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Impeccable Italy: The Ostuni Art Resort in Puglia

**Ann Abel** Senior Contributor

Travel

I know the difference between expensive travel and the truly luxurious

Anyone who has ever visited Puglia knows one thing: It's virtually impossible to see the trulli without being completely smitten.

Trulli are small brick homes with conical roofs, an architectural style that had its golden age in the 19th century. They look like dwellings for charming Latin gnomes, with Italian accents and a taste for orecchiette with sausage and broccoli rabe, paired with a full-bodied red.

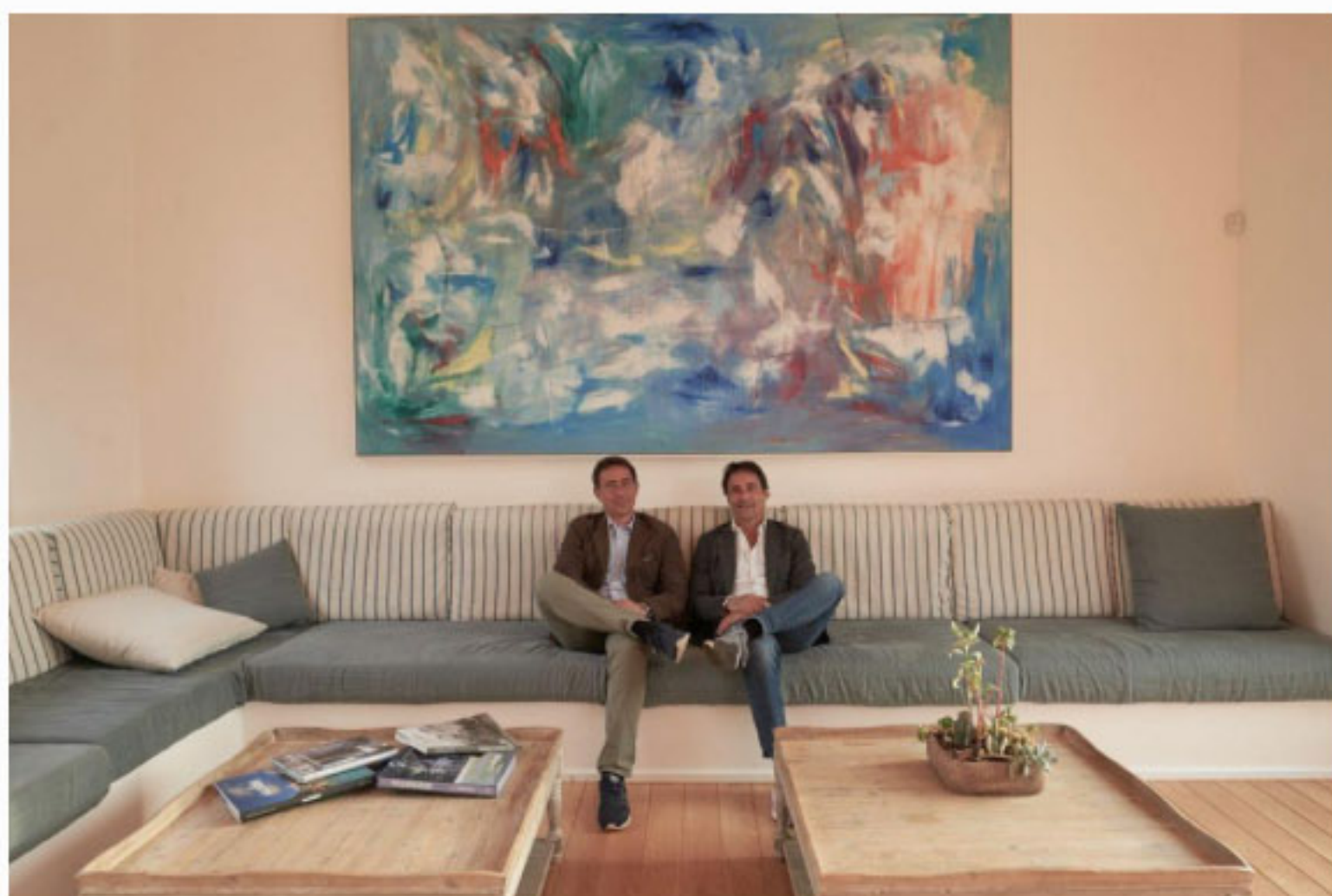
For many of us, the closest we'll get to a bona-fide trullo is a day trip to Alberobello, a UNESCO site that's unfortunately as full of tourists as it is of charm. It's not unpleasant, but it's not quite magical, either.



