

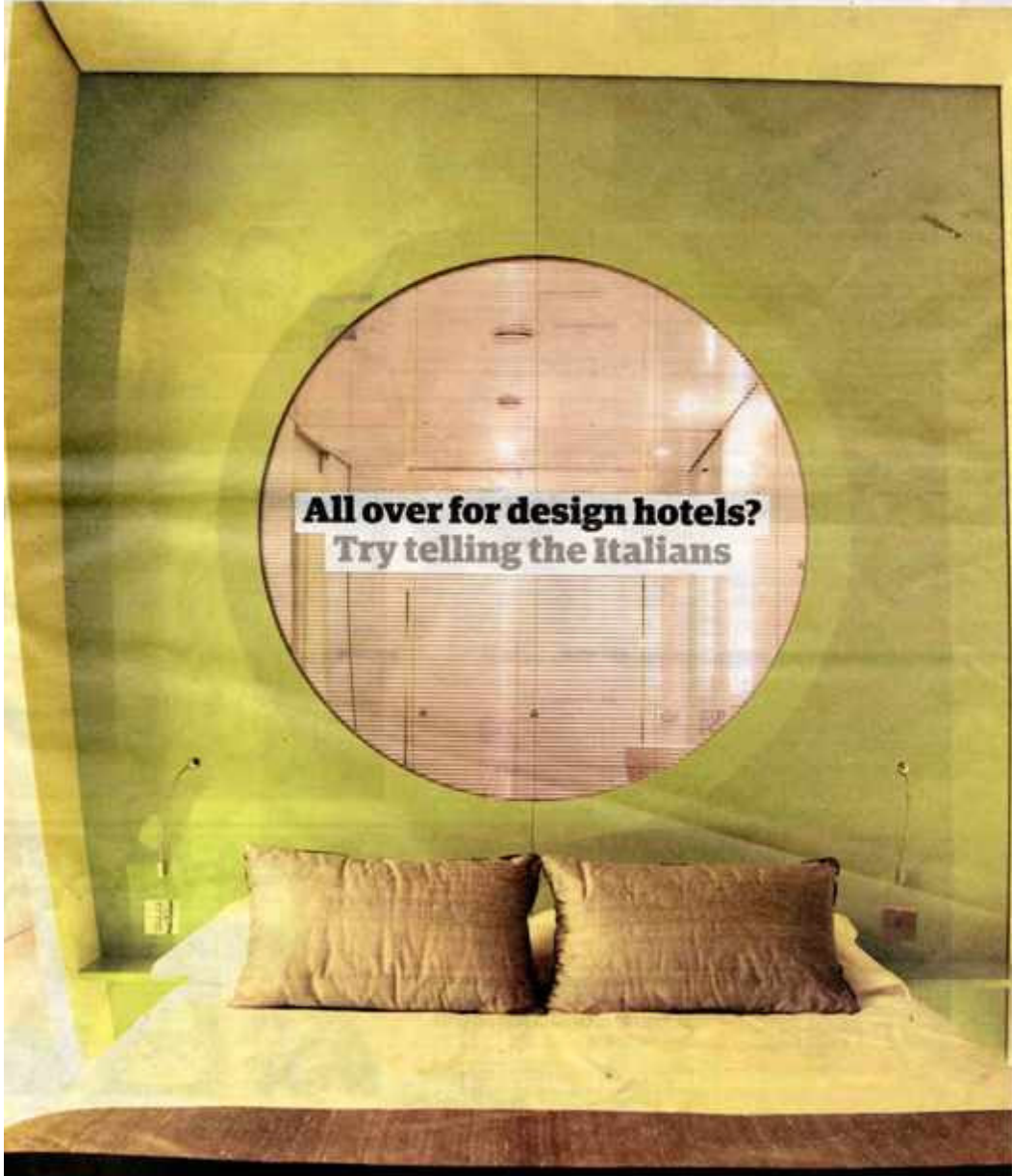


travel



Catch a movie outdoors » Page 3

Readers' guide to summer festivals » Page 8





Bespoke suite (clockwise from above) ... the fit-out of the Duomo has cost £10m and features Anad ironwork, such as bronze bar, unique chairs, red lacquer doors and steel reception desk



instead from following a big day out for the company at the nearby Milano motorbike track. It's a perfect match.

And yet not all the locals are so sure. The police were in earlier, officially posing around with their tape measures in the hotel's impressive entrance corridor and if they were being told it's just something a millionaire out of town. People stop and stare at the bronze facade and pass through the red lacquer doors at the ring-of-steel reception as though it might have landed from Mars, or somewhere equally extraterrestrial.

"People have an issue to a more rustic place," explains Alessandro, a wood importer who lives down the road. "I think it's fantastic, it's perfect. But I'm sure they will all accept something so new." Even Kimble's sister declares it "wow-the-top".

"To say the risk was quite high," says Bernardi, a modest forty-something who hides his ambition so beautifully, but has already had a lengthy career in the hotel business. "I couldn't live a life without challenges." The fit-out, he tells me, has cost £10 million; the reception desk alone, hand made by a local metal worker, came in at a cool €16,000.

Rimini is already known for its super

cube like Villa Rosa that pump out horse muck up in the hills in the early 1970s. And it's these that limit the rest of the town made for itself up. Richard Dennis, whose company Effluent Wastewater specialises in group travel, says the Duomo is just what the town needs. Scheduling to make things up to the hotel's design, plus for an airport jet stage. The locals will all crowd into the traditional bars of the fish market to drink their traditional evening aperitif sparkling wine, Aperol and so on. He says, but the real tourists will come here when they've had enough of the seaside bars (you'll find the best between beaches 2 and 3 with names like Cocconi).

