



Puglia's Masserias: Exploring the Unexplored

Natasha Lardera (June 27, 2011)



A photographic journey of Puglia's farmhouses led by architect Diane Lewis and photographer Mark Roksmán is captured in the pages of Rizzoli's newest publication presented at Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò. A special event, with one special guest, Nichi Vendola, president of Regione Puglia, concludes an amazing season of presentations.

“As a child growing up in Puglia, the Via Appia was our natural playground and the Masserias were the background,” with these words Nichi Vendola, president of the Regione Puglia, who is currently visiting New York, described to the audience at Casa Italiana Zerilli Marimò the beauty of a region portrayed through its farmhouses in the book [Masseria the Italian farmhouses of Puglia](#). [2]

Published by Rizzoli, with photography by noted New York photographer Mark Roksmán and text by architect and scholar Diane Lewis, the book features 200 color photographs that capture the spirit of an architectural tradition that makes the “heel of Italy” one of the most enchanting regions of the



country.

To better understand what these buildings are we borrow text from the presentation: "Surrounded by verdant vineyards and groves of olive trees, the ancient Masseria buildings of Puglia – fortified domestic structures of brick, stone and concrete dating from the middle ages – embody a rich cultural past largely unexplored by the tourists and villa seekers of Tuscany. Once serving as farmhouses and way stations for those traveling along the Via Appia, these buildings have been renovated to serve as private residences or boutique hotels, with their beautifully preserved interiors thoughtfully adapted and turned into cool serenity."

The book, which is divided into four sections – The Coastal Plains (towers and courtyards), The Itria valley (manors and chapels), Magna Grecia (fortresses and colonnades) and Imperial Puglia (wells and cisterns) - offers a previously unseen look into these amazing spaces that were defined by Diane Lewis "estates of family and livestock."

This photographic journey introduces the reader to constructions such as the pure and rustic Cimino, a Masseria adjacent to the ruins of the ancient Roman city of Egnatia Massaria, that is a fortified farmhouse surrounded by vegetation and ancient olive groves, the elegant Appidè, whose name is rooted in Greek, that features blocks of jointed masonry and Hellenic structures, Girifalco a living farm that maintains fields, groves, livestock and Montereale, a 17th century manor house that once hosted royals and introduced them to rustic elegance and Masseria life, among others.

"We were crammed into a caravan eating sandwiches and driving around to as many Masserias as possible" Diane Lewis explained, "Mark took thousands of photos and only a few hundreds made it into the book." Putting this book together was an amazing quest where the authors were received not private homes and working Masserias with great hospitality, energetic support and generous cultural contributions. "This is typical of the spirit of the people of Puglia, people who have a strong identity but welcome other identities, who are special but do not see themselves as better than others," president Vendola concluded.

The book is available at Rizzoli.

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[2] <http://www.rizzoliusa.com/book.php?isbn=9780847835904>