists of 115 bedrooms; also private apartments with balconies are available. It has a nice restaurant with terrace overlooking the canal. **Il Palazzo** at Bauer has 76 rooms in the more upscale section of the hotel.

LUNA HOTEL BAGLIONI ***** This is my favourite hotel; a 5 star definitely. Located just round the corner from St. Mark's Square, private berth enables gondolas and motorboats to reach the hotel direction. The hotel has been totally modernised and restored to its former splendour, with a definite air of elegance and taste. Lunch was the best food I experienced during my stay in Venice. Overall the hotel has a very friendly atmosphere. It has 118 rooms, 9 suites and 7 junior suites. The hotel is probably best used by incentive groups, as it only has small meeting rooms.

HOTEL DES BAINS ***** located as it is on the Lido island, it has the benefit of its own private beach. Although you lose a little of the feel of Venice itself on the island, the hotel is ideal for conference groups needing a large space and leisure facilities. The hotel is closed during the winter period and even though we visited during its closed period it still had a nice feel about it. Its season goes from April to October and it offers 157 double rooms, 14 single rooms & 19 suites. Conference and meeting rooms accommodate up to 400 people and outdoor reception facilities up to 2000.

RESTAURANT SAMPLES

DA RAFFAELE: Along the side of one of Venice's many canals, you will find Raffaele, which offers (weather permitting) outside dining along the canal or inside in the "Museum of Arms". You'll dine among arms, bronzes, swords, lances and daggers, all displayed in large show cases or on the wall. The food is typical Venetian with home-made pasta, spaghetti, dumplings, delicious seafood and shellfish and game (when in season) with a good selection of wine. It will seat up to 150, and prices are moderate for Venice.

TAVERNA LA FENICE is considered to be the gastronomic annex to the Fenice Theater. It is very elegant with its wooden ceiling, fireplaces and living rooms all dating back to the 17th century. Especially known for its excellent seafood specialties it can cater for up to 100 people.

ANTICO MARTINI located close to La Fenice Theater, is a very elegant restaurant, well known for its many different specialties. Maximum capacity for 30.

The original **HARRY'S BAR** is surprisingly a very small place. The upstairs restaurant will cater for a small group of about 20.

Other recommended restaurants are: **ANTICO PIGNOLO, DO'FORNI, LA COLOMBA, LA CARAVELLA, MALAMOCCO** and the luxurious **GRAN CAFFE RESTAURANT QUADRI** overlooking St. Mark's Square.

SPECIAL FUNCTION VENUE SAMPLES

PALAZZO PISANI MORETTA caters for up to 140 guests. The Palace is the property of the Pisani family. Built in the splendid Gothic style, it has its own private floating dock on the Grand Canal. The whole place is lit by candelabras hanging from the ceiling, making it an ideal location for that special or very romantic occasion. I would have to say I would definitely consider using this venue as long as if it can be proved that it meets all current fire regulations as I didn't have the opportunity to check this at the time.

PALAZZETTO PISANI - FERRI caters for up to 50 persons. Palazzetto Pisani looks onto the Grand Canal from a point between the Accademia Bridge and St. Mark's, which is the most splendid part of Venice. It is accessible from the canal and by land. Countess Maria Pia Ferri de Lazaras still resides in the palace and if requested, she can personally meet, greet and attend the evening with your guests. Palazzetto Pisani Ferri is the ideal place to entertain your guests in a unique atmosphere.

OVERVIEW

As we all know, Venice is the floating city of Italy. It is architecturally very beautiful and a romantic but also very expensive city. I don't think Venice would suit a group that enjoys nightlife, as there simply isn't any. You just enjoy it for its culture, beauty, music played in St. Marks Square and Piano bars you find in most hotels. Any other entertainment would have to be provided as part of the programme designed by you on behalf of your client.