



Gritti Palace, Venice

Venice's storied Gritti Palace—which recently reopened after an extensive 15-month, \$55-million renovation—has seen its share of updates since the Pisani family constructed the original Gothic palazzo in 1475. Following his acquisition decades later, the Doge of Venice, Andrea Gritti, expanded the building in 1525. Over the centuries, it served as a residence of nobles and Vatican ambassadors until it was converted to a hotel in 1895. Italy's CIGA (Compagnia Italiana Grandi Alberghi), took over the property in 1947 and renovated it with a focus on luxury and romance, attracting Hollywood's A-list, prominent heads of state, 20th-century royals and cultural luminaries including Ernest Hemingway, who once famously staged a midnight game of baseball in the hotel's lobby. Hemingway penned portions of his novel *Across the River and into the Trees* during extended stays at the Gritti in the late 1940s and early '50s.

The corner Hemingway Presidential suite on the *piano nobile* (one level above the ground floor) is one of 21 new suites named for famous patrons, Venetian cultural institutions, local neighborhoods and historic naval battles. Donghia Associates' Design Director Chuck Chewning, who oversaw the project, pays tribute to Papa's spirit in the 990-square-foot suite appointed with antique paintings, handcrafted Venetian mirrors, *terrazzo veneziano* and oak parquet floors, and silks, velvets, and embroidered damasks reproduced from original designs by the renowned Venetian textile house Rubelli, Donghia's parent company. Hemingway's own club chair as well as his works and other masculine accents set the tone. Pour a whiskey at the suite's bar and walk out the floor-to-ceiling French doors to

the balcony for a smoke overlooking the bustling Grand Canal. Another suite, the two-story Redentore Terrazza on the building's top floor, features an enormous multilevel rooftop terrace with a small pool and panoramic vistas of La Serenissima.

The renovation reduced the number of rooms from 91 to 82, further enhancing the Gritti's enchanting intimacy. One daunting task for Chewning and his team was cataloging every piece of original art, furniture and fixtures to determine what should be restored and returned to the property. Chandeliers and light fixtures, for example, were sent to Galliano Ferro on Murano for refurbishment and reconstruction. "This is more along the lines of a grand residence rather than a grand hotel," says Chewning, who approached the project as if it were a private home. "We really pushed aside the standard hospitality thinking—every room is a mix of new and existing pieces, materials, different marbles and detailing." To reassure returning guests, Chewning returned certain works of art and antiques to their former places to convey a sense of familiarity and continuity. The shimmering Bar Longhi, with its 1940s-era etched mirrors and original paintings by 18th-century Venetian master Pietro Longhi, has been beautifully refreshed yet preserved, and a high-tech underground hydraulic system ensures it won't flood again. The outdoor terrace on the Grand Canal overlooking the baroque Church of Santa Maria della Salute is the perfect spot for watching the vaporettos, water taxis, and gondoliers float by, while puffing on a Fuente Hemingway.

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—Laurie Kahle