

Bond's Italian Escape

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Beverley Watts is shaken and stirred by beautiful Basilicata

In new Bond film *No Time To Die*, James races through the winding streets of Matera in his iconic Aston Martin. The Basilicata town is a location scout's dream, an other-worldly place with a huge honeycomb of cave homes carved out of a limestone ravine.

Matera is now a UNESCO-protected must-go destination, dotted with boutique hotels and pretty restaurants, but it was once the "Shame Of Italy". First settled in the Palaeolithic Age, large families crammed into the natural grottoes – the Sassi Di Matera (Sasso Caveoso and Sasso Barisano) – with their pigs and donkeys until the area was evacuated

in 1952. Many tucked-away dwellings are still being discovered and restored.

Rock-cut Benedictine monasteries such as Santa Lucia Alle Malve, with its 13th century murals, are magical but there's more to see in this dramatic terrain.

Sited in the instep of Italy's boot, Basilicata is a region of mountains and forests, breathtakingly beautiful and very welcoming. Book bed and breakfast in the tranquil, tiny clifftop village of Castelmezzano and be dazzled by the views in one of the most charming hideaways in Italy.

Castelmezzano is perched high in the Lucanian Dolomites above a deep



The Angel Flight is not for the faint-hearted!

gorge and can only be reached via the winding pedestrian main walkway. A good reason to travel light! In the 1800s, the remote hamlet became a refuge for political outlaws but now the lovely doorways hide only 23 family-run B&Bs.

Castelmezzano is joined to nearby Pietrapertosa by one of the longest and highest zip lines in the world: Volo Dell'

Angelo (Angel Flight). You can go in either direction (from different heights), flying horizontally from peak to peak. It's a 007-style thrill to experience, fun just to watch.

With both an east and west coast and some wide, white sandy beaches, it's a wonder Basilicata is so unspoilt. Relax by the cerulean Ionian Sea at Metaponto and visit the haunting Tavole Palatine, a

6th century BC Greek temple to the goddess Hera. We had the place to ourselves.

If you have time, motor down to Maratea, "the town of 44 churches" on Basilicata's Tyrrhenian coast, squeezed into the fold of a mountain to stay invisible to pirates. Main square Piazza Buraglia is a hub of narrow lanes and interesting shops. Framed by bright green shutters, La Farmacia Dei Sani has an irresistible array of local food and wine.

