

Hotel Review: Tomtom Suites in Istanbul



Admittedly, “Get thee to a nunnery,” Hamlet’s famous insult to Ophelia, doesn’t sound like much of a slogan for a hospitality business. But turn it into a fun-loving invitation and you could have an apt tag line for this cozy 20-suite boutique hotel, which opened in the summer of 2008 in an elaborately restored 1901 building that used to house French nuns: “Get thee to a nunnery! Wireless Internet and Molton Brown toiletries provided!”

THE LOCATION

[Tomtom Suites](#) addresses the partier’s paradox: how to find a crash pad within striking distance of a night-life district that isn’t overrun by noisy lager louts. A five-minute walk from [Istiklal Caddesi](#) — the city’s music-blasting main drag of bars, clubs and restaurants — Tomtom Suites is just far enough away from it that the throbbing bass can’t penetrate its walls, and it’s just small and elite enough that intimacy is assured.

THE ROOMS

Like [Istanbul](#), a city celebrated as the bridge between [Europe](#) and [Asia](#), Tomtom Suites links two different stylistic worlds. On one hand, the spacious suites are quite contemporary, featuring smooth wooden floors and furnishings, subdued autumnal colors, Italian lighting and ample high-tech gadgetry (Wi-Fi, flat-screen TV, DVD player, cordless phone, electronic safe). At the same time, some distinctly Turkish touches inject Oriental warmth — hand-painted ceramics, tubular harem-style cushions with tassels, plush embroidered chairs and a welcome basket filled with regional fruit. In Room 206, the closets were generous, and the minibar was stocked with everything from local Efes beer (4 euros, about \$6 at \$1.52 to the

euro) to Gruyère cheese biscuits (3.50 euros) to chilled Turkish rosé (20 euros). The only downside was the view of a small nondescript courtyard — though many rooms have views of the attractive Italian Consulate.

THE BATHROOM

Done top to bottom in white marble, the angular bathroom featured a rectangular glass shower and, better yet, a separate deep Duravit bathtub (with underwater jets) designed by [Philippe Starck](#). After slathering yourself in Molton Brown “stress-relieving hydrosoak” and “enlivening toko-yuzu body lotion,” you can stand on the scale, use the blow dryer with one hand and make a call on the bathroom phone with the other — while dressed in a fluffy white robe and slippers. Anyone tired of his or her epidermis will appreciate the additional pumice stone and rough exfoliation glove.

AMENITIES

A comfortable lobby library offers a primer on Istanbul’s rich history, thanks to books like “Images of the Ottoman Empire” and “Walking Through Byzantium.” There’s no gym to work off pounds, but the panoramic top-floor breakfast terrace offers a free daily means to accumulate some, thanks to a morning spread of olives, cheeses, breads, cold cuts, fruits, cereals and made-to-order eggs. By night, the same space becomes a restaurant with knockout views of Istanbul’s glittering skyline and a menu with good traditional Turkish mezze dishes (the eggplant in yogurt — 5 euros — is especially tasty), some so-so steaks and a lengthy international wine list.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The French nuns might hardly recognize their former quarters. Austerity and privations have given way to a classy, comfortable small hotel. While dedicated sightseers might be better served in the history-packed Sultanahmet neighborhood, the location of Tomtom Suites should appeal to epicures, night owls and power shoppers willing to splurge a bit for stylish digs.

Tomtom Suites, Tomtom Kaptan Sokak 18 (off Bogazkesen Caddesi), Beyoglu; (90-212) 292-4949; www.tomtomsuites.com. Doubles from 180 euros (\$274).