Matera

The “subterranean city” is next year’s European Capital of Culture, the result of a steady revival, writes KATIE PARLA.

SEE

MUSMA The wide-ranging collection of the Museo della Scultura Contemporanea Matera (MUSMA) spans sculpture from the late 19th to early 21st centuries. It’s housed in Palazzo Pomarici in the Sassi, where its grand halls and courtyards, and even humble pantries are the backdrop to works by acclaimed artists including Carla Accardi, Maria Lai and Guido Strazza. Via San Giacomo, musma.it

Sextantio Le Grotte della Civita Located in Civita, the Sassi’s oldest district, this 18-room boutique hotel takes a minimalist approach to décor in refurbished centuries-old cave dwellings with honey-hued stone walls and reclaimed-timber furnishings. The dining room, which doubles as a common area, is set in a deconsecrated 13th-century church. Via Civita, 28, legrottedellacivita.sextantio.it

EAT & DRINK

Enoteca dai Tosi Spanning several subterranean levels, this bar (above) has interiors by a Belgian design firm and features green-glass lights that illuminate the cavernous spaces, including a former cistern. The list includes classic Italian cocktails and some 250 Italian wines. Via Bruno Buozzi, 12, enotecadaitosi.it

Stano Near the edge of Sasso Barisano, where the old town meets the new, this family-run trattoria serves Matera’s traditional cucina povera, featuring humble ingredients such as legumes, dried peppers and durum-wheat pasta. A highlight is lamb stew with potatoes and wild herbs, cooked in a terracotta pot sealed with dough. Via Santa Cesarea, 67/69, stanoristorazione.it

I Vizi degli Angeli The small but well-chosen selection of natural flavours at this artisanal gelato shop ranges from classics such as hazelnut and pistachio to unique blends such as mallow and thyme, both plants which grow wild at the fringes of Matera’s old and new towns. Via Domenico Ridola, 36, ivizedegliangeli.it

STAY

Sextantio Le Grotte della Civita

MUSMA

Don’t miss

The Sassi

The rock-hewn cave hotels and grotto churches of the Sassi, the old town, are the main attraction. But the new town also deserves exploration. Start in Piazza Vittorio Veneto, a popular meeting point, and continue along Via del Corso to Lucano la Bottega for an amaro. On Via Domenico Ridola, Chiesa del Purgatorio’s carved façade features cautionary death imagery; further along, Mosto serves cocktails and craft beer on a broad promenade.

Take a crash course in the cheeses of Basilicata and neighbouring Puglia at La Bottega del Vicinato. Varieties include goat’s cheese aged in wild herbs and caciocavallo made from the milk of the local Podolico cattle (Mercato di Via Marconi, Box 28).