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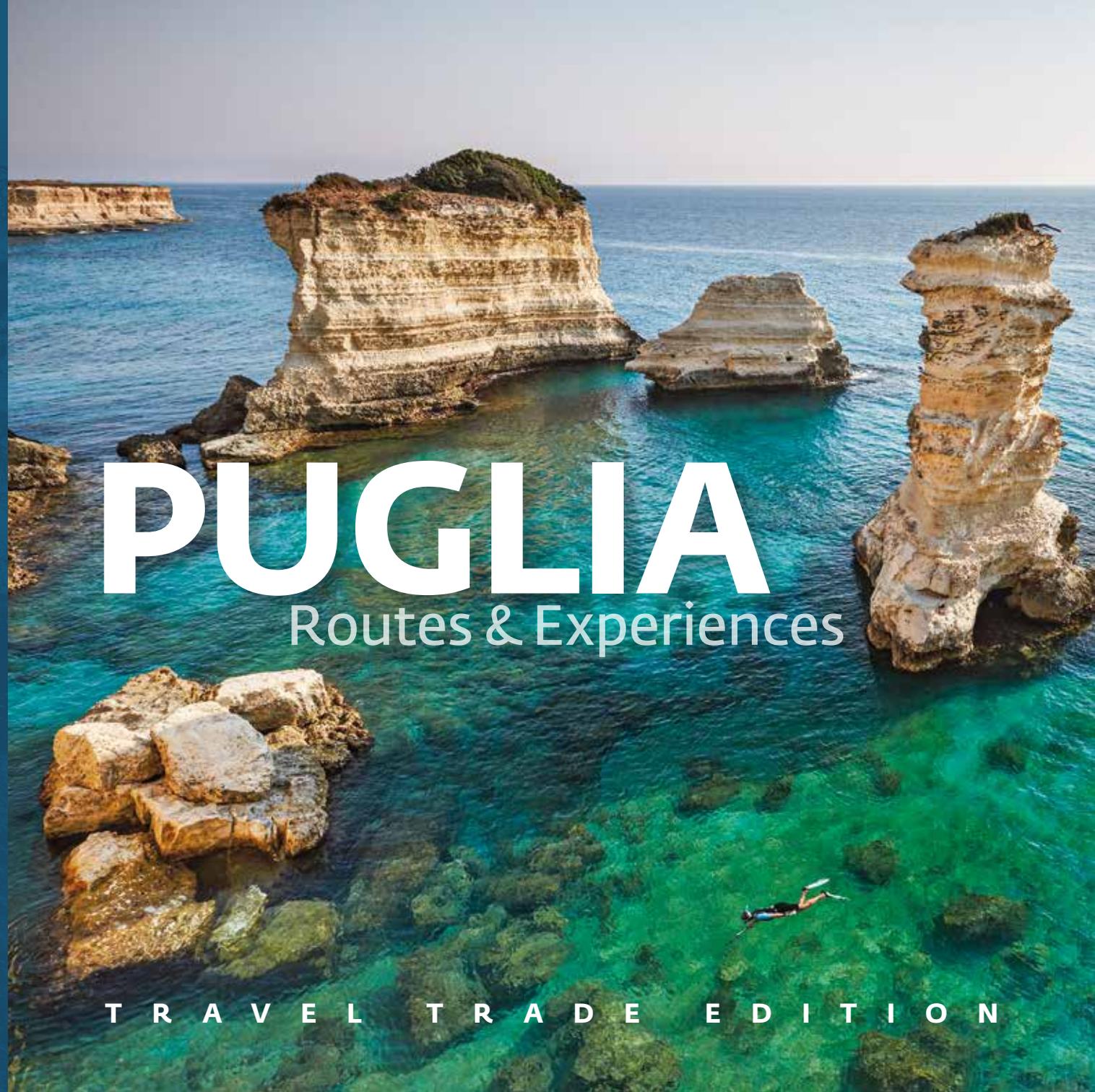


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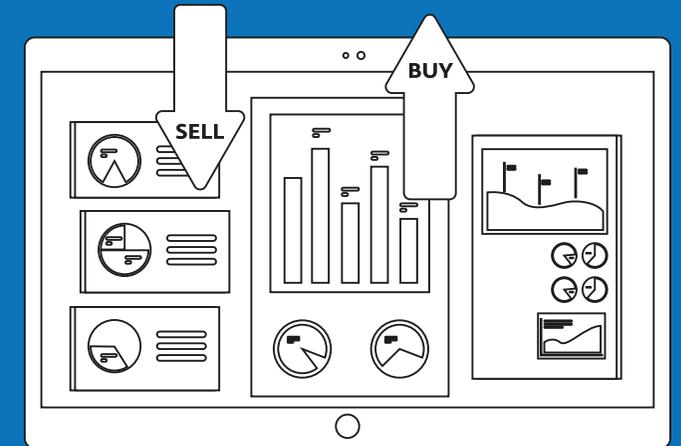
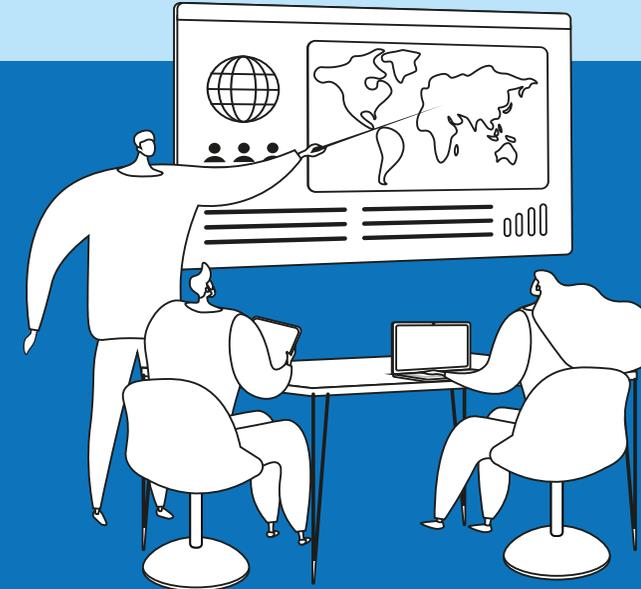
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Shared interests are paired, helping plan effective meetings and delivering optimized supply & demand solutions.

