

LUXURY IN PUGLIA | ROMANCE OUTSIDE ROME | NEW ENGLAND ESCAPES | MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

# ANDREW HARPER'S Hideaway Report<sup>®</sup>

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SINCE 1979

TRAVELING THE WORLD IN SEARCH OF TRULY ENCHANTING PLACES



ROBERTO MOIOLA / GETTY IMAGES

Polignano a Mare, Puglia

**W**e make a point of returning to Italy every year, and it's as much of a pleasure as a duty. When I finish an itinerary there for an article, I usually want to turn right around and do it again as a vacation. This time, we went to Puglia, a lesser-known region that has sprouted an array of enticing hotels and fine restaurants. It's a perfect place to visit

in spring. For a summer getaway, consider coastal New England. There, we rambled around the beaches of the Cape Cod National Seashore, the historic towns of Martha's Vineyard and the opulent mansions of Newport. Also look inside for the latest Cruise News and the first of our Member Spotlight columns. The latter highlights *your* travel experiences, which we are excited to share.

# THE NEW LUXURY OF PUGLIA

**Plush  
hideaways  
and resorts  
draw us back  
to a formerly  
remote corner  
of Italy**

On my first visit to Puglia many years ago, I discovered an under-the-radar destination with few tourists, a handful of relaxed hotels and a charming ruggedness that was worlds away from Florence or Positano. Puglia doesn't have the white-sand beaches of Sardinia or the verdant scenery of Tuscany or the cultural cachet of Sicily, but that's what makes it so appealing. A journey here doesn't come with a long list of must-dos to check off your bucket list. Instead, it's about slowing down and savoring the simple things: a beautiful lunch under the olive trees at a *masseria* (fortified farmhouse), a sunset stroll through a sleepy village or a dip in the sea at a rocky beach.

Now the secret is out, and Puglia's newfound popularity has resulted in numerous

luxury hotels and resorts popping up in the last decade. The region may no longer feel as undiscovered (or as inexpensive), but it's more comfortable than ever to explore. We selected four of the most promising properties to visit undercover, and each proved distinctive and delightful in its own way.



## PALAZZO BOZZI CORSO

From Borgo Egnazia, we traveled to Lecce, finding the 2,000-year-old city bathed in a sparkling golden light. We made a few wrong



Lobby, La Fiermontina Palazzo Bozzi Corso, Lecce

*“I WISH WE COULD HAVE STAYED FOR A MONTH.”*

turns in the baroque center’s narrow one-way streets before we reached the 10-room La Fiermontina Palazzo Bozzi Corso. No signage alerted us that we were in the right place — just an enormously heavy door. When I rang the buzzer, a door-within-a-door opened and a bellman welcomed us, efficiently retrieving our luggage and whisking our car away.

As I stepped into the palazzo's bright entryway with a soaring glass ceiling, I knew we had arrived somewhere special. Though the building dates to the 18th century, the décor has a modern edge, with contemporary art and sculptures and design-forward furniture. Mixing too many styles can sometimes appear sloppy, but here the décor looked intentional and perfectly executed. The art in the hotel, owned by siblings Fouad Giacomo and Antonia Yasmina-Filali, is meticulously curated and surprisingly personal. Family photos line the walls between notable works of modern art, and the suites are named after illustrious friends and family members, including Lady Madeleine Astor and artist Jacques Zwobada. I felt like we were spending a weekend at the home of a fabulous and well-connected friend.

We booked the shockingly affordable Suite Deluxe Lalla Soukaïna (named after Fouad's

daughter, whose mother is the princess of Morocco), a 720-square-foot space with parquet floors, high ceilings, a fireplace and a balcony overlooking the city. A formal salon, honor bar and game room right outside our suite might have been an extension of our accommodations (we never saw another soul there). We also enjoyed relaxing in the rooftop lounge by its tiny plunge pool, and guests are welcome to use a larger pool at the sister property, La Fiermontina Luxury Home.

Palazzo Bozzi Corso is a one-of-a-kind hotel in a beautiful city that remains unspoiled by tourism. I wish we could have stayed for a month.

**LA FIERMONTINA  
PALAZZO BOZZI  
CORSO**

**RATING 95**

**LIKE**

The welcoming and professional staff; the high ceilings; the delightful breakfast in the garden; the intimate rooftop bar; the interesting interior design.

**DISLIKE**

The paper-thin walls; the tiny pool; the absence of a spa.

**GOOD TO KNOW**

The included breakfast in the courtyard is fabulous, but without an on-site restaurant, you're on your own for lunch and dinner. On the roof, there's a bar serving light snacks at aperitivo hour.

**ROOM TO BOOK**

The hotel's rooms all have different styles and amenities, but we recommend any of the deluxe suites.

**\$\$; Lecce**