

Essentis Properties

Evening Standard

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Homes & Property Homes abroad

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Bag yourself a gorgeous Italian

Give crowded Florence and Venice a miss. Fly south for a bespoke bolt hole in peaceful Puglia, says **Cathy Hawker**



History repeats: exquisite vaulted ceilings in the master's suite feature in homes by Essentis Properties

of their completed and sold properties. These are substantial homes, each with at least four bedrooms and featuring pools, gyms and wine cellars to grounds of five or more acres. Each property takes about 18 months to complete, says Francesco Carlucci, founder of Essentis Properties.

"Everything is handmade to the client's plans, using local in-house architects," says Carlucci. "Our clients love the craftsmanship and we encourage them to visit the stone-masons' academy we established, where veteran masons train apprentices in age-old techniques."

Essentis owns plots in southern Puglia and around Matera, and completed homes start from £1.78 million.



From £1.78 million: boutique homes in Matera and Puglia, full tributes to the stone-mason's art. Can include pools, gyms and wine cellars (Essentis Properties)

Elegant dining: owners of the new-build homes, right, can take advantage of a chef service arranged by the developer

CONTACTS
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■ Casa Travella:
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AFFORDABLE PUGLIA

Buying a home in Italy makes sense for financial as well as lifestyle reasons, says Linda Travella, of property firm Casa Travella. "There is no inheritance tax and, after five years, Italy has no capital gains tax either. Properties are easy to let, there are activities for all ages, such as art, sports, food and wine, as well as fantastic selections of properties at realistic prices."

In Puglia, Ostuni is a beautiful architectural gem, known as the White Town for its baroque buildings. Two minutes from the town's main square, Casa Travella has a building with five apartments for sale for £268,500. The properties currently provide an annual £26,500 net rental for their owner.

A three-bedroom villa under three miles from Ostuni and 15 minutes from the sea is £200,000, also through Casa Travella. The property has 800 olive trees in its three-acre gardens, producing 400 litres of olive oil annually.

NEW-BUILD HOMES WITH TRADITIONAL GOOD LOOKS

The archetypal house of the southern region is the masseria – a handsome and substantial thick-walled farmhouse, the origins of which date from the 14th century. These normally sit on acres of ancient olive groves or high fields of wheat.

For the past seven years, Essentis Properties has been building in the style of the masseria, employing traditionally trained stone-masons to create beautiful bespoke homes using pale limestone blocks. True traditional is the barrel and star-vaulted ceilings found in all 30

£178,000: a three-bedroom villa with terraces of mature gardens overlooking the fishing village and beaches of Torre Santa Sabina (Casa Travella)

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BRITONS who love Italy have historically bought their second homes around the country's northern honeypots – farmhouses in Tuscany or waterfront apartments overlooking Lake Como. However, with hordes of selfie-snapping tourists threatening to overwhelm Florence and Venice, it's the turn of the quieter, agricultural south to shine.

Regions such as Puglia, in the "heel" of Italy's long, thin boot, and neighbouring Basilicata offer ancient architecture and warm hospitality. Nowhere is this more evident than in Matera, one hour from Bari airport and designated as the 2019 European Capital of Culture. A Unesco World Heritage Site for its 7,000-year-old Sassi – dramatic cave dwellings cut into a steep stone gorge – Matera saw off tough competition from the central cities of Siena and Perugia.

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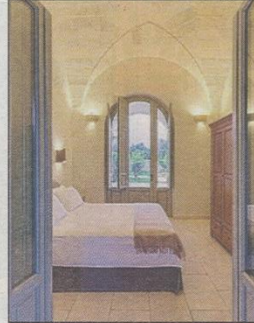
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Give crowded Florence and Venice a miss. Fly south for a bespoke bolt hole in peaceful Puglia, says **Cathy Hawker**



£178,300: a three-bedroom villa with two acres of mature gardens overlooking the fishing village and beaches of Torre Santa Sabina (Casa Travella)

