

# PEAK DESIGN

Inspired by the region's dramatic natural skyline, a classic wellness retreat in the Dolomites is given a modern makeover.

By Rachel Gallaher Photographed by Alex Filz





Designed by European firm Network of Architecture, an expansion of the Olympic Spa Hotel in northern Italy includes 10 new guest rooms in a modern building with a roofline that mimics the jagged peaks of the surrounding Dolomite Mountains.



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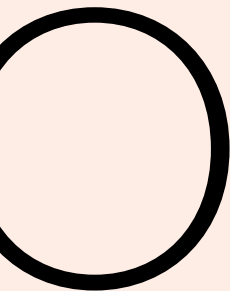
—MICHELE PASCUCCI AND NICCOLÒ PANZANI, NETWORK OF ARCHITECTURE



The steep roofs reflect the regional design vernacular; abundant snowfall in the winter months makes them a necessity.  
For the exterior, the architects chose a cement mix in a color similar to that of Dolomite rocks. »







opened as a small guest house by a local family in 1963, the Olympic Spa Hotel has expanded over the years into a popular vacation destination in northern Italy's Trentino region. Tucked into the mountainous terrain of the Fassa Valley, the hotel, which remains under family ownership, has grown from that single guest house to include blocks of rooms; a restaurant, spa, and other amenities; and most recently, two modern additions designed by Italy- and Germany-based architecture firm Network of Architecture (NOA): a building comprising 10 guest rooms and a gym, and an elevated wooden sauna.

Looking to the future, the family had presented NOA with the idea of a multistep refresh that would modernize the property's facilities while remaining true to its roots. This vision complemented NOA's process, which always considers a project's lifespan and integration with its surroundings.

"Our design approach is always in long-term scenarios in which, at the beginning, it is not relevant what will be built in the immediate future, but how the hotel as a whole will evolve," note architect Michele Pascucci and interior designer Niccolò Panzani, both of NOA. "From an aesthetic point of view, the owners are very committed to tradition and the use of natural materials; an essential condition was the use of wood."

The first step was orienting the new building. Beautiful, wooded vistas had previously served as a backdrop for the existing resort, with most rooms facing the road. "We flipped the hotel's center of gravity and set the new premises all facing the forest," Pascucci and Panzani say. "The Dolomite Mountains permeate the entire design, and their influence is particularly recognizable in the jagged silhouette of the roofs."

The new building's striking outline is especially evident in winter, when the dark exterior contrasts with the snowy landscape. "We used a cement mix whose color had to

come close, in a mimetic intent, to that of the Dolomite rock," Pascucci and Panzani explain. At one end of the complex, a higher peaked roof caps a two-level suite; the rest of the guest rooms are situated under a lower, but no less jagged, roofline. "These steep slopes have always been present in the region, given the abundant snowfall in the winter months," the designers say. The building is partially buried and connected to the existing hotel by an underground passage, allowing for sheltered access.

Each guest room has floor-to-ceiling windows and a large terrace overlooking the slope toward the Avisio stream. Four of the accommodations, the Te Bosch rooms, pay homage to the forest with their private, year-round glass-walled patios. The five water-inspired Te Aga rooms feature stone fountains that provide guests with water from a nearby mountain spring.

For all, local oak was used for flooring and custom furniture. "We wanted to use materials from the natural world as much as possible, to merge outside and inside into one continuous space," the designers explain.

Nearby, a wooden bridge leads to the stand-alone sauna. Supported by pilotis, the elevated structure floats above a cross-country ski track where the famous Marcialonga ski race takes place each year. The sauna's interiors are treated with black wax to create an interesting contrast to the exterior—and to the winter landscape.

"The profile of the sauna roof recalls the aesthetics of the guest room building, and the timber cladding and structure recall the classic house in the woods," Pascucci and Panzani note. "It was very important to us to link the wellness moment—going to the sauna—to the psychological well-being one derives from a walk in the forest." ❄





The hotel's new sauna is made entirely of wood. The exterior is clad in warm-toned larch, while the interiors are finished in spruce treated with black wax.