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How grand hotels become great

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Casa Manni in Rome, Italy

The place I haven't yet stayed at but keep hearing about as a precious recommendation is **Casa Manni** in Rome (www.casamanni.com). Occupying a 17th-century palazzo near the Spanish Steps, the nightly rate at this two-bed apartment starts at €530. Owned by Armando Manni, a film director, it has been refurbished by American architect Adam D Tihany, and claims to "offer many features the grand hotels haven't even thought of, and would be unable to offer if they had". I am intrigued, not least because what with pillow menus and the rest, I thought there was nothing left to surprise us in the world of luxury travel. Except, that is, for the price of brunch.

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