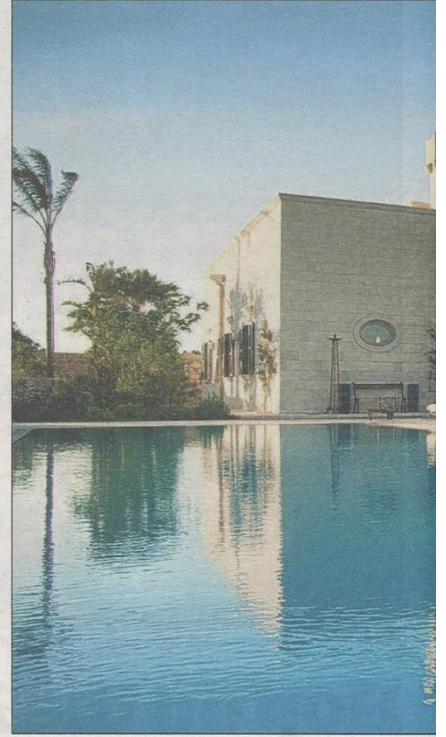


History repeating: exquisite vaulted ceilings in the masseria style feature in homes by Essentis Properties

of their completed and sold properties. These are substantial homes, each with at least four bedrooms and featuring pools, gyms and wine cellars in grounds of five or more acres. Each property takes about 15 months to complete, says Francesco Carlucci, founder of Essentis Properties.

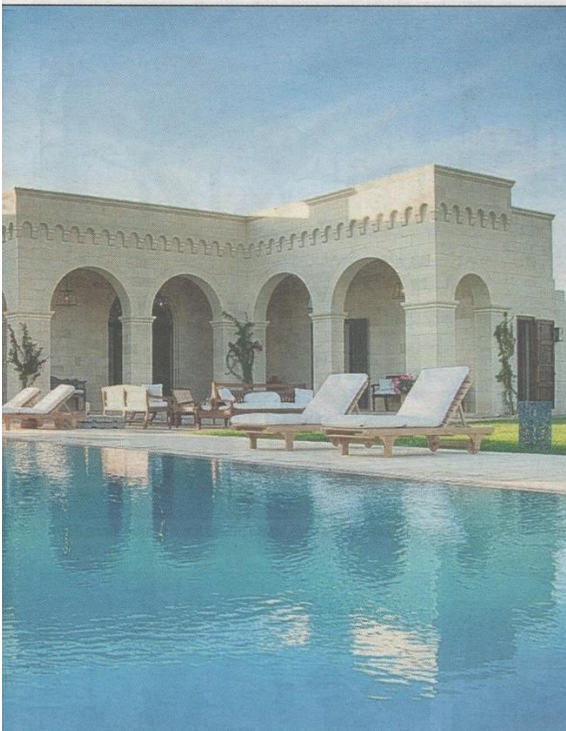
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From £1.78 million: bespoke homes in Matera and Puglia, left, tributes to the stonemason's art, can include pools, gyms and wine cellars (Essentis Properties)

Elegant dining: owners of the new-build homes, right, can take advantage of a chef service arranged by the developer

CONTACTS

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A smaller, 2,100sqft four-bedroom home built six years ago, now up for resale, is £900,000. The company offers a full concierge service, arranging chefs and airport transfers from Bari or Brindisi airports and all owners use the in-house management company, which organises cleaning, rentals and will even harvest the olives.

"Our owners like the chance to create something unique in a totally unspoiled area, far from the crowds and close to the sea, with a season that lasts from March to late November," notes Carlucci.

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In Puglia, Ostuni is a beautiful architectural gem, known as the White Town for its bedazzling buildings. Two minutes from the town's main square, Casa Travella has a building with five apartments for sale for £498,500. The properties currently provide an annual £28,500 net rental for their owner.

A three-bedroom villa under three miles from Ostuni and 15 minutes from the sea is £103,250, also through Casa Travella. The property has 160 olive trees in its three-acre gardens, producing 400 litres of olive oil annually.