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PUGLIA

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T R A V E L T R A D E E D I T I O N

PUGLIA

Routes & Experiences

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WHY PUGLIA

This guide showcases Puglia for travel professionals, suggesting itineraries and typical Pugliese experiences as well as providing practical planning information. The region, which encompasses the heel of the Italian boot, is one of Italy's hottest destinations and is especially popular in summer when holidaymakers flock to its glorious beaches and chic resorts. But there's more to the region than its stunning seaside. Its bucolic countryside is made for year-round touring while its headline cities are rich in historic and cultural interest. There's also nowhere better to eat – Puglia's food and wine are a real joy to discover.



Puglia

GETTING STARTED

Information Websites



- **Viaggiare in Puglia**
www.viaggiareinpuglia.it
Puglia's official tourist website has a mix of inspirational and practical, up-to-date information.
- **Aeroporti di Puglia**
www.aeroportidipuglia.it
Official website of Puglia's two international airports.
- **Trenitalia**
www.trenitalia.com
Italy's national train operator.
- **Autostrade**
www.autostrade.it/en/home
Italy's motorway operator has a comprehensive website.

Documents

EU citizens can travel to Italy with a national ID card. British nationals and citizens of non-EU countries must have a passport. This must be valid for at least 6 months beyond the date of your departure from Italy.

Useful Numbers

Ambulance **118**
General Emergency Number **112**
Coastguard **1530**
Fire Brigade **115**
Police **113**



USEFUL INFORMATION

Climate

Puglia has a typical Mediterranean climate with long, dry summers and mild winters. Temperatures can soar to the high-thirties degrees C in summer.

Opening Hours

As a rough guide, shops open from 9am to 1 or 1.30pm and then from 4 or 5pm to 8pm Monday to Saturday. Variations occur, though, and special and Sunday openings are common in peak season. Many supermarkets and big department stores stay open throughout the day. Restaurants generally open from around noon

to 3pm and then from 7.30pm to 11pm (or later in summer). Bars and cafes usually open from around 7.30am to 8pm, though some serve until 1 or 2am.

National Holidays

Italy's national holidays include:

- New Year's Day** 1 January
 - Epiphany** 6 January
 - Easter** March/April
 - Easter Monday** March/April
 - Liberation Day** 25 April
 - Labour Day** 1 May
 - Republic Day** 2 June
 - Ferragosto** 15 August
 - All Saints' Day** 1 November
 - Immaculate Conception** 8 December
 - Christmas Day** 25 December
 - Boxing Day** 26 December
- In addition, all towns and cities

have their own Patron Saint holidays throughout the year.

Mobile Phones & Wi-fi

European mobile phones can be used in Italy. Overseas and non-EU phone owners should check with their provider about roaming charges. Coverage is generally fairly good but it can be patchy in some more remote areas. Free wi-fi is generally available in hotels, B&Bs, *agriturismi*, *masserie*, vacation rentals, though signal quality can vary. Many bars and cafes also offer free wi-fi.

High Season

Peak season rates apply in July and August, though prices also spike at Christmas, New Year and Easter. Shoulder season runs across spring (April to June) and autumn (September to October).

Money & Credit Cards

Italy uses the Euro. ATMs are widespread across the region. Major credit cards are widely accepted but some smaller shops, restaurants and hotels

may insist on cash. Tipping is not mandatory and Italians are generally not big tippers. In restaurants service is generally included but if it's not, it's OK to round the bill up to a convenient sum. In smarter establishments, five to 10% is fine.

TRANSPORT

Airports

Puglia is served by two international airports, both managed by Aeroporti di Puglia. Regular flights are scheduled to and from main European hubs – see www.aeroportidipuglia.it for updated timetables.

Bari 'Karol Wojtyła'

International Airport Situated some 15 km northwest of the city centre – 20 minutes by taxi, 15 minutes by train (Ferrotramviaria), 30 minutes by bus (Tempesta). Best suited for destinations in central and northern Puglia.

TRAVELLING WITH PETS



To bring your pet to Italy, you'll need proof of a valid rabies vaccination and an animal pet certificate, available from your vet. The animal must also be microchipped. Animals coming from an EU country must be accompanied by a European pet passport.

Check with your airline about the regulations for travelling with a pet. As a rule, small dogs and cats can be carried on board as long as the weight of the animal and carrier doesn't exceed 10kg. Heavier than that and the pet must travel in a special section of the hold. Puglia offers plenty of pet-friendly accommodation. To avoid unpleasant surprises, always check with your accommodation provider when you book. Pets can be taken to the *spiaggia libera* (free beach) but regulations might apply – local councils are required to display the rules by the beach. Alternatively, there are private beach clubs that accept animals at Torre Canne, San Cataldo and Pescoluse.

