

Andrew Harper's Hideaway Report[®]

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TRAVELING THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF TRULY ENCHANTING PLACES

Library, main salon, J.K. Cafe, bed and bath of our Junior Suite at J.K. Place Roma / PHOTOS BY ANDREW HARPER



Rome has a surprising number of distinguished boutique hotels, and I already recommend four of them: the Residenza Napoleone III (two sumptuous suites within the 16th-century Palazzo Ruspoli), The Inn At The Roman Forum (a 12-room hideaway located a short walk from the Colosseum), Portrait Roma (a 14-suite townhouse hotel, just off Via Condotti, owned by the Ferragamo fashion family) and Villa Spalletti Trivelli (12 rooms and suites within a century-old stone mansion surrounded by gardens). Given this abundance and variety, it might seem superfluous to go in search of another property similar in scale. However, both J.K. Place Firenze and J.K. Place Capri have proved extremely popular with *Hideaway Report* readers, so when **J.K. Place Roma** opened in the summer of 2013, it seemed inevitable that I should pay the new 30-room hotel a visit.

My initial impression was not entirely favorable, as the property is situated on a cobbled street so narrow that you are obliged to leap from your taxi to avoid

a cacophony of horns from indignant drivers backed up behind. On the other hand, the location is close to Via Condotti and adjacent to the astounding Ara Pacis, the richly carved and ornamented “Altar of Peace” commissioned in 13 B.C. to honor Emperor Augustus and now protected by a striking glass-and-steel pavilion designed by American architect Richard Meier.

The 19th-century building that now houses J.K. Place was originally the architecture school of the University of Rome. The front entrance is extremely discreet, but once inside you find yourself surrounded by supremely stylish public areas created by the brilliant Florentine designer Michele Bönan. The main salon, drenched in light from a glass ceiling, has clean modernist lines, contemporary furniture and dramatic modern paintings, but it is humanized by neoclassical sculptures and piles of art books, as well as an array of leading international newspapers and magazines. To one side is a library with dark wood shelves, a black

wooden floor, brightly colored rugs, cream armchairs and directional lighting. And beyond, *J.K. Cafe* has dramatic turquoise walls, deep green-and-sapphire velvet banquettes and rust-red leather chairs. The overall effect is so unusual, imaginative and harmonious, I had to suppress an urge to applaud.

The café is a delightful place for a meal at any hour of the day, but I particularly enjoyed the ambiance at lunchtime. As Rome is blessed with numerous fine restaurants, the menu sensibly offers a selection of delicious comfort food, with appetizers such as burrata with tuna roe, and octopus and potato salad with rocket, followed by mains that include the JKBurger (a brioche bun with Fassone beef from Piedmont and Tuscan bacon), pasta carbonara with local pecorino cheese, and *scialatielli* (a type of thick and short fettuccine) with seafood and zucchini blossoms. The wood-paneled bar at the end of the dining room provides an extremely congenial place for a pre- or post-dinner drink — maybe the

house cocktail, the JKSour (Disaronno, passion fruit and lemon juice), or a flute of Spumante — while either perched on a bar stool or relaxing at a brass-rimmed table in a contiguous lounge.

Bönan's talent is also evident in the hotel's guest rooms. Our 475-square-foot Junior Suite came with dove-gray walls, large gilt-edged mirrors, black lacquer furniture, mirrored closet doors and a king-size bed backed by a padded headboard covered with handmade cream fabric. The spectacular bath was clad in gray-and-white-striped marble and was equipped with heavy chrome fixtures, twin vanities set in a white-marble surround and a sizable walk-in shower

with a monsoon showerhead. Overall, the room was stylish, quiet and supremely comfortable; its only drawback was that it lacked an exterior view (which on a future occasion I would specifically request).

During our stay, all the staff members — especially those at reception and in the bar — were uniformly charming, with relaxed and gracious good manners. Despite the sophistication of its contemporary design, J.K. Place Roma never lapses into trendiness or pretension. It is a civilized private enclave of great distinction. The only things that it conspicuously lacks are facilities such as a spa or a fitness center.

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LIKE Inspired contemporary design; congenial café; comfortable accommodations; delightful staff. **DISLIKE** Lack of a fitness center and spa. **GOOD TO KNOW** Despite its sequestered location, the hotel is only a seven-minute walk from the Spanish Steps. *Deluxe Room, \$820; Junior Suite, \$1,270. Via di Monte d'Oro 30. Tel. (39) 06-982-634. jkroma.com*



preceding a rating, denotes an officially recommended hotel that will be added to The Andrew Harper Collection. Palazzo Manfredi (89) was not up to the required standard.

Full-service travel planning is available to members at (800) 375-4685 or reservations@AndrewHarper.com.

For comments and inquiries concerning *The Hideaway Report*, please email aharper@AndrewHarper.com.