

MASSERIA TRAPANÀ, PUGLIA, ITALY

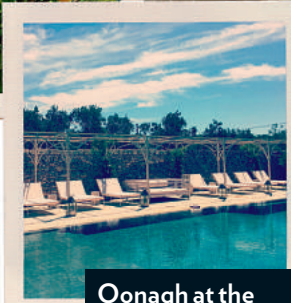
SLEEPS 18

I love new experiences and fresh adventures, so there aren't many places I'd happily return to every holiday for the rest of my life.

But then I discovered Masseria Trapanà, a twinkling oasis set amongst olive and lemon trees, nestled right in the heel of Italy. This is the one place in the world I would happily rebook time and time again.

From the moment my partner and I arrive at the property's imposing 16th-century wooden door and step into the lantern-lit courtyard we feel like we've come home. Only to a much much better version, because here cold glasses of champagne are handed to you as you walk through the door, huge bottles of Aesop products line the marble shelves in the bathroom, there's an outdoor bath in your own private garden big enough for two and the beds are so impressive I have to take a running jump to get in. In this home the rooms magically tidy themselves while you laze around the grounds or have a private yoga lesson in the gardens; big bottles of muscle-relaxing magnesium salts are left by your bath, mineral water appears by your bedside every night and there's a direct line to the bar from your room. We book just one of the nine rooms (all have pared-back stone walls and lofty ceilings), but there's the option to take over the entire Masseria, making this a glorious spot to holiday with up to 18 lovingly chosen friends.

Australian owner Rob really puts his guests at the heart of his property, too, but in the most relaxed way. Don't expect obsequious waiters, fussy service or formality of any kind. Here you can pad barefoot around the chic open-plan sitting area and eat breakfast whenever you wake up (served until the last guest rises. Rumour has it one guest slept in until 3pm, so breakfast was served until teatime!). It's big



Oonagh at the entrance to the property; and above, relax poolside



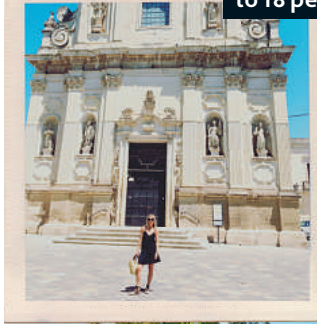
enough for peace and tranquillity (there are enough hammocks dotted about the gardens for everyone to have an afternoon snooze) but also small enough that staff remember you like a skinny cappuccino every morning (which I do). Here the pressures of everyday life melt away on the lemon-scented air, you don't even need to choose your evening meal, there's a set menu each night served on the terrace (all preferences catered for, of course) so you get what you're given, just like at home.

For our trip we flew to Bari airport, a good two hours' drive from the hotel (taxis are expensive so car hire is a must). The great news is that BA now flies direct from Heathrow's Terminal 5 to Brindisi airport which is only some 30 minutes away, making a long weekend tantalisingly easy.

Should you wish to tear yourself away from the sanctuary of the hotel, the beautiful Baroque city of Lecce is a 10-minute drive away and two beach clubs Bacino Grande and Mora Mora around 40 minutes – the hotel has a partnership with both and will arrange transfers on request. But with the very exciting news of a spa being built under the hotel ready for early 2018, I intend to stay firmly behind that big wooden door, happily holed up in my home away from home. OONAGH BRENNAN >>



All nine rooms of the Masseria can be booked out for up to 18 people



Trip notes

From around £220 per night for one room, based on a couple sharing; Trapanà.com. Flights from London to Brindisi from £100 with British Airways, Ba.com