LA CONTRORA

In Puglia, the custom of the afternoon siesta, known locally as '*la controra*', is a fact of life. Shops, and often museums and monuments as well, close for much of the early afternoon, typically from around 1pm until 4pm or 5pm in summer. Closing time is rarely before 8pm. In summer, shops in touristy areas will often stay open throughout the evening, sometimes closing as late as midnight.

Andria to Bari **60**
Barletta **11**
Brindisi **170**
Foggia **82**
Lecce **208**
Taranto **140**
Trani **13**

Bari to Andria **60**
Barletta **65**
Brindisi **117**
Foggia **134**
Lecce **154**
Taranto **88**
Trani **51**

Barletta to Andria **11**
Bari **65**
Brindisi **175**
Foggia **88**
Lecce **212**
Taranto **145**
Trani **11**

Brindisi to Andria **170**
Bari **117**
Barletta **175**
Foggia **246**
Lecce **38**
Taranto **70**
Trani **163**

Foggia to Andria **82**
Bari **134**
Barletta **88**
Brindisi **246**
Lecce **284**
Taranto **216**
Trani **92**

Lecce to Andria **208**
Bari **154**
Barletta **212**
Brindisi **38**
Foggia **284**
Taranto **108**
Trani **202**

Taranto to Andria **140**
Bari **88**
Barletta **145**
Brindisi **70**
Foggia **216**
Lecce **108**
Trani **134**

Trani to Andria **13**
Bari **51**
Barletta **11**
Brindisi **163**
Foggia **92**
Lecce **202**
Taranto **134**

Brindisi Airport Also known as **Salento Airport**, it's about 6 km from the city centre – 15 minutes by bus (STP) or taxi. Fly here for destinations in the Itria Valley and Salento. Foggia's **Gino Lisa** airport mainly serves private flights and helicopter connection with the Tremiti Islands.

Helicopter

Alidaunia (www.alidaunia.it) operates daily flights from Foggia to the Tremiti Islands. Services are year-round with two weekly flights stopping at Peschici and Vieste en route during summer. Some private helicopter services are also available on request at regional airports.

Car & Motorcycle

Car hire is available at Bari and Brindisi airports and in the region's main cities.

Roads

Puglia has a modern and efficient road network. Main roads include the toll-paying A14 motorway; the SS16, which runs through the entire region; the SS100, which connects Bari and Taranto; the SS97, which traverses the Murgia; and the SS172, known as the *Trulli* freeway, which runs through the Itria Valley. Minor roads known as *complanari* run down the region's coast, serving holiday resorts, *agriturismi* and campsites.

Road Rules

EU driving licenses are recognised in Italy. If your license doesn't have photo ID or if you hold a non-EU license you'll need to get an International Driving Permit (IDP). A license is required to ride a scooter – a car license will do for bikes up to 125cc. Drive on the right, overtake on the left. It's obligatory to wear

CRUISING IN A VINTAGE CAR

Star in your own *dolce vita* film by cruising Puglia's back roads in an open-top convertible. A number of operators are now offering tours of the Bari coastline and Itria Valley in vintage Fiat 500s and other classic cars. Packages vary but routes generally cover the same ground, typically taking in Polignano a Mare, the Grotte di Castellana, Alberobello, Locorotondo and Martina Franca. Lunch in a *masseria* is often provided and two-day tours might include a night in a *trullo*.

seat-belts in front and rear seats. Wearing a helmet is compulsory on all two-wheeled vehicles. The blood alcohol limit is 0.05%; for drivers under 21 and those who have had their license for less than three years, it's zero. Unless otherwise indicated speed limits are: 130 km/h on

autostradas; 110 km/h on main roads outside built-up areas; 90 km/h on secondary roads outside built-up areas; 50 km/h in built-up areas.

Taxis

Taxis can be useful for short city journeys. You'll find ranks at main train stations, otherwise you can call for a radio taxi. Uber is not available in Puglia. On average, most city journeys cost between €10 and €20. Flat rates may apply from city centres to airports.

Train

Trenitalia (www.trenitalia.com) runs Alta Velocità high-speed trains to Puglia's main cities. Daily services run from Turin, Milan, Venice and Rome to Foggia, Bari, Brindisi, Lecce and Taranto. As a rule, trains to Lecce generally stop at Foggia, Barletta, Bari, Ostuni and Brindisi. Within the region, Trenitalia and several local companies run slower intercity and regional trains to most towns and cities. See www.viaggiareinpuglia.it ('Useful info' then 'Moving Around Puglia') for details of regional routes.

SEA

Bari and Brindisi are Puglia's main ports. Ferries sail to/from Greece, Albania, Croatia and Montenegro.

The main companies and their routes:

- **Adria Ferries** (www.adriaferries.com) Bari–Durrës
- **Grandi Navi Veloci** (www.gnv.it) Bari–Durrës
- **Jadrolinija** (www.jadrolinija.hr) Bari–Bar; Bari–Dubrovnik
- **Montenegro Lines** (www.montenegrolines.net) Bari–Bar
- **Superfast** (www.superfast.com) Bari–Corfu, Igoumenitsa, Patras
- **Ventouris Ferries** (www.ventouris.gr) Bari–Corfu, Cephalonia, Igoumenitsa; Bari–Durrës
- **Grimaldi Lines** (www.grimaldi-lines.com) Brindisi–Corfu, Igoumenitsa, Patras
- **Red Star Ferries** (www.directferries.co.uk/red_star_ferries.htm) Brindisi–Saranda, Vlora; Brindisi–Cephalonia, Zakynthos (Zante)

Ferries run to the Tremiti Islands from Manfredonia, Vieste and Peschici in summer and from Termoli in the neighbouring region of Molise year-round. Major International cruise companies serve Bari, Brindisi and Taranto ports.

