

  
BELMOND  
HOTEL CIPRIANI  
VENICE



PRESS KIT

Belmond Hotel Cipriani introduced by Amanda Woods

OVERVIEW

In the floating city of love there is a place that looks and feels like no other. An elegant oasis of serenity and style, Belmond Hotel Cipriani in Venice has a special place in Belmond history as the first hotel in its global portfolio of iconic properties, trains and river cruises.

A destination within a destination, Belmond Hotel Cipriani is a mere five minutes from St Mark's Square by private wooden motorboat, allowing guests the opportunity to explore the city's charms before retreating to the tip of Giudecca Island on the edge of Venice's picturesque lagoon.

While the canals and winding streets of the Queen of the Adriatic may be filled with tourists, Belmond Hotel Cipriani is a secluded retreat where guests can relax like nowhere else in Venice.

Here they can slip into one of the finest swimming pools in Europe and the only Olympic-sized pool in central Venice and float in filtered seawater as attendants stand by with fresh towels and cool drinks. They can treat their taste buds in the hotel restaurants, including the Michelin-starred Oro Restaurant, and be pampered by a range of indulgent spa treatments in the Casanova Wellness Centre.

Those feeling active can kayak or water bike past ancient monasteries and wildlife, or team up with a personal trainer to exercise around Giudecca Island or on state of the art equipment from Technogym in the hotel's fitness centre. Tennis fans can raise their heart rates and their game by taking on a tennis pro on the hotel's red clay tennis court, while fashion lovers can have a workout of their own in the hotel's boutique which offers a colourful collection of Venetian fashion, accessories and jewellery.

Guests can choose to stay in either the hotel's main building with vistas of the lagoon, or in the former 15th-century palace, the Palazzo Vendramin, with panoramic views of St Mark's Square.

The two buildings are joined by an ancient courtyard and green walkway where roses, jasmine and wisteria bloom and where herbs including mint, rosemary and sage grow before appearing on dishes and in drinks in the hotel's restaurants and bars.

The recently renovated rooms and suites are light and fresh, combining traditional and contemporary details with unique Venetian touches.

The 95 accommodations range from charming single rooms with king sized beds and marble bathrooms, through double rooms and junior suites to suites, many with balconies or

terraces. Here guests can start their day with a complimentary full breakfast and end it looking out into a beautiful peaceful night with unforgettable views over the lagoon, gardens or St Mark's Square.

The majestic Dogaressa Suite is the largest in the Palazzo Vendramin, with panoramic views over St Mark's Square and the Doge's Palace. The sitting room features original 18th-century Coromandel screens and antiques enhanced with priceless Fortuny and Rubelli fabrics, the elegant marble bathroom offers a bathtub and separate shower while the master bedroom comes with a king size or twin beds overlooking the tranquil Casanova gardens.

The famous Palladio Suite has its own exclusive dock for guests to arrive and leave in privacy, an airy living room that opens onto a lagoon-view balcony, a private plunge pool and jacuzzi on a terrace surrounded by fragrant jasmine, two marble bathrooms, a dining area where a personal butler can serve up to eight at an intimate dinner party, and 180-degree views of the Venetian lagoon through floor to ceiling windows.

Hotel guests and visitors alike are welcome to drink and dine in Belmond Hotel Cipriani's renowned bars and restaurants.

Launched in April 2014, the 40-seat Oro Restaurant received its first Michelin star within two years of opening. Headed by Executive Chef Davide Bisetto, who became the first Italian chef to gain two Michelin stars in France, the menu reinterprets the hotel's historic gastronomic tradition using the finest Italian ingredients. The wine list includes more than 1,000 esteemed labels, while the décor by one of the pioneers of restaurant design, Adam D Tihany, includes a domed gold leaf ceiling with a stunning handmade Murano glass chandelier.

