

# Relax in Sorrento

Kat Hopps escapes to Italy to take in the cliff-top views of the Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria

The hotel's large balcony enjoys a stunning view of the Bay of Naples across the water

Overlooking the Gulf of Naples sits the pretty town of Sorrento, a welcome retreat from its frantic neighbour across the water. Famed for its production of limoncello, the historic town, home to just 16,500 inhabitants, instantly introduces you to a slower pace of life amid a maze of narrow streets.

Perched on the town's cliff-top edge was to be my home, the Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, dating back to 1834 and still owned and managed by the Fiorentino family. The hotel enjoys fantastic sea views and large grounds; a lush Mediterranean garden permeated by sweet white wisteria, stretches over 20,000 square metres and is lined with orange and lemon groves. Legend has it the Roman Emperor Augustus had a villa nearby and original ruins can be found.

If the devil is in the detail, it is clear why grandmother still reigns as matriarch, evidenced by her choice of locally sourced antique furniture pieces that capture the romance of a bygone era. With its exquisite period features, frescoed ceilings and intimate atmosphere, it is no surprise the hotel has

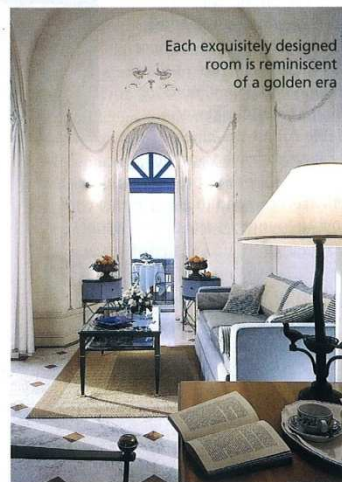
attracted numerous celebrities such as Sophia Loren, Luciano Pavarotti and even British royalty.

Grandson, Guido Fiorentino, is the current President and CEO and has modernised the rooms with the required comforts. He has raised the bar too with a new Michelin star chef at the hotel's Terrazza Bosquet Seafront Restaurant whose creative style was on show with unusual but delicious dishes like the homemade seaweed pasta.

You never need do more than simply laze about: my Stress Relief Ritual at the hotel's spa was a soothing 50-minute body massage. We were rewarded for venturing out with a boat trip along the coastline – passing the Punta Del Capo beach – and lunch at Lo Scoglio in Marina del Cantone with its famous zucchini and three cheeses dish.

Should you seek adventure a little further afield, a trip to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Pompeii is a must – the amphitheatres, roman baths and brothels, give a remarkable insight into day-to-day Roman life before its demise.

*Kat Hopps*



## TRIP NOTES

✦ 3 nights at Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, Sorrento, costs from £732 per person, based on 2 sharing a classic room on a bed & breakfast basis, including return flights from London Gatwick to Naples and private transfers booked through Classic Collection Holidays (0800 294 9324). Grand Hotel Excelsior Vittoria, Piazza Tasso, 34 – 80067, Sorrento, Italy, +39 081 877 7871; exvitt.it