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In Puglia The Beautiful City Of Andria Has Yet To Be Discovered By Tourists. It Won't Be Long Before It Is.

John Mariani :: 6/2/2025

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CASTEL DEL MONTE, APULIA, ITALY - 2023/04/13: Castel del Monte, a 13th century hilltop citadel and ... [+] castle that was never completed. The Castel del Monte belongs to the Unesco world heritage sites. (Photo by Frank Bienewald/LightRocket via Getty Images)

LightRocket via Getty Images

Andria is the fourth-largest city in Italy's Puglia province, only six miles from the Adriatic coast, and quite a sophisticated city it is, though largely unknown to foreign tourists who are more likely to visit Bari, Alberobello and Lecce. Walking down the broad, tree-lined Corso Cavour at twilight is to experience the *passagiata* of locals strolling arm in arm, nodding to everyone, looking in the boutique windows, getting café or pizza or gelato along the way.



ANDRIA, ITALY - OCTOBER 2006: An aerial image of City Center, Andria. (Photo by Blom UK via Getty ... [+] Images)

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Andria shares the same history of being ravaged or taken over or gifted by everyone from the Byzantines to the Fascists, but since the war it has evolved into a major Italian city, rich in wines and agriculture.

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Like much smaller towns, Andria is crammed with churches of various interest, including Sant'Agostino built by the Teutonic Knights and San Nicola di Myra, built over grottoes. There's a Ducal Palace, and fifteen miles outside of town is a UNESCO World Heritage site worth a trip—the 13th century octagonal Castel del Monte. Beyond its municipality lies the Alta Murgia National Park spread over 67,000 miles and populated by wild horses and eagles.



Highly innovative cuisine is wed to tradition at Retrosina in Andria.

Retrosina

Both hotels and modern B&Bs are remarkably inexpensive, so that even the fine, glass and steel Cristal Palace Hotel, with a sports center, heated pool and gym, flower garden and lawn is currently charging only \$107 per night.

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Most of the restaurants and trattorias in Andria serve traditional Puglian food—*orrecchiete* with *broccoli di rabe*, fava beans and chicory, spaghetti *all'assassina* cooked in red wine—but there are also some very contemporary restaurants prized for their innovation, including **Restrosena** (*Via Ettore Carafa 12*), which serves a tartare of pheasant with figs cooked in red wine, cardoons and black pepper; “French toast” with a sashimi of salmon, avocado and cream cheese; and *pacchero* pasta with tiny squid, anchovies, broccoli and ricotta. It also has a very extensive wine list, with many Puglian bottlings.

Despite its homey name, **MaMà** (*Corso Cavour 27*) is a minimalist restaurant that sets an enticingly modern menu of dishes like rice with almonds and scampi and spaghetti with sea urchins.



At Il Turaciollo Elena Fucci and chef Luciano Matera, promise creativity with every dish.

John Mariani

But I was quite amazed when my wife and I read about and saw the menu at **Il Turaciollo** (*Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, 4*), where the owners, Elena Fucci and chef Luciano Matera, have for 20 years been on the front line of innovation. Luciano bounds from table to table exuberantly telling you about the menu, the specials and the wines—300 very decently priced labels at the lively wine bar at the front, overseen by Elena.



The menu at Il Turaciollo features several crostini, including this one with anchovies, tomato and ... [+] mozzarella.

John Mariani

Despite its age, the restaurant itself looks brand new and scrubbed, with arches, half-stone walls, tile floors and wooden tables set with individual lamps. Luciano promises a “touch of creativity in every dish,” and he fulfilled that promise for us starting off with puffy, warm focaccia and a series of *crostini*—small dishes set on crusts of bread—one, with anchovies, small balls of mozzarella and tomatoes, the other of fried zucchini chips and red peppers.



Turaciollo takes a traditional cannoli tube and makes it into a sumptuous torta.

John Mariani

Next was pork that had been caramelized and cooked wine and dusted with herbs, along with a *capocollo*, the collar meat of a black pig. Desserts were as delicious as they were pretty, including a rich

cannoli cake and a *semifreddo* with chocolate and hazelnuts. Our bill, including a 35€ Puglian wine, came to 103€, including tax and service.

On our trip we had been meandering north from Lecce along the coast and Andria seemed like a reasonable overnight stop. But it proved much more than that for its beauty and a culture built on centuries of conflict that have now coalesced into one of the loveliest cities in Puglia. After our meal, we, too, were strolling arm in arm, nodding and smiling at the younger Adrians still enjoying the warm evening on the broad Corso Cavour.

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John Mariani is an author and journalist of 40 years standing, and an author of 15 books. He has been called by the Philadelphia