The informal and yet undeniably glamorous Cip's Club Restaurant has long held an international reputation as one of the top spots in Venice. Italian specialities and traditional Venetian cuisine are enjoyed alfresco on a wooden terrace over the lagoon with spectacular views of St Mark's Square day and night. Meanwhile the poolside Porticciolo Restaurant offers appetisers, salads, and brick oven pizzas alongside refreshing drinks.

The hotel has three bars, each with its own distinct personality.

Enoteca La Via della Sete allows guests to savour a traditional Venetian wine cellar's atmosphere with a selection of the best Italian and global wines paired with small Italian cicchetti snacks. The Gabbiano Bar is where guests can watch the sun set as they sway to live piano music, while the San Giorgio Bar opens in the evening for aperitifs or after dinner drinks beside the lagoon.

Belmond Hotel Cipriani has a reputation for impeccable service—a reputation that goes beyond the hotel grounds and includes private tours and experiences.

While the complimentary private shuttle boat runs 24 hours a day between the hotel and St Mark's Square, guests can arrange to take the hotel's wooden motorboat, Shirley, out for full or half day excursions. Shirley can carry up to ten people and comes with a dedicated captain who can take guests to Murano for glass, Burano for lace, or to any number of the islands in the lagoon for a magical getaway. Picnics and champagne can also be arranged for sunset, or any time of day.

The hotel has a special Smile Club for younger guests. From May until mid-September a tutor supervises a playroom where children can learn to make traditional Venetian masks, take a picnic in the garden and have pastry lessons with a chef. Babysitting is available on request, and the hotel also arranges special activities for the whole family including treasure hunts around Venice and visits to the city's Secret Prisons.

A stay at Belmond Hotel Cipriani as part of Belmond's signature Venice Simplon-Orient-Express journey from London to Venice, allows train lovers to combine the romance of Venice with the romance of rail.

While many guests may dream of living at the Belmond Hotel Cipriani year-round, the hotel is open for just seven months each year, from the end of March until the beginning of November.

## HISTORY & BACKGROUND

After more than twenty years of running one of the hottest spots in Venice, Giuseppe Cipriani wanted to make a new dream come true.

The founder of the exclusive Harry's Bar restaurant had long thought about building a hotel that would be within easy reach of St Mark's Square and yet far enough away from the crowds to ensure peace and privacy.

At the time the Viscountess Boyd of Merton, Lady Honor Svejdar and Lady Brigid Guinness, the three daughters of the head of the Guinness family, the second Earl of Iveagh, were all Harry's Bar customers and enthusiastically supported his plans.

Cipriani wanted to build his hotel on the point of Giudecca Island, a place known as The Spinsteries as it was where rich Venetian families would confine their eldest daughters in monasteries. It is also where the legendary lover Casanova would tempt some of the young girls out of the monasteries to join him in adjacent vineyards.

After Cipriani showed the Guinness sisters the spot, they rapidly established a joint company, purchased a two-hectare plot of land, and work began.

In 1956 the hotel opened its doors under Giuseppe Cipriani's management, and became a friendly competitor to Harry's Bar which Cipriani also continued to run.

The hotel quickly gained a reputation for its wonderfully relaxed atmosphere, impeccable service and superbly prepared food and was such a success that a decade later adjoining land was purchased and the hotel was expanded to include new rooms and the largest swimming pool in Venice, 600 square metres of filtered seawater surrounded by manicured gardens.

Long before George Clooney and Amal Alamuddin's stay at Belmond Hotel Cipriani during their wedding festivities made international news, the Cipriani was a favourite amongst movie and rock stars, presidents, prime ministers and royalty.

In 1972 Cipriani resigned as president of the hotel but remained on the board of directors.

Then came the day the Hotel Cipriani started Belmond's journey to becoming one of the world's leading luxury hotel and adventure travel companies.

The President of Sea Containers, James B Sherwood, could often be found at the Hotel Cipriani when he was in Venice. When it became clear that the hotel, which was loss-making at the time, was available for sale he bought it 'on a whim' in 1976 for £900,000

The following year Sherwood bought the first train carriages that would become the Venice Simplon-Orient-Express and started plans to create a luxury train that would bring guests from London and Paris to stay at his new hotel.

