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HOTEL REVIEWS

# This 17th-Century Townhouse in Italy Is Now a Contemporary Boutique Stay

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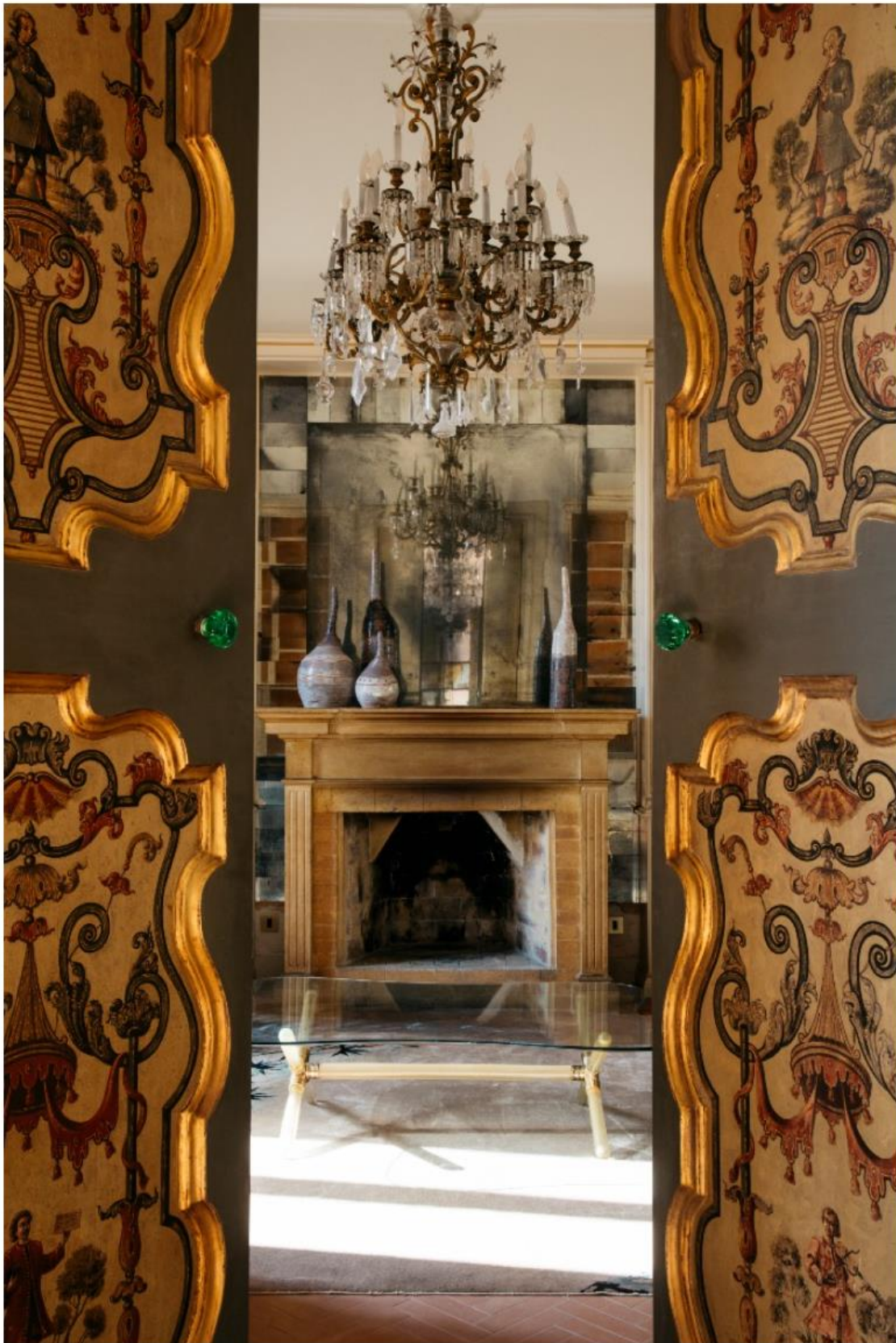
Lecce is a fairytale of a city. As 18th-century traveler Thomas Ashe once wrote, the southern paradise is ‘the most beautiful city in Italy’. Spiraling columns, grinning gargoyles, and decorated facades are trademarks of *Barocco Lecce* architecture, a fantastical style complemented by Lecce’s incredible Roman ruins.