Times & Distances

From Bari to

Foggia 134 km; 1 hr 15 mins by **car**; 2 hrs by **train**
Vieste 218 km; 2 hrs 20 mins by **car**
Taranto 88 km; 1 hr by **car**; 1 hr to 1 hr 30 mins by **train**
Brindisi 117 km; 1 hr 15 mins by **car**; 1 hr to 1 hr 30 mins by **train**
Lecce 154 km; 1 hr 30 mins by **car**; 1 hr 20 mins to 1 hr 50 mins by **train**

From Brindisi to

Lecce 38 km; 25 mins by **car**; 30 mins by **train**
Taranto 70 km; 55 mins by **car**; 1 hr to 1 hr 40 mins by **train**



Kids Discounts

Admission to state museums is free for under-18s from EU countries. For non-EU citizens, it's half-price for five- to 18-year olds and generally *gratis* (free) for under-5s.

FAMILIES

With everything from silky sandy beaches to adventure parks, wild animals and world-class *gelato*, Puglia is made for family travel. Whether you're into dinosaurs, dolphins or just splashing around at the seaside, you'll find plenty to keep you and your little ones happy.

Educational Farms

A great way of learning about Puglia's rural way of life is to visit one of the region's *masserie didattiche* (educational farms) or *agrimusei* (agricultural museums). These offer hands-on educational activities for children that range from cooking classes and outdoor workshops to feeding farm animals. Many also have playgrounds and extensive grounds to explore.

Family-Friendly Attractions

As well as big drawcards like the **Castellana Grotte Caves** and the *trulli* of **Alberobello**, Puglia boasts many kid-friendly attractions. These range from the **Parco dei Dinosauri** at Castellana Grotte to the ever-popular **Zoosafari** at Fasano. For more animal fun, head to Taranto, where, if you're lucky, you'll get to see dolphins on cruises run by the **Jonian Dolphin Conservation** group. Also in Taranto, kids can get creative at one of the regular interactive workshops held at the **MARTA Lab**.

Best Beaches for Families

Families after some classic bucket-and-spade fun are spoilt for choice in Puglia. The region has some superb family-friendly *spiagge* with lovely soft sand and placid shallow waters. On the

sheltered Ionian coast you'll find fabulous beaches at **Castellaneta Marina**, **San Pietro in Bevagna**, **Porto Cesareo** and **Marina di Pescoluse**. Over on the Adriatic side, there are excellent sandy beaches at **Vieste** (Gargano), **Torre Canne** and **Capitolo**, south of Monopoli, and the **Baia dei Turchi** just north of Otranto.

Eating Out

With so much *gelato*, *focaccia* and pizza to feast on, it's not hard to keep your children well fed. Kids are welcome in all but the smartest restaurants and although few places offer special kids menus you can always order a *mezza porzione* (half-portion) of a regular dish. Pasta and pizza are reliable kid-friendly dishes that you'll find served everywhere.



Monopoli

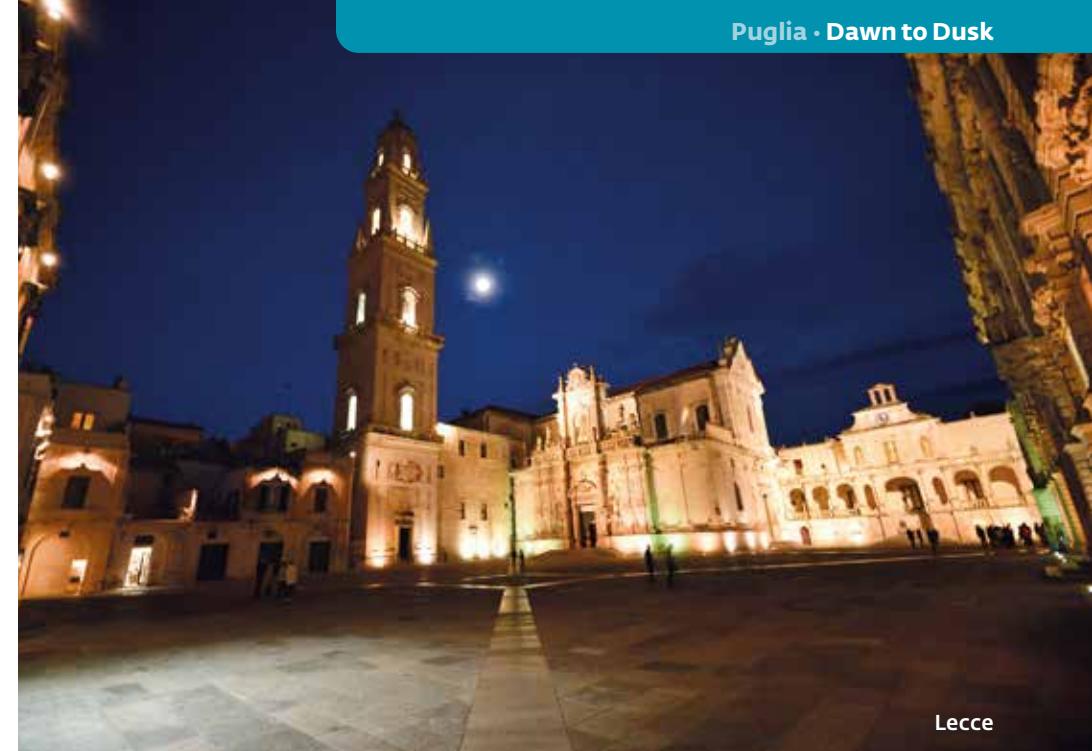


Puglia Dawn to Dusk

Puglia's enduring beauty takes centre stage in our **12 dawn-to-dusk itineraries** which celebrate the best of the region's natural wonders and urban highlights.

