# Castle Elvira, Puglia



So, where are we?

In Puglia, the newly-discovered-by-the-gays area of Italy located in the heel of the high-heeled boot that makes up the shape of the country. Just fifteen minutes by car from what is known as the most beautiful town in Puglia, we reckon where we’re staying is even more beautiful, so much so you won’t want to leave. We did then came straight back.

And where we’re staying...?

Castle Elvira, an early 20th-century castle in beautiful grounds and - unusual for Puglia, which is flatter than Twiggy in the 1960s - views! Especially if you’re sitting in the limestone bath at the top of the tower or having cocktails on the roof.. more of which later. There’s a large pool beneath the castle with hot tub and cabanas with drifty gauze and a smaller, more private one near the tower, where you can pretty much take over, play your own music, order up some Aperols etc. On the top of the castle is a gorgeous bar area perfect for sunset while the rest of the public spaces include a basement cinema with designer sofas for lounging, a grand piano in the main salon, a chef’s kitchen for private dinners… A helicopter pad can’t be far behind, surely.

What’s the style?

Where do you start? It’s all style. Tons of the stuff. Everywhere you look. Let’s say ‘maximalist’ as a jumping-off point and explain that as it’s the brainchild of an artist, there is art and design at the heart of the place. Quirky art and design with some classics thrown in for balance. Grand, sexy, eclectic… this is just off the top of our heads.

And the rooms?

Well, no two rooms are the same but they do all have in common an exquisite eye for detail thanks to the gay Brits behind it. Our room in the tower, just along a crunchy path from the main building and the restaurant, is tall (well, it’s a tower) with a roof terrace with the limestone bath mentioned up there. The art is big, the bed is circular to match the circular room and there is every amenity from Roberts radio/speaker to a coffee machine that actually makes nice coffee! Other rooms are equally arty and colourful and fun, whether it’s in the main castle building or the little annexe beyond the tower.

Is there a story?

Yeah, a good one. Some little Italian princess from Milan asked her parents - all innocence! - if she was a princess, why didn’t she have a castle. Them being loaded and she being well-beloved they built her one in secret and when she was given it, she was so made up she went out and picked them mushrooms for a feast. You know what’s coming: she tried some of the mushrooms, which turned out to be poisonous and carked it. The parents were so distraught, they locked up the castle, never to return. Fast forward a century and a bit and Londoners Steve and Harvey are scouting for a property, get shown the grafitti-wrecked castle as a joke and fall in love with it.

And to eat?

The restaurant, between the castle and the tower, the one with the big Magnus Hastings portrait of drag queen Courtney Act overlooking its terrace, serves up only the very finest of local produce including a cracking little vegan menu. Chefs Marino and Fabiana from Salento have a fresh take on Pugliese cooking while breakfasts are help-yourself affairs with hot food ordered from the menu.

So, to sum up...

If there is a more beautiful hotel in Europe - the world! - we have yet to see it. Leave it to a couple of gay Brits to totally bring it in a way that is stylish, humorous, relaxed, fun... listen, you don’t get Hollywood movie stars doing take-overs without it being something pretty darn special.

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