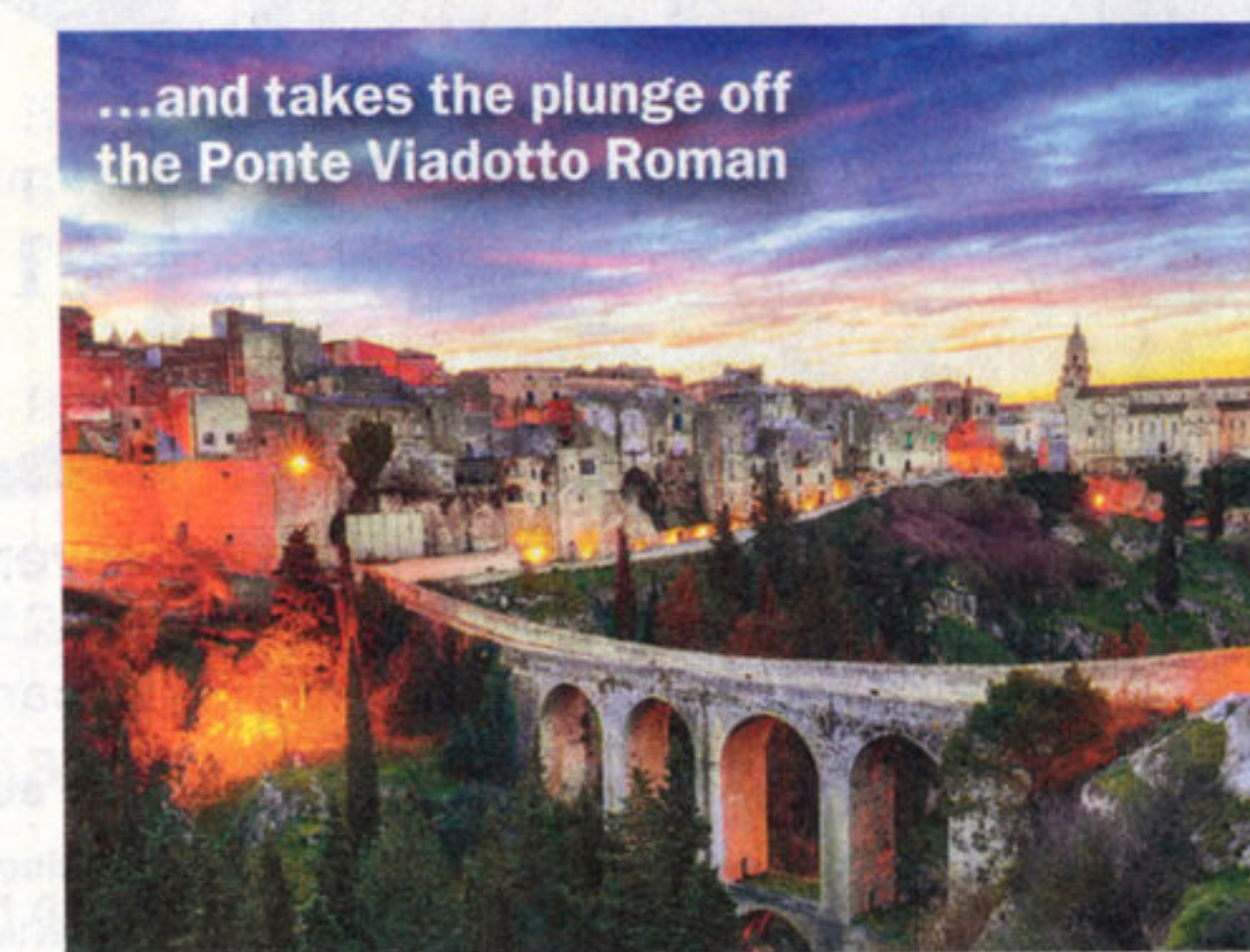
007 Secrets

In *No Time To Die*, the 25th Bond movie, James comes out of retirement in Jamaica after his old CIA friend Felix Leiter asks for his help. With clever Hollywood editing, the film – which began shooting in April 2019 – actually jumps between Matera and Gravina in Puglia, where Bond leaps off the Ponte Viadotto Roman aqueduct.

During the production, Daniel Craig stayed at the sumptuous Palazzo Gattini in the heart of Matera's Sassi quarter. Over the years, films in the Bond franchise have been shot in other wonderful Italian locations including Rome, Siena, Venice, Lake Como and Sardinia.



Bond gets into some scrapes...



...and takes the plunge off the Ponte Viadotto Roman

Pasta Paradise



Pasta e Fagioli

Agriturismo La Dimora Dei Cavalieri is a great place to stay in the middle of stunning countryside in Potenza, or to stop for a leisurely lunch. Sip a prugnolo (blackthorn) digestif after trying Lucanica sausage, sharp pecorino sheep's milk cheese, Pasta e Fagioli Basilicata (pasta with beans) and spelt pear tart.

The red aubergine, which looks like a tomato, is often used in Lucanian cuisine and horseradish, which grows near streams, is sprinkled on pasta.

For real Hollywood glamour, Hotel Palazzo Margherita in Bernalda is owned by Francis Ford Coppola and his family. In 1904 the film director's grandfather left Italy for a new life in America, but Francis still loves the place and his daughter Sofia chose the venue, with its fragrant garden, for her wedding in 2020.

Here we learned to make orecchiette pasta from 00 grade semolina flour. The dough is just flour and water (no eggs) and you create each ear-shaped piece of pasta with your fingertips.