BAROQUE SALENTO

Breakfast on iced coffee and bombastic baroque architecture in **Lecce**'s graceful historic centre. Further artistic splendours await in **Galatina** whose Basilica of Santa Caterina d'Alessandria thrills with its astonishing interior decor. See the day out on the Ionian coast, basking in the golden light of a seaside sunset in **Gallipoli**.



Lecce

Bari



FABIO DELLI / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

IN THE HEART OF BARI

Dive into Puglia's hot-blooded regional capital for a day to remember. Get down with the fishermen at the portside market before strolling the labyrinthine lanes of **Bari Vecchia**, taking in sights such as **Largo Albicocca**, the **Cathedral of San Sabino** and the **Basilica of San Nicola**. After some shopping in the 19th-century **Murattiano** district, round the day off with a trattoria meal and drinks on the seafront.

ACROSS IMPERIAL PUGLIA

With its show-stopping seafront cathedral, **Trani** provides a picturesque gateway to central Puglia, an ancient land of castles, cathedrals and medieval villages. Take in Trani's marina and historic centre, then strike inland to feast on heavenly *burrata* in **Andria**. Continue southwards to UNESCO-listed **Castel del Monte**, Puglia's most celebrated and mysterious castle.



Trani

AROUND TRULLI & THE ITRIA VALLEY

Experience some of Puglia's most iconic landscapes and best-loved white towns in the Itria Valley. Kick off by marvelling at conical-roofed *trulli* houses in UNESCO-listed **Alberobello**, before pushing on to **Locorotondo**, famous for its white wine. Next, continue to **Martina Franca**, renowned for its baroque centre, and **Cisternino**, where you can dine on grilled meat at one of its popular *fornelli* (butchers' shops serving grilled meat).



Locorotondo



Capo d'Otranto

ROAD TO THE END OF THE EARTH

Be the first to see the sun rise at Italy's most easterly point, **Capo d'Otranto**, where the Adriatic meets the Ionian Sea. From there the road snakes down the Salento's rocky east coast, winding through a parched, almost other-worldly, landscape as the sea shimmers on the blue horizon. Push on southwards until you reach the end of the earth, the ancient *finis terrae* at **Santa Maria di Leuca**.



Peschici

GARGANO'S UPHILL UNESCO SITES

Make a pilgrimage to the heart of the Gargano. With its revered sanctuary to the Archangel Michael, the remote mountain town of **Monte Sant'Angelo** is the place to start. From here, strike out to explore the enchanted **Foresta Umbra** before descending to the coast and a sunset dinner overlooking a *trabucco* (traditional fishing platform, displayed in the photo) in **Peschici**.

DISCOVERING TARANTO & GRAVINE

Revel in rugged natural beauty and historical treasures in Taranto and its oft-overlooked province. From **Laterza**, home of one of Europe's deepest canyons, head eastwards to **Massafra** to investigate rocky cave churches adorned with Byzantine frescoes. A few kilometres further on, **Taranto** boasts one of Italy's great archaeological museums and a menu of superlative seafood, including the region's most prized mussels.



Taranto

ARTFILMPHOTO / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

HOPPING FROM POLIGNANO TO OSTUNI

From echoing sea grottoes to groves of gnarled olive trees rising from rusty-red soil, this part of Puglia encapsulates the region's myriad faces. Welcome the morning with a *caffè speciale* in the cliff-top town of **Polignano a Mare** before pushing south through laid-back **Monopoli** to finish the day in the white streets of hilltop **Ostuni**.



Polignano a Mare



Melendugno

SNORKELLING IN TWO SEAS

Take in two seas on a coast-to-coast dash across the region. Greet the day with a snorkel in the Adriatic at the **Torre Guaceto Protected Marine Area**. Done there, speed south to the Salento and the **Porto Selvaggio Regional Natural Park** where you can dust the day off by swimming and snorkelling in its dreamy Ionian waters.



Gravina in Puglia

VADYMLAVRA / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

RELISHING ALTA MURGIA

Enjoy tours of local winemakers as you explore the ravines and wild highlands of the **Alta Murgia National Park**. Start in **Altamura**, enjoying elegant architecture and delicious local bread in its handsome historic centre. Then push on to **Gravina in Puglia** to sample fruity white wine and stare into the vertiginous gorge that bisects the town.



Troia

ENCHANTED DAUNIAN MOUNTAINS

With their wooded slopes, medieval castles and remote hilltop towns, the **Daunian Mountains** (Monti Dauni) are ideal hiking and cycling terrain. For a taste of their bucolic charm, hit the road for a slow tour of their sleepy villages. Kick off in **Troia**, home to a magnificent 12th-century cathedral, then head south to explore steeply-stacked **Bovino**, and revel in sweeping views from **Deliceto's** lordly Norman castle.