The pool OSTUNI ART RESORT

But for those with the knowledge and the means, there's a better, more magical alternative. Despite what the name suggests, the [Ostuni Art Resort](#) is an exclusive-use property for up to 16 guests. Or as the owners put it, a “nucleus” for groups of friends and family to celebrate shared cultural heritage and bolster relationships.

There are five renovated trulli, some of which are connected to a modern main house. Their pillowy beds are nested into alcoves within the stone walls, beneath the domed ceilings. There is a deeply pleasing color palette. I wasn't alone in saying the soft blue of the doors was simply perfect. (I recently stayed with colleagues as a guest of the owners.) Outside, amid the gnarled, thousand-year-old olive trees, are gardens, a swimming pool, various terraces and a pizza oven.



Giorgio and Giulio Angella OSTUNI ART RESORT

The Ostuni Art Resort is a passion project of Giorgio Angella, an architect in Rome, and his brother, Giulio, a real estate expert. Giorgio had done extensive work on historic hotel restoration projects in Greece and Italy. He wanted to do his own. They chose Puglia because, they say, it is one of those places where “the clock stops, the beat slows, and the senses awaken”...a place that seems to have always been there, “that the soul recognizes, even though the consciousness is barely aware of it.”

And so, they found a ruined, circa-1800 farmhouse and the remains of various trulli that date as far back as the 16th century. They spent years working with local craftsmen on a painstaking restoration that followed the principles of bio-architecture, which favors formal harmony and natural materials. The result is a cluster of earth-colored buildings that blend into the landscape as if they had always been a part of it.



Ostuni Art Resort OSTUNI ART RESORT

“Just the sight of the ancient trulli nestled amidst an olive grove seemingly forgotten by time is like meeting a soul mate,” they say. “There’s nothing alien here, no unease. You reach out touching the gnarled trunk of an olive tree that has stood in this very spot for centuries, even millennia.” It’s a feeling of being home.

Longtime art collectors, the brothers set about installing pieces from their impressive collection of contemporary art by young, emerging artists from Italy and beyond. The old and the new go hand in hand, with monochrome paintings, neon lettering and even collage art made from copies of the *Corriere Della Sera* newspaper resting against the weathered bricks.



A bedroom OSTUNI ART RESORT

It’s little wonder that Ostuni Art Resort is a favorite of ultra-luxe tour operator Antonello Losito. His company, [Southern Visions](#), organizes better-than-you-can-fathom trips for visitors who want to bike through the olive groves (he’s a former professional cyclist) or simply soak up the slow life. There are quite a few celebrities and members of royal families among his clients, but he’s far too discreet to name names.

Any luxury tour operator worth his salt these days is talking about authentic experiences. Losito says that’s just a start. He’s out to create memories. On his trips, the journey is at least as important as the destinations. He tries not to keep guests in a van for more than an hour or so. Guests go from point A to point B by cycling and walking, of course, but also by hopping on a yacht, or driving a small fleet of vintage Italian sports cars.



Walking Wine ANN ABEL

And so it was in the passenger seat of a cherry red, convertible 1964 Fiat that I got to the starting point for a glorious hike through fields of multicolored wildflowers. These days, nature, quiet and stillness are some of the biggest luxuries there are.

At the end of the hike, we came into a clearing and found what looked like a food truck. But that would have been too obvious. Instead, there was a tuk-tuk fully kitted out as a wine bar, thanks to the local company [Walking Wine](#).

Turns out, it’s also hard to encounter that and not be completely smitten with Puglia.