Orecchiette are shaped by hand

Fact File



Piazza Vittorio Veneto

- ◆ We flew into Naples and travelled around Basilicata by car.
- ◆ In Matera we stayed at Hotel Sassi, near central Piazza Vittorio Veneto. In a quiet pedestrian district, you can spot kestrels nesting on the hotel's rooftops.
- ◆ We ate at Ristorante Nadi in Matera's Via Fiorentini. The restaurant stretches

into the rock through a series of arches.

◆ In Castelmezzano our comfortable, spotless B&B was La Casa Di Giulietta. Signora Nunzia Valluzzi was a very considerate host.

◆ For our visit to Maratea, we spent the night and dined on fresh seafood at the pink-painted Hotel Borgo La Tana.

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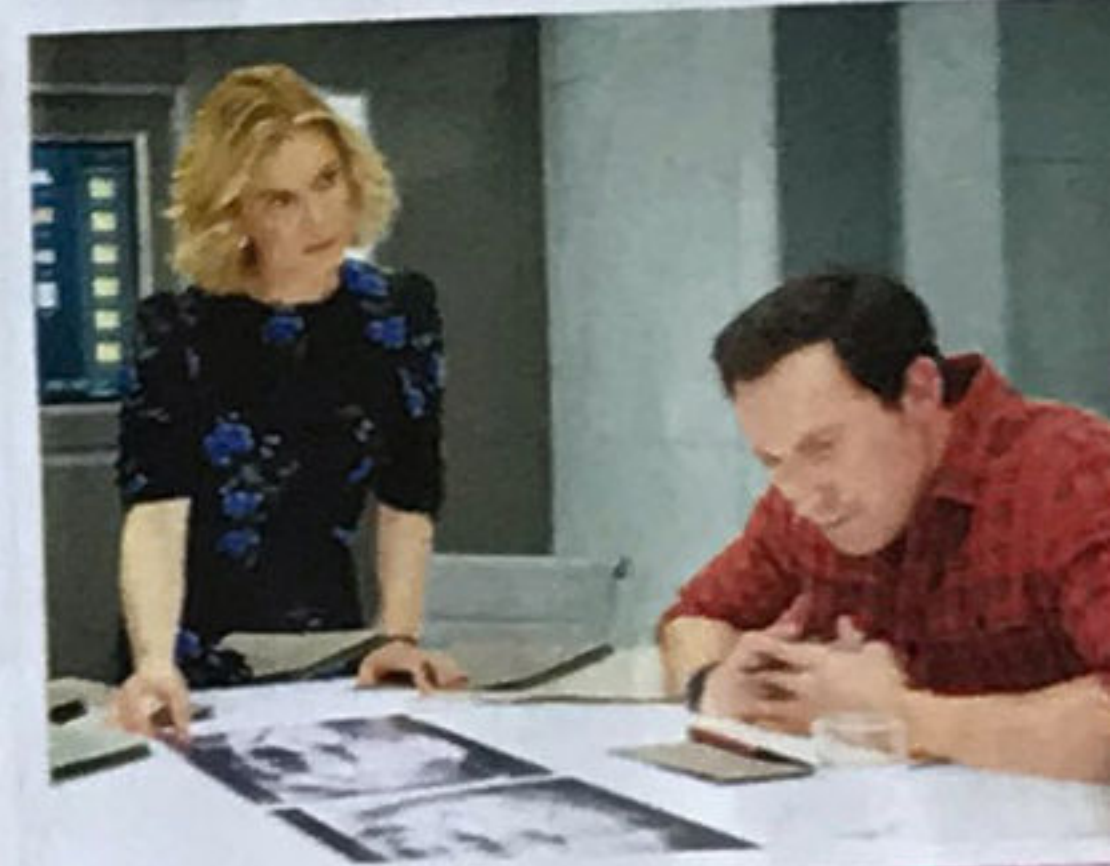
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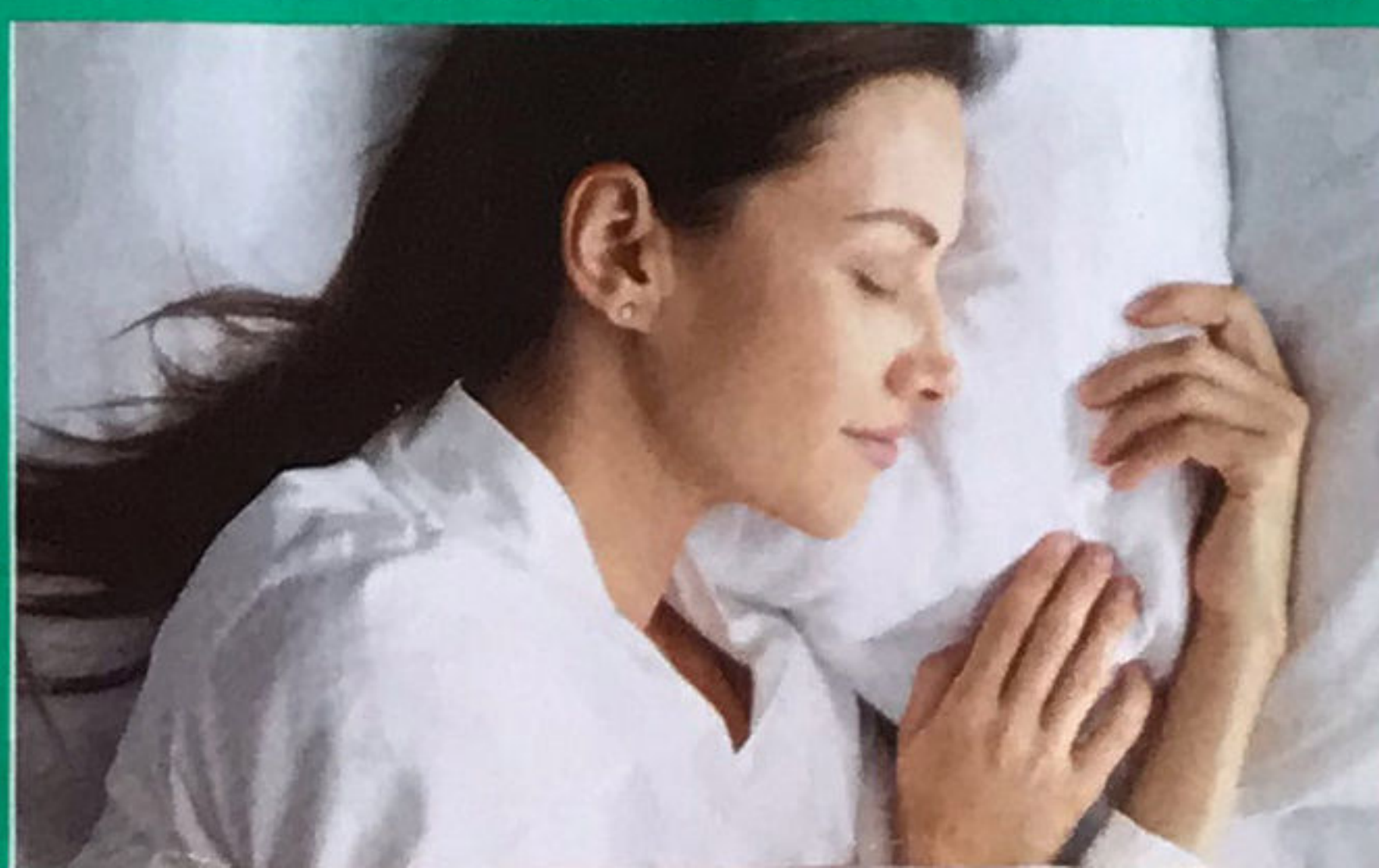
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