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Esplanade Zagreb Hotel receives Art of Hospitality Excellence 2026

Bordighera, Italy - 28 September 2026

Esplanade Zagreb Hotel has received the Art of Hospitality Excellence distinction 2026 at the European Hotel Awards, recognising a century-old institution whose reputation has been built not only on architecture and prestige, but on the continuity of service, personality and human attention that define great hospitality.

The hotel is represented by Ivica Max Krizmanić, General Manager, whose long career at the Esplanade has become closely intertwined with the life of the property. Under his leadership, the hotel has continued to evolve while preserving the service culture and sense of occasion that have made it one of Croatia's most recognised hospitality landmarks.

A century of hospitality born from the golden age of travel

Opened in 1925 to welcome passengers travelling on the legendary Orient Express between Paris and Istanbul, the Esplanade quickly became a social and diplomatic address in Zagreb. More than one hundred years later, it remains a place where heritage is lived rather than simply displayed.

Its Art Deco identity, monumental public spaces and Oleander Terrace are part of that legacy, but the hotel's character also comes from its ability to combine ceremonial grandeur with personalised service. Following a complete renovation, the Esplanade reopened in 2004 with contemporary comfort integrated into the historic fabric of the building.

Hospitality expressed through people, gastronomy and ritual

The Esplanade's 208 rooms and suites are only one part of the experience. Zinfandel's Restaurant, Le Bistro, the Esplanade 1925 Lounge & Cocktail Bar and the Oleander Terrace extend the hotel's identity through gastronomy and social life, creating spaces that remain closely connected to Zagreb itself.

This continuity is especially visible in the work of the teams. The property's reputation has long depended on service that feels personal rather than mechanical, combining discretion, memory and professionalism. In this sense, the Esplanade represents the 'art of hospitality' in its most complete form: a culture transmitted through people and sustained over generations.

Ivica Max Krizmanić and the continuity of an institution

Ivica Max Krizmanić has spent more than three decades at the Esplanade and has served as General Manager since 2012. In 2025, the hotel's centenary year, he was named European Hotel Manager of the Year by the European Hotel Managers Association, recognising his results in management, employee development and contribution to the hospitality industry.

His leadership illustrates an essential dimension of the Esplanade story: preserving a legendary hotel requires more than protecting its architecture. It requires transmitting standards, developing people and ensuring that a historic institution continues to feel relevant to new generations of guests.

The logic behind Art of Hospitality Excellence 2026

The European Hotel Awards are not based on public voting, popularity rankings or automated scoring. Their approach is qualitative, holistic and editorial, considering identity, leadership, service culture, guest experience, consistency and the distinctive contribution of each property to European hospitality.

For Esplanade Zagreb Hotel, Art of Hospitality Excellence 2026 recognises the rare continuity of a hotel that has remained a stage for travel, gastronomy, diplomacy and social life for more than a century. The distinction celebrates the people behind that continuity and the ability to make heritage feel alive through authentic, personalised hospitality.

ESPLANADE ZAGREB HOTEL Art of Hospitality Excellence 2026 Represented by Ivica Max Krizmanić - General Manager Zagreb, Croatia

EUROPEAN HOTEL AWARDS 2026

28 September 2026

Grand Hotel del Mare Resort & Spa - Bordighera, Italian Riviera, Italy

Private international event - by invitation

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