In 1977 Sherwood appointed Dr Natale Rusconi as Managing Director and in the years to come the hotel acquired the Palazzo Vendramin, Palazetto Nani Barbaro and Granai della Repubblica, opened Cip's Restaurant, the Casanova Garden and Casanova Beauty and Wellness Centre, and unveiled the Palladio and Dogaressa Suites.

In 2008 the current General Manager, Giampaolo Ottazzi, was appointed to his new role. Under Ottazzi's leadership the hotel's rooms and suites have been meticulously renovated, a new business centre and lively shopping arcade have opened, the Smile Kid's Club has been created to entertain children aged 4 to 12 years, and the new restaurant, Oro, has received its first Michelin Star within two years of opening.

## PEOPLE

### **Giampaolo Ottazzi, General Manager**

When Dr Natale Rusconi left the hotel after more than 30 years as Managing Director, many wondered who would replace him. Belmond turned to Giampaolo Ottazzi, General Manager of another of the portfolio's exclusive Italian properties, Belmond Hotel Caruso in Ravello.

Giampaolo has always been drawn to special hotels, with Belmond Hotel Splendido in Portofino and Hotel de Paris in Monte Carlo amongst his earlier places of work. Over the years he worked his way up through concierge, front desk and sales management positions.

Giampaolo's first General Manager role was at the Hotel Villa La Massa in Florence. He then took over the helm at the Grand Hotel Continental and Park Hotel in Siena, followed by his move to Belmond Hotel Caruso.

Since arriving at Belmond Hotel Cipriani, Giampaolo has overseen physical changes in the hotel including renovations and the opening of the Michelin-starred Oro Restaurant. He says working in a seasonal hotel that is open seven months a year is more intense than working in a hotel that is open year-round, and he strives to help his 220 staff come together to form an effective team.

While he admits he has few spare moments when the hotel is in season, Giampaolo says he loves to spend time with his 14-year-old son or exploring the lagoon. "I have a typical wooden Venetian boat with a little motor and love to stop at islands, swim in the lagoon and have some fish for lunch. I like to be among nature wherever I go."

As well as taking his son and friends out on his boat, Giampaolo can also be found sharing his private boat with hotel guests he has come to know over the years.

"Some of the guests probably know Venice better than me because they've been coming for 30 or 40 years and staying for long periods. But they like to experience the town with a local and we go together on my boat to discover little family run restaurants."

Giampaolo says the hotel's gardens are one of his favourite places to recharge his batteries. "I walk around in the garden where we have a rabbit, three ducks, and chickens. I see if the chickens have laid their eggs and make sure the herbs are fine. It's a very quiet place to reinvigorate the mind before coming back to the office."

He can often be found in the hotel restaurants enjoying beef carpaccio, a dish invented by Giuseppe Cipriani, and says his favourite drink is the Bellini, which the hotel only serves between May and September so they can use fresh peaches, just as Mr Cipriani always did.

Giampaolo says it's an honour to work at Belmond's flagship hotel, to see it change over the years and to get to know the people who stay there. "We have a special clientele from all over the world and I love to satisfy their needs. This is the challenge every day."

#### **Roberto Senigaglia, Concierge**

When Roberto Senigaglia was a young boy he went to primary school on the island that faces Belmond Hotel Cipriani. For years he looked across at the grand hotel and dreamed about what life was like there, not knowing that when he grew up he would become one of the hotel's most recognisable faces.

Today Roberto is the first person most people see when they arrive at Belmond Hotel Cipriani, and the last person they see as they leave. After starting as a captain on one of the hotel's boats 25 years ago he was recognised as being perfect for the doorman's position.

Over the years in his role as concierge Roberto has charmed guests, solved their problems big and small, and offered advice on everything from what to do in Venice to life in general. "Every day I'm asked unusual questions or have to solve sudden and unexpected problems." Roberto explains. "I remember one day a gentleman came to me 15 minutes before he was due to get married, having forgotten to bring his belt. He asked me to go and buy one but I knew I did not have enough time. I immediately lent him my own belt—so he got married on time and with his trousers on."