Bernardi's better gameplan is to bring the two groups – the visitors and the locals – together. It's quite a shock for us, to mix with people we don't know," he says. "But someone has to start. It's hard to socialise across these barriers, and I want to help people do that."

The Duomo's owner first became aware of Anad's imagination during the 2002 Milan Furniture Fair where a special show of hypothetical hotel design was pulling in the crowds. Anad's offering happened to be in Mexico City proposed a circular hotel inside a circular room with angles projected around all 360 degrees. That it could become anything from a football stadium to a

People stare at the ring-of-steel reception as though it might have landed from Mars

city, eliminating the need to actually leave the room at all.

He sent Anad a brief suggesting they turn the whole idea of the hotel on its head. Literally. Ceilings instead of floors, upside-down beds, inverted house views. The designer interpreted this more pragmatically as the proposal of a man who desperately wanted delirium, but probably didn't really want to wake up in the morning gazing down at a floor that looked like a ceiling. "It was the man who made the pull back," agrees Bernardi. "He has a unique sense of beauty." And now the task is taking on an ugly little existing hotel in a side street and trying to match the ambition of his new owner."

As it is, the Duomo only has 41 rooms to fill. And ultimately a further nine suites. And such is Anad's reputation it's already being talked about all over the world. "We had people from South America phoning us three weeks ago, before we'd even finalised any plans," says the general manager Norberto Chioducci. And this being the case, it looks like Rimini has the hotel it needs, even if it might not quite deserve it quite yet.

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Design through the ages (from top) ... the chic Carducci 96 is set in a 1900s villa; the Grand Hotel adored by Federico Fellini; on the beach – Italian style



Way to go

Getting there
EasyJet (easyjet.com) begins direct London flights on June 29 from £26 one way. Or take Overland London-Rimini by Eurostar and overnight sleeper train from £122 one way. Or take the Col Rail Europe from 0870 544666 or see easylife.com/italy.htm

Where to stay
Hotel Duomo, Via Gordano 26, 47024 24211/5, duomohotel.com. Double £190-£290 B&B (plus vat 10%). Breakfasts 08-10am £1.30 B&B (plus 10% vat)

Where to eat
Lunch on the beach: Basilico, Bagno 47/48, Lago Mare, Rimini +39 0541 291 002
Farewell, highly the best: Da Fico, Via Sall' I, Rimini +39 0541 446 522. Tapak and Kioskeri, Via Sall' I, Rimini +39 0541 446 522
Kioskeri, Via Sall' I, Rimini +39 0541 446 522

Where to eat
Italian Food & Drink, 020-7406 1254, it.it
Country code: 02 19
Flight time London-Rimini: 75m, Seville, £1+ 1.41 euros.

The best and worst of airline food

Hungry Traveller

Page 10

I was the only boutique hotel in the village ...

Riad Farnachi, Marrakech, Morocco
Jonathan Wix, who created 42 The Gulls in Leeds and the Scotsman in Edinburgh, was blazing a trail when he converted three riads into Riad Farnachi in the oldest part of the medina in 2004. It's got daybed-filled courtyards, a stunning pool and hammam, roof terraces, fruit trees ... A sort of Embassy Morocco. But for real. Many more have followed in its footsteps.

2 Derb el Anassiri, Rue Souk el Fassi, Qariat Jim Akad, Marrakech Medina (00 212 2438 4910, riadfarnachi.com) www.riadfarnachi.com five suites from £225

The Sun House and The Dutch House (see Rosenberg), Galle, Sri Lanka
The Sun House and its sister property The Dutch House are amazingly well preserved colonial mansions, which were turned into the classic boutique hotels in Sri Lanka in 1995 by Hong Kong based proprietors Geoffrey Orbits. Both have infinity pools, incredible views, legendary bedrooms and other guests die to change in to be transported back to the style of the 1920s.

Galle, Sri Lanka (00 94 91 4380177, manohouse.com) suites from £130

Hotel Trossanton, Cornwall, UK
Once a yacht club, Hotel Trossanton perches on a Cornish cliff and its cluster of houses all have sea views. Thanks to Olga Polizzi's stylish design, it was the first hotel in the area to be able to think about changing London prices when it opened in 1998.

St Mewes, Cornwall (00 44 15 290 055, trossanton.com) from £205

Il Convitto, Puglia, Italy
Puglia is not so widely on the smart travel map, and Il Convitto-Santa Maria di Costantinopoli, which opened in 2003, helped put it there. The 19th century complex has been restored by the McAlpine family (Lord Alan and Alison), former treasurer of the Conservative party, and his Greek wife Athena who have filled it with their own art collection making it more like a home than a hotel.

Martina di Iano, Puglia, Italy (00 39 8 963248) nine rooms from £250

Semiramis, Athens, Greece
To say that the Semiramis is a landmark in its design is putting it mildly, but then its designer, New York based Kimball Smith, is not known for his restraint. Appearing like a piece of brightly coloured paper in the bougeous suburb of Thessalon in 2004, it's become a destination in its own right.

Hadissa Trikoupi 45, 11503 Filiofilo, Athens (00 30 210 5084400, semiramisathens.com) 20 rooms from £200, GR

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