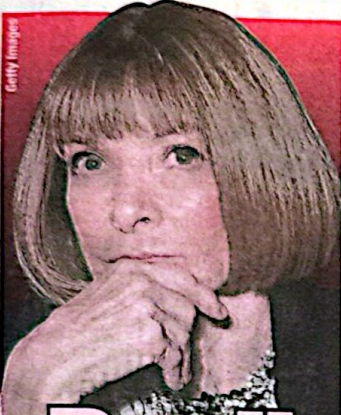
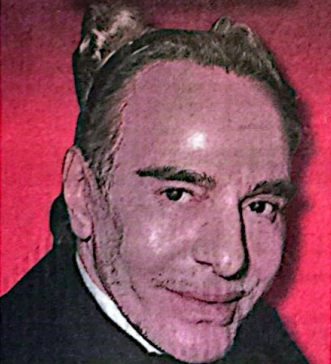




Devil wears nada

Anna Wintour's Met Gala humiliation

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The Met will no longer honor John Galliano, whom Wintour backed, after backlash over his antisemitic rants.



TIMES SQ. STAB SPREE

Woman knifes two, killing one, before being shot dead by cops

An unhinged woman stabbed two people, one fatally, around Times Square yesterday afternoon, before charging at cops waving two knives. Police tried to tase her, but when she didn't go down and instead charged at them, they shot her dead.

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Courtesy of Vista Ostuni



Masseria Torre Maizza a Rocco Forte Hotel



La Fiermontina

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Vista Ostuni opened last summer bringing a contemporary luxury vibe to the rustic region; meanwhile, Masseria San Domenico is the grand dame of Italian agricultural estates; but those hungry for some old-school comfort should visit the boutique La Fiermontina Luxury Home, where the hospitality is inspired by the owner's pasta-fueled stays with his nonna.

WELL HEELED

Italy's stiletto has an old soul but it's getting fresh polish

By JACKIE COOPERMAN

FIRST encountered Pugliese hospitality years ago while working as a journalist in Milan, where I had the great fortune to befriend a gaggle of twentysomething Apulians.

They plied me with pasta, wine and conversation, inviting me to visit their native region on the heel of Italy's boot. The area was

still fairly sleepy in 2003. At the time, budget airlines were beginning to connect the region to European capitals, and the entrepreneurial Melpignano family had only recently pioneered luxury hospitality on the coast south of Bari, with the opening of Masseria San Domenico in 1996.

Returning last summer, I discovered a region just as welcoming, but notably more focused on upscale international visitors. Today, an abundance of excellent hotels dot the landscape, from the Borgo Egnazia resort opened by the Melpignanos in 2010 to "grande dame" masserie (renovated agricultural estates) like Masseria San

Domenico and newer bella boutiques like Vista Ostuni and Palazzo Tafuri.

And the boom in the boot is far from over: In 2028, the Four Seasons opens its first property, and Rocco Forte Hotels will add its second. Puglia's boosters laud development, saying it makes the region a year-round destination. They're not worried about overcrowding: Puglia spans nearly 7,500 square miles. Zoning regulations prohibit excessive construction and protect nature preserves on the Adriatic and Ionian coasts.

On a recent visit, Masseria San Domenico exuded old-world luxury: linens were hand-embroidered, breakfast arrived on bespoke porcelain and ancient olive trees flanked the serene saltwater pool.

Nearby in Savelletri, Rocco Forte Hotels opened Masseria Torre Maizza in 2019. Awash in bougainvillea, the resort highlights local strengths: menus feature produce from the masseria's organic gardens, and the hotel brings guests to artisanal leather and textile workshops.

Eighteen miles south and with an entirely contemporary vibe, Vista Ostuni opened last summer, after

an ambitious renovation of a 14th-century convent that later became a tobacco factory. Vista's checkerboard swimming pool overlooks the whitewashed hilltop town of Ostuni on one side and a stunning panorama of olive trees and the Adriatic Sea on the other.

The staff is solicitous, the scale dramatic: reception-area ceilings are 23 feet high, and lush silk drapes suggest a Bronzino painting. The 28 rooms and suites showcase modern Italian design: ceramic plates from the nearby village of Grottaglie complement Dedar fabrics and Cassina furniture.

In Lecce, 50 miles south of Ostuni, the spirit of nonna guides La Fiermontina Luxury Home. Owned by siblings Yasmin Antonia and Fouad Giacomo Filali, the 19-room hotel honors their grandmother, Antonia Fiermonte. A Lecce beauty, Fiermonte was a muse to two Roman sculptors — she moved with them to Paris, married each in turn, and died, unexpectedly, at 42.

Her grandchildren never met her. First visiting Puglia in 2001, they marveled at Lecce's Baroque architecture, its Greek amphitheater and Norman fortress. Mr. Filali purchased a

rundown 17th-century masseria as a vacation home. When excavation revealed that the basement was double the expected size, the siblings created the hotel.

"We realized that we had brought my grandmother back to her land, to reconstruct our relationship with her," Ms. Filali said.

Since its 2015 opening, La Fiermontina has elevated tourism in Puglia's Salento region (towns like Lecce, Otranto and Gallipoli). Filali says a "wonderful heritage" informs its generosity: "Jews, Turks, Greeks, French, and Spanish were all here. In the end, we all share this land," she said.

Southwest, on the Ionian coast, Nardò captivated Florence-based French aristocrats Antoine and Ghislaine d'Espous. In 2020, they bought an abandoned palazzo with excellent bones, renovating it to create the minimalist but welcoming 17-room Palazzo Tafuri. The owners kept the original frescoes and coat of arms and added contemporary furniture, a spa and a chic rooftop bar.

Sometimes called the "little Lecce" because of its concentration of Baroque architecture, Nardò dates back to 460 BC. The center is lively,

with a flourishing aperitivo culture in Piazza Salandra.

"You spend the morning seeing Baroque architecture, then you have lunch with your feet in the sand," said general manager Athanasios de Jousineau, a Parisian native who has fully embraced the Apulian lifestyle. "You have the food, the wine, a really good level of historic and architectural sites and the beautiful sea, both Ionian and Adriatic."

Indeed, in August, I savored the Caffè Leccese (iced espresso with sweet almond milk) in Palazzo Tafuri's courtyard. My family and I toured some churches before heading to Togo Bay beach club, swimming in Caribbean-blue water and feasting on octopus sandwiches. Later, we enjoyed a delicate tomato carpaccio and marinated local anchovies at Petricore, where Chef Gino Tarantino creates Michelin-worthy dishes in his great-grandparents' Liberty-style palazzo.

"Apulian hospitality is very simple," said Puglia native Delia Facchini. "Guests are not considered just guests, but members of a family."

Even after all these years, that's something that hasn't changed.