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# A HUT OF ONE'S OWN

For a winery in Germany's Moselle Valley, Matteo Thun designed simple yet sophisticated visitor cabins that are tuned in to their surroundings

BY BRENDAN CORMIER



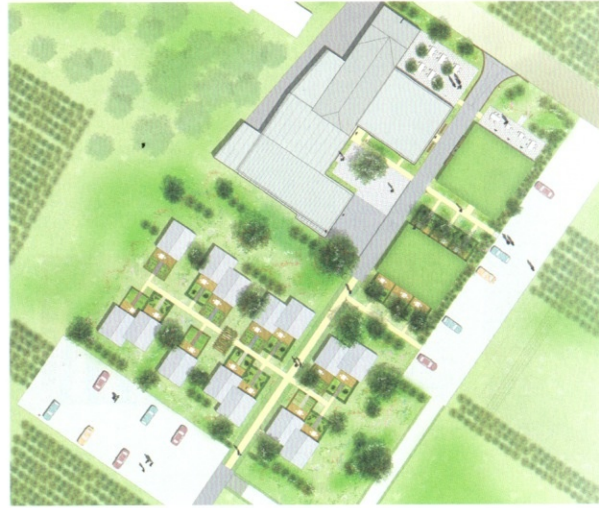
↑ At the Longen Schlöder Winery, the 20 guest houses, by Italian architect Matteo Thun, are surrounded by fruit trees. Each house features a small wooden deck and a private garden.

**LIKE MOST VILLAGES** in the Moselle Valley, Longuich is dotted with signposts directing you to guest houses and wine taverns. This is wine country, German style, and the region is a popular getaway for stressed-out northern Europeans looking for peaceful walks along romantic paths, accompanied, of course, by a glass or two of the region's signature Riesling. While traditional kitsch is the standard for new buildings here – think fake timber frames and gabled roofs – one new development bravely stands out. Last spring, Italian designer Matteo Thun completed 20 impeccably refined stone huts for the Longen Schlöder Winery, offering tourists a fundamentally different kind of vineyard experience.

It all started seven years ago, when owners Markus and Sabine Longen came across a feature about Thun in a German magazine and felt a connection. When it came time for them to expand their vineyard-restaurant to include a small hotel, he was their first choice. Thun responded enthusiastically to the small commission, eager to work in a region steeped in history and craftsmanship.

His big idea was not to construct one building but several small ones. He argued that a single volume wouldn't be special enough for the area's highly competitive hospitality market. Instead, he proposed turning each hotel room into its own little hut.

These mini-homes (*häuschen*), as Markus



- ← Local stone covers the houses' facades. Recessed mortar braced with steel gives the effect of dry-laid stone.
- ← Twenty guest houses, a recently extended restaurant and the main house are situated on the winery's estate, surrounded by vineyards.
- ↳ Visitors can choose their own gardens - from shade garden to herb garden or even fragrant rose garden.
- ↳ Among the many pleasures is the winery's signature Riesling.



Longen calls them, epitomize crafted luxury and refined detail. Inspired by the vintners' cabins scattered throughout the hills, they reflect Thun's appreciation for this pastoral landscape through the choice of two local materials: slate for the outer walls and the roof, and oak for the massive exterior doors and the interior floors and most of the furniture. These materials are used with great care and ingenuity; the recessed mortar of the stone facade is braced with steel, giving the exterior the effect of dry-laid stone. As for the oak, Thun employed expert local woodworkers to fashion precise door frames, ensuring that the stone and the oak met perfectly flush.

For the interiors, Longen emphasized the need

for a space where his guests could decelerate from their fast-paced lives. In response, Thun's compact 20-square-metre rooms contain little to distract the eye. The walls and the pitched ceiling form a continuous expanse of creamy white plaster, and the minimal oak furnishings - a bed, a desk, a chair and a ladder - create a contemplative, harmonious still life.

Aside from his career as an architect, Thun has an illustrious reputation for product design, a member of the legendary Memphis Group in Milan back in 1981 with founder Ettore Sottsass, and later acting as art director for Swatch. It is no surprise that much of his architecture reflects this history, resembling beautifully sculpted

objects enlarged to an architectural size. The huts could even be viewed as scaled-up miniatures plucked from a child's model train set. The bed frame, the desk and the bathroom sink were all designed by Thun, and he even sketched the label for Longen's signature Riesling.

Marc-Antoine Laugier's seminal "Essay on Architecture," penned in 1753, extolled the virtues of the primitive hut, calling for a return to simplicity and modesty in architecture. At the Longen Schlöder Winery, Matteo Thun takes Laugier's words to another level, creating an architecture that in its sophistication is far from primitive, but which nonetheless offers a welcome return to nature.



↑ The interiors of the 20-square-metre cabins were kept deliberately simple in favour of a low-key, de-stressing environment. Cove lighting adds a warm glow to the creamy white walls and ceiling.  
←← The red chair represents the project's single accent colour, used effectively in the outdoor furniture and the cabin numbers.  
← Matteo Thun designed all the furniture in the cabins - beds, tables, chairs - down to the bathroom sink.

## If you go

### HOW TO GET THERE

Longuich is located about 15 minutes from Trier, with easy train connections to Frankfurt, Cologne and other major cities. It is also about a half-hour drive from Luxembourg.

### THINGS TO DO

Trier is possibly the oldest city in Germany, settled by the Romans in the first century B.C., and ruins can be found scattered throughout the region. On the outskirts of Longuich is the Römische Villa Urbana. In the centre of Trier, Porta Nigra, the best-preserved Roman gate north of the Alps, ushers

you into the city's main shopping street.

A continuous path along the Moselle River leads past several neighbouring villages, and through valleys flanked by steep hillsides and rows of grapevines. Just outside Mehring, five kilometres from Longuich, a hike through the forest and up the hill to the highest point, the Fünf-Seen-Blick, offers a breathtaking view of the entire wine-making region.

### WHERE TO EAT

The Longen Schlöder Winery's restaurant serves generous portions of traditional German cuisine.

Of course, the wine is the focal point here, with a large list of the vineyard's own vintages featured, including Riesling, Pinot Noir, Chardonnay, Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot.

Four o'clock is the traditional coffee and cake break in Germany. Café Laurentius (Maximinstrasse 17), just down the street from Longen's, offers an assortment of classic German cakes to accompany your coffee, which is served under a beautiful grapevine pergola.

→ From \$125 per night for double accommodation. [longen-schloeder.de](http://longen-schloeder.de)