While the hotel attracts many celebrity guests Roberto has managed to avoid becoming starstruck, saying every guest is a VIP to him. "The curious thing about real stars is that when they arrive the sensation is you have met them already and know them somehow, but you have just seen them on TV.

"I've met really famous and important people over the years, but I've also learnt that simple and spontaneous conversation is the most important thing. When a queen or a princess says 'Hi Roberto, how are you and how is your family?' they make my day."

Roberto says that over the past 25 years both the hotel industry and guests have changed; people are now more informal and friendly than before. He also admits he has become very fond of some of the repeat guests over the years.

"They treat me like a son. You become a real reference point and you both can't wait to meet every year and count the days until you see each other again."

In the winter season Roberto spends as much time as he can with his family, going skiing and on other holidays together. But he's happy when it's time to return to work. "Every day here is like paradise. When I arrive in the morning I open my "office" – the gate on the pier – and see guests having breakfast in the sun while our turtle, Roberta, is in the pond eating ham and maybe being fed by some of the younger guests. All this surrounded by luxurious gardens. I couldn't ask for more! I really do feel privileged."

## TOURS

Belmond Hotel Cipriani may be one of Venice's most desirable hideaways, but with so much to see and do in the floating city most guests also embrace the opportunity to explore. The hotel offers a range of bespoke tours to hidden gems for singles, couples or groups.

### **Bacari Tours**

Bacaro bars are where Venetians gather in the evening to swap tales and laughs over aperitifs and tasty cicchetti snacks. The hotel's guide escorts guests on a walking tour along quiet canals to some of the best and most unusual bacari in town.

Here guests can learn about the history of the individual bars as well as their neighbourhoods, snack on cicchetti, savour specialist wines and raise a glass of the famous Spritz cocktail with new friends.

### **Winery Tours**

Alongside Venice the most famous islands in the lagoon are Murano for glass, Burano for lace, and Torcello for history. But the lagoon also has lesser-known islands that produce delectable wines.

Belmond Hotel Cipriani takes guests touring in their wooden boat, Shirley, to wineries where they can meet and talk with the owners.

Other tours feature the nearby Collio region which is gaining an international reputation for crisp white wines. Between tastings guests travel in a motorcycle sidecar to see the vibrant Italian countryside from a different angle.

### **Sensorio Tours**

Belmond Hotel Cipriani has a range of shopping tours that introduce guests to rarely seen boutiques and workshops, where they can hear fascinating stories from the owners as they admire their work.

On the Sensorio Tour guests enjoy a delicious tasting in a chocolaterie, feel the materials and contours of antique furniture, listen to a violin serenade, look out over spectacular views, and not only smell exotic fragrances but also create one of their own.

During a private visit to the perfume museum Palazzo Mocenigo guests can learn expert techniques used in the art of perfume making and create their own individual scent.

## CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY & ENVIRONMENT

Belmond Hotel Cipriani is committed to the environment and community. The hotel uses energy saving methods, recycles water from air conditioning for the gardens and helps to reduce waste in the famous waterways by sponsoring a boat that cleans the Canal Grande of plastic bottles and other floating waste every morning.

The hotel has created the Run for Croissant initiative whereby guests can raise money for a children's hospital in Padua when they buy special t-shirts and jogging pants following a run around Giudecca Island with a stop for croissants by the lagoon.

Plastic lids from bottles are also collected and donated to a local non-profit organisation for blind people which then raises funds through recycling.

When disasters hit, fund-raisers often start with staff contributions with guests then invited to contribute. When an earthquake devastated towns in central Italy, the restaurant created a special pasta dish from the region with half the proceeds going to the relief effort.

Meanwhile, after hearing about problems at home from one of the hotel's employees from Senegal, staff decided to send his village containers of food along with serviceable computers and linens that were being replaced.