

contemporary art that's meant to be cheeky and a grating soundtrack of pop music at the otherwise serene pool.

It's a testament to the hotel's spirit — and the friendly and welcoming staff — that in spite of a few unfortunate style choices, I can still recommend this property. Our expansive Paragon Suite was absolutely gorgeous, with original frescoes, antique furnishings, a huge patio and a round sunken tub that was so large we nicknamed it the human cauldron. In the early evenings, the room was dazzling, bathed in a rose-gold glow that illuminated the frescoes and ornate details of the furniture.

Our first meal at Paragon 700 was lunch under the pergola near the pool, where I dined on a simple yet refined dish of linguine with tiny shelled clams finished with basil oil. It was so exquisite that we decided to return for dinner the next night. In the evening, lanterns transformed the property. We dined outside, where we enjoyed a sophisticated multicourse meal that included decadent gnocchi and a perfectly cooked turbot fillet served with fresh vegetables. It turned out to be one of the most romantic and delicious meals of our entire trip. The pool, soundtrack aside, ended up being a relaxing escape during the hottest part of the day. In addition, the one-room spa in the palace's former cistern, accessed by a hidden staircase, is surprisingly impressive for such a tiny space, with a steam room, a hydromassage tub and treatments such as



Lounge Bar 700, Paragon 700, Ostuni

salt scrubs, Ayurvedic massages and facials.

The property is a short walk from the charming shops and restaurants in Ostuni, and it's a convenient base for day trips to nearby villages. Though even just the name of Paragon 700 suggests it's geared toward younger guests, travelers of any age who love creative and character-rich boutique hotels would be happy here. Indeed, most of the other guests we encountered were over 60 (with the exception of a thirtysomething couple on their honeymoon).

PARAGON 700 RATING 93

LIKE

The convenient location; the excellent restaurant; the feeling of staying at a mini-resort.

DISLIKE

The inattentive service and grating music by the pool; the gauche art.

GOOD TO KNOW

Navigating the narrow streets to reach the hotel can be a bit hair-raising, but valet parking on-site is free, and the village is in walking distance.

ROOM TO BOOK

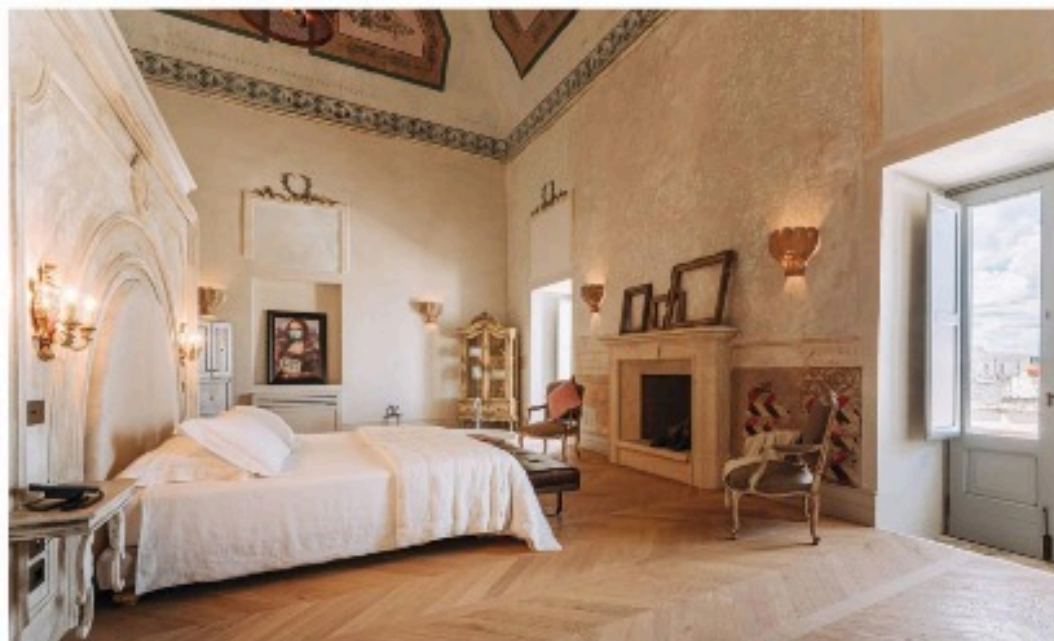
The Paragon Suite for its sunset views and original frescoes.

BENEFITS

A \$100 hotel credit; daily breakfast for two; and early check-in, late checkout and upgrade at time of arrival, subject to availability.

\$\$, Ostuni

Paragon Suite, Paragon 700



GREGORY VENERE