

DESTINATIONS

HOTELS, RESORTS & SPAS | EDINBURGH

Q&A

DARIO ORSILI, WHISKY SOMMELIER,
100 PRINCES STREET, EDINBURGH

INTERVIEW BY Rhodri Andrews

Q. Where did your love of whisky begin?

A. I started my career in Italy as a bartender 20 years ago when there was a big boom in scotch whisky. I tried a lot of different scotch and began to improve my knowledge, becoming a 'master of whisky' in Rome, before owning my own bar and restaurant with some friends. I sold that and went travelling around the world, visiting around 40 distilleries in Japan, Ireland, Scotland and beyond. After returning to Italy, I realised I didn't have the right audience – when you come to Italy you ask for wine, not whisky! As an Italian, I always say I was born in the wrong place. So about six years ago, I moved to Scotland. I first worked at The Balmoral Hotel, before becoming head bartender and whisky ambassador at 100 Princes Street when it opened last year. Now I've found my place.

Q. What does your role as a sommelier entail?

A. I look after the three private whisky-tasting experiences we offer at 100 Princes Street. These are only available to guests staying at the hotel, so they're really exclusive. Each one appeals to a different type of guest, whether they're new to whisky or really know their stuff. I tailor the experience to each guest, so the first question I ask is, 'What do you like to drink?' and then I go from there, selecting the type of whisky I think they'd like. But the setting plays a part too. The experiences are held in the hotel's

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Whisky is Scotland's liquid history as each has its own story not only of the distiller but of the area too



Ghillie's Pantry, where guests are surrounded by 200 single malts and I talk about the people who make them, the history behind the process and why each area's whisky is so different. Guests get to travel around Scotland from their seat – whisky is Scotland's liquid history, as each one has its own unique story not only of the distiller but of the area too.

Q. How can travel agents sell this uniquely Scottish experience to clients?

A. All of the experiences at 100 Princes Street [part of The Red Carnation Hotel Collection] are commissionable through travel

agents and we can work with you to see what kind of whisky tasting would be best for your client. Also, given enough notice, we can organise a tour to one of the many distilleries in Scotland we have a strong relationship with.

Q. How can visitors explore Scotland's whisky heritage outside the hotel?

A. In Rome, we'd tell visitors that to really get to know Italy, you need to visit a church. In Scotland, you have to visit a distillery like Glenfarclas in Speyside or Springbank in Campbeltown. It's an iconic

DARIO'S TOP TIP

Spend a few days in Edinburgh, then get out to visit some of the remote villages and get talking to locals over a dram. They'll recommend their favourite whiskies and things to see, so it's an authentic way to get to know Scotland



PICTURES: 100 Princes Street/Red Carnation Hotels

experience and will help guests explore Scotland, as there

are so many distilleries across the country to visit. We often joke about the weather in Scotland, but the rain is key to whisky as water is such an important ingredient, as is the time the whisky is left to age in casks – that's why whisky has so much heritage in Scotland. **TW**

BOOK IT

Double rooms at **100 Princes Street** start from £545 per night. Whisky experiences at the Edinburgh hotel start at £85. 100princes-street.com