Hidden in the center of its *centro storico* is **Palazzo Luce**, a gorgeous 17th-century townhouse where Queen of Naples Maria d'Enghien once resided. Today it's a seven-bedroom boutique dedicated to contemporary art and design.



The vibe of Palazzo Luce's art gallery meets fabulous pied-a-terre where iconic Gio Ponti pieces mingle with site-specific contemporary art from the moment you enter. Every room of the palace, from the entrance reception, libraries, and dining area to each bedroom, is a design moment where historic pieces by Italy's most iconic designers including Franco Albini, Ettore Sottsass, Carlo Mollino, and Ignazio Gardella intermingle with contemporary artists like William Kentridge, Alfredo Jaar, David Tremlett, Joseph Kosuth Andrea Bowers, Mimmo Jodice and Vanessa Beecroft.



Palazzo Luce gets you from its entrance — a fairytale courtyard with an open staircase. The main floor is a celebration of design and art starting. The breakfast room is a timepiece of original Gio Ponti tables and chairs and Gio Ponti-inspired flatware by Ginori.

The Sala della Musica is the piano nobile's grand ballroom with an immense wall-to-wall carpet designed by Joseph Kosuth, while just beyond are the whimsical Library with polychrome tessellated sofas of Brigitte Niedemair and Martino Gamper, and wall-to-wall books specifically curated by art duo Kings (Federica Perazzoli and Daniele Innamorato), and Marzia Miglioras all immersive site-specific installation of mirrors, and the Gamper Bar designed by celebrated architect/designer Martino Gamper.



Each guestroom is entirely unique and entirely up to your art cravings. On the main floor is the more minimalist Paravento with its large brass dividing screen by Storage Associati, wall lighting designed by Brigitte Niedermair, and the stripey Passaggi, an Art Deco flashback.



The elegant **Luce** harkens back to the previous century with its terracotta tiles and exposed pietra Leccese stonework, while **Fanciullino** is perfect for a couple-plus-one. The double bedroom suite has charming majolica tiles, furniture by Gio Ponti and Marzio Cecchi, and artworks by Thomas Ruff and Mimmo Jodice.



The coveted **Maria d'Enghien Suite**, yes, this is where a queen once slept, features a site-specific ceiling fresco by artist David Tremlett.



Splurge on the top-level Gio Ponti-inspired suites. The **Blue Ponti** features a one-of-a-kind Wall Unit, created by Ponti for Dulciora in the late 1940s. In contrast, the Rosso Ponti features furnishings by Gio Ponti and vintage prints of Marcel Duchamp by Ugo Mulas. Both rooms have direct access to a gorgeous rooftop terrace where guests can enjoy aperitivo at Bar Ponti Cielo taking in the Lecce landscape from Duomo to the Roman arena.



Bonus is the **Plates** room, a private workout area just off the garden, designed by Giuliano Deii Uva Architetti with the incredible Merrithew Stott machines.





When art collector Anna Maria Enselmi purchased the palace, she envisioned it as a home for her epic collection of Gio Ponti pieces, and as a dialogue for living artists. Now Palazzo Luce is even more, it's an interaction of artists and art lovers, where guests can fully immerse themselves in art and catch a performance.

**Location:** Lecce, Puglia

**Rating:** Five-star

**The vibe:** A Baroque dream with total immersion into the Italian design scene.

**Amenities:** Rooftop terrace, Pilates suite, free Wi-Fi, private dining areas, bar, Dyson blow dryers, tea/coffee maker in all rooms, Aesop, and Biologique products.

**Food + Drink:** Palazzo Luce curates private artsy dinners and lunches on its terrace, kitchen terrace, and library Biblioteca de Selcy. Its Gamper Bar is great for signature aperitivo and late nights chats.

**Our favorite thing about the hotel?:** The rooftop terrace with its amazing view of Lecce, and the privacy.

**What's Nearby?** Everything including Basilica di Santa Croce, Roman Amphitheatre, Roman Theatre, Lecce Cathedral

**Any neighborhood recs?** Explore the incredible **Baroque churches by night** with **ArtWork**. Get a bird's eye view from the **Bell Tower at the Duomo**. Taste a *Sospiri* (sweet bread pastry) at **Caffe Alvino**. Visit **Fratelli Coli**, the Salento's most prolific and award-winning majolica artist, for a few hours.

**Rooms:** 7 (two with rooftop terrace access)

**Pricing:** Rates start at \$1,324/night.

**Closest Airports:** Brindisi Airport Salento BDS (30 miles), Bari Airport BRI (104 miles)