DIVING AMIDST TREMITI ISLANDS & VIESTE

Spend a day exploring the crystalline waters and idyllic coves of the Tremiti Islands and you'll be a fan for life. Action is centred on the two inhabited islands, **San Nicola** and **San Domino**, where you'll find wonderful swimming and unforgettable diving. Round the day off back on the mainland in the attractive town of **Vieste**.



Tremiti Islands



Puglia Routes

- 1 Highlights Tour
- 2 Itria Valley Circuit
- 3 Best of the Salento
- 4 Taranto & the Alta Murgia
- 5 From the Gargano to the Daunian Mountains
- 6 An Adriatic Cruise



The **six itineraries** outlined in this chapter run the length and breadth of the region, leading from ancient forests to sun-baked beaches, from hilltop towns to the *trulli* of the Itria Valley, from otherworldly caves to remote, rugged canyons. They take in ancient ruins and beautiful baroque cities, plunging cliffs and dreamy seascapes, offering stunning vistas at every turn.

CANADASTOCK/SHUTTERSTOCK



UNESCO-listed Castel del Monte

Puglia Routes

1 Highlights Tour

10 days
550 km

From the dizzying white cliffs of the Gargano to the silky sands of the Salento, from the joyful baroque architecture of Lecce to the strange conical *trulli* of the Itria Valley, this 10-day tour showcases Puglia's greatest hits. The road takes in historic cities and pristine white towns, heavenly coastal scenery and echoing underworlds. It's quite a ride.

Distances & Driving Times

Vieste → Trani: 142 km ⌚ 2 hrs 10 mins
 Trani → Castel del Monte: 34 km ⌚ 40 mins
 Castel del Monte → Bari: 60 km ⌚ 1 hr
 Bari → Polignano a Mare: 35 km ⌚ 35 mins
 Polignano → Castellana Grotte: 16 km ⌚ 25 mins
 Castellana Grotte → Ostuni: 50 km ⌚ 50 mins
 Ostuni → Taranto: 59 km ⌚ 50 mins
 Taranto → Lecce: 107 km ⌚ 1 hr 15 mins
 Lecce → Otranto: 46 km ⌚ 35 mins

Overnight Tips
Base yourself in...

Vieste: 2 nights
 Trani: 1 night
 Bari: 2 nights
 Ostuni: 1 night
 Taranto: 1 night
 Lecce: 2 nights
 Otranto: 1 night

TOP EXPERIENCES IN THIS ROUTE

OUTDOORS (p. 56)

- Biking 1 3 4 5
- Hiking 6 7 11
- Nature & Landscape 12 13 14

BY THE SEA (p. 64)

- Diving 1 2 3 4 5 6
- Scenery & Wildlife 7 9 10 11 12 13
- Boat Tours 15 16 17 18
- Towns 19 21 22

FOOD & WINE (p. 72)

- Food Tasting 1 2 3 4
- Wine Tasting 6 7 8 9
- Street Food 10 11 12 13
- Raw Fish 14 15 16
- Local Life 17 18 19 20



Foresta Umbra

Days 1 & 2

Gargano & Foresta Umbra

On the spur of the Italian boot, the Gargano boasts some of Puglia's most spectacular scenery. Base yourself in the attractive whitewashed town of **Vieste** (or in **Peschici**) for a couple of days exploring the **Gargano National Park**. The coast, with its plunging white cliffs and idyllic beaches, is the obvious attraction, but venture inland and you'll discover fine walking and cycling in the **Foresta Umbra** (pictured above), listed

among UNESCO Primeval Beech Forests. To the south, you can visit the site where the Archangel Michael supposedly appeared to a local bishop in remote **Monte Sant'Angelo** (also inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List). Off-shore, the **Tremiti Islands** offer stunning seascapes and swimming.

Day 3

Trani & Castel del Monte

Known as the 'Pearl of Puglia', the coastal town of **Trani** boasts a picturesque marina and a

handsome historic centre. Here, among its winding streets and medieval churches, you'll find two **synagogues**, testament to the town's important Jewish history. Trani's headline act, however, is its celebrated seafront **cathedral**. Dedicated to St Nicholas the Pilgrim, it's a masterpiece of austere Romanesque architecture with a sober facade and elegant bell tower. Some 34 km southwest of Trani, the UNESCO-listed **Castel del Monte** (pictured below) is one of Puglia's most iconic sights. Enigmatic and magnetically beautiful, its distinct octagonal form is visible from miles around as it towers over the



Day 4

Bari

Puglia's fiery capital has energy to burn. For visitors, the main focus is **Bari Vecchia** (pictured), the atmospheric old town where old ladies roll *orecchiette* pasta on skinny lanes and students crowd into lively bars. Lording over the area is the beautiful **Cathedral of San Sabino**



Bari

PHOTOVIDEOWORLD / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

lush green countryside. Mystery surrounds its original function and still today scholars debate why Frederick II built it in the 13th century.

and the **Basilica of San Nicola**, a Puglian-Romanesque cathedral built in the 12th century to house the relics of St Nicholas (aka Santa Claus) which had been brought from Turkey in 1087. Nearby, you can stroll the elegant seafront promenade and browse shop fronts in the 19th-century **Murattiano** quarter, the bustling heart of the modern city.

Day 5

Polignano a Mare & Castellana Grotte

Polignano a Mare makes for

some magical photos with its compact **historic centre** rising out of a craggy ravine pockmarked with marine caves. All around, the blue sky and sea frame the scene perfectly – the same blue that inspired local boy Domenico Modugno to pen his worldwide hit *Nel blu dipinto di blu*, also known as *Volare*. In the crowded summer months, action centres on the popular local beach known as the **Lama Monachile**. Finished in Polignano, head 17 km southwest to the **Castellana Grotte Caves**. This spectacular



Ostuni

complex of limestone caverns is reckoned to be Italy's longest natural subterranean network. First discovered in 1938, the caves are accessed through a vast 60m-deep cavern known as the **Grave**. Beyond this, you enter a world of fantastical karst formations, stalactites and stalagmites, many given nicknames by early explorers – look out for the Roman wolf, the owl, the Leaning Tower of Pisa. The highlight is the otherworldly **Grotta Bianca** (White Grotto), named after its extraordinary alabaster stalactites.

Day 6

Ostuni

The 'white city' of Ostuni (pictured) rises above oceans of silver-grey olive trees at the eastern end of the Itria Valley. En route from the Castellana Caves you'll pass through a succession of beautiful towns including **Alberobello**, crammed with conical-roofed *trulli* (UNESCO site) and **Locorotondo**, famous for its crisp white wine. In Ostuni, the main activity is strolling the atmospheric streets,

taking in the attractive arches, buttresses, baroque trimmings and stairways. Crowning the whole package is an impressive 15th-century **cathedral** with an unusual Gothic-Romanesque facade.

Day 7

Taranto

On the instep of the Italian boot, Taranto hides its charms behind a rather rough-and-ready appearance. But look beneath the surface and you'll discover a city

rich in history and culture. Its prize attraction is the **MARtA – Museo Archeologico Nazionale**, one of Italy's premier archaeological museums, whose collection recalls the city's golden age as an important power during the time of Magna Graecia. Other highlights include the city's 15th-century Aragonese **castle** and its **cathedral**, one of Puglia's oldest Romanesque buildings.

Days 8 & 9

Lecce

Lecce, dubbed the Florence of the South, is a sunny university city renowned for its extravagant baroque architecture. Known as

barocco leccese (Lecce baroque), this exuberant style finds form in a wealth of 17th- and 18th-century palazzos and churches. Chief among these is the **Basilica of Santa Croce** (pictured right), whose facade is a mesmerizing ensemble of cherubs, angels and assorted beasts. Further glories await on **Piazza del Duomo**, the city's focal square, which is flanked by the 12th-century **cathedral** and **Palazzo Vescovile** (Bishop's Palace).

Day 10

Otranto

A classic white town on the Adriatic, Otranto (pictured below)



Otranto

is a popular summer hangout. But for all its festive atmosphere, it has a bloody history – in 1480 Turkish invaders massacred 813 citizens when they refused to convert to Islam. The victims' bones are today interred in Otranto's Norman **cathedral**, a graceful 11th-century building boasting an astonishing mosaic depicting the tree of life. The town's other principal sight is its Aragonese castle which inspired Horace Walpole's 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*.



UNESCO-listed
Alberobello

Puglia Routes

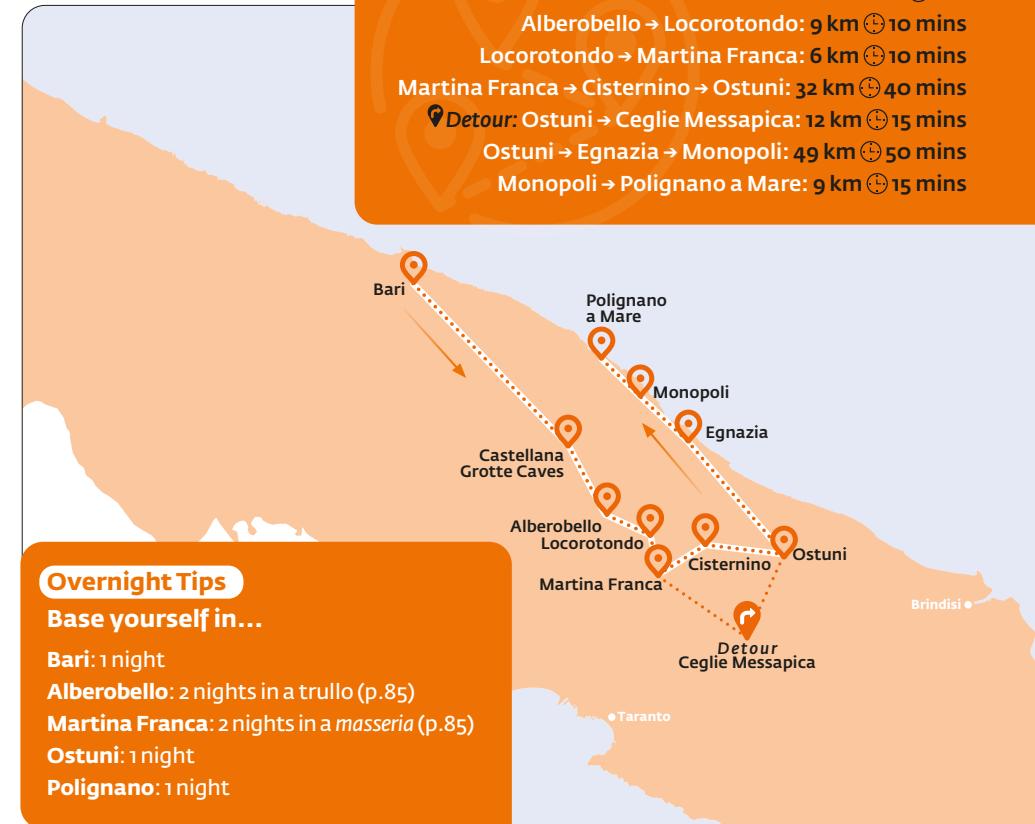
2 Itria Valley Circuit

7 days
177 km

This circular tour takes in some of Puglia's most iconic landscapes and photogenic towns. At its heart, the Itria Valley is a picture of rural charm with its grey drystone walls, gnarled olive trees and characteristic *trulli* houses. Pristine white towns pepper the way as the road leads to the sun-scorched coastline where lazy blue waters lap onto rocky inlets and dazzling sea caves.

Distances & Driving Times

- Bari → Castellana Grotte → Alberobello: 60 km ⊕ 1 hr
- Alberobello → Locorotondo: 9 km ⊕ 10 mins
- Locorotondo → Martina Franca: 6 km ⊕ 10 mins
- Martina Franca → Cisternino → Ostuni: 32 km ⊕ 40 mins
- 📍 *Detour*: Ostuni → Ceglie Messapica: 12 km ⊕ 15 mins
- Ostuni → Egnazia → Monopoli: 49 km ⊕ 50 mins
- Monopoli → Polignano a Mare: 9 km ⊕ 15 mins



Overnight Tips

Base yourself in...

- Bari: 1 night
- Alberobello: 2 nights in a *trullo* (p.85)
- Martina Franca: 2 nights in a *masseria* (p.85)
- Ostuni: 1 night
- Polignano: 1 night

TOP EXPERIENCES IN THIS ROUTE

OUTDOORS (p. 56)

- Biking **3** **5**
- E-bike Loop in the Itria Valley (p. 63)

BY THE SEA (p. 64)

- Diving **2** **3** **4**
- Boat Tours **16** **17**

FOOD & WINE (p. 72)

- Food Tasting **3** **4**
- Wine Tasting **9**
- Street Food **10** **13**
- Raw Fish **14** **16**
- Local Life **19** **20** **21**

Day 1

Bari

Start with a blast of urban grit in Bari. Puglia's regional capital is a city of colourful markets, busy boulevards and grand municipal buildings. Much of the city's new town dates to the 19th century but it's in **Bari Vecchia**, the tangled historic centre, that you'll find the city's main drawcards, including the **Basilica of San Nicola**, Norman-Swabian **castle** and the **Cathedral of San Sabino**.

Day 2

Castellana Grotte & Alberobello

As you head southeast from Bari, take time to stop off at the **Castellana Grotte Caves** (pictured bottom left) on the northwestern edge of the Itria Valley. As you descend into the vast cave complex, you enter a strange, haunting underworld of weird rock formations and dripping stalactites and stalagmites. The highlight is the eerily beautiful **Grotta Bianca** (White Grotto).

From the caves, it's a further 17 km to UNESCO-listed **Alberobello**, Puglia's *trulli* capital, which counts more than 1400 of these surreal and fairy-tale houses. Many are packed into the Rione Monti district, to the southwest of central Piazza del Popolo. For the best views search out the **Belvedere Santa Lucia**. The vista is amazing but it's one you're unlikely to enjoy on your own. The town is largely given over to tourism and it can get very busy between May and October. Much better to come in the quieter, off-peak months.

**ITRULLI**

A unique feature of the Itria Valley are the UNESCO-listed conical-capped white houses known as *trulli* (singular, *trullo*). These drystone constructions, made with roughly worked limestone boulders, first appeared in the 14th century and quickly sprouted across the area. Their odd, Hobbit-like design might look simple but it's ideally suited to the local climate with their thick walls ensuring they stay cool in summer. It's also said that the lack of mortar meant they could be dismantled quickly, thus enabling their owners to avoid paying taxes on them.

Day 3

Locorotondo

Hilltop Locorotondo is a memorable sight as it appears like a white boat bobbing on a sea of green. There are few must-see's as such but its circular **historic centre** is a joy to explore with its gleaming white houses and colourful displays of balcony flowers. You can admire great views of the surrounding valley from the **Villa Comunale** and you'll want to dedicate some time to tasting the town's celebrated white wine.

Day 4

Martina Franca

The main town in the Itria Valley, Martina Franca (pictured on p. 26 bottom right) boasts exquisite baroque architecture and an elegant historic centre. On Piazza Roma, the 17th-century **Ducal Palace** is a showcase example of the local baroque style with a grandiose facade and lavish rococo interior. In summer, it's used to stage events and exhibitions during the **Festival della Valle d'Itria**. From the piazza, Via Vittorio Emanuele,

known locally as *u'ring*, leads to Piazza Plebiscito overlooked by the 18th-century **Basilica of San Martino**.

Day 5

Cisternino & Ostuni

With its charming, casbah-like core, **Cisternino** is recognised as one of the *Borghi più Belli d'Italia* (Italy's Most Beautiful Towns). As you wander its tangled streets look out for the **Torre Civica**, dating to the Norman-Swabian period (11th to 12th centuries) and, on its left, the town's **Chiesa**



Castellana Grotte Caves



Martina Franca

Madre. Cisternino's real drawcard, however, are its *fornelli* (butchers' shops doubling as basic eateries) where you can dine on delicious grilled meat. Once you've had your fill, push on to **Ostuni**. This chic white town marks the end of the Itria Valley and the beginning of the hot, dry Salento. Most people come in summer to lap up the festive atmosphere and hang out in its busy bars and restaurants. Holidays apart, it has a couple

of worthy sights: a dramatic 15th-century **cathedral**, and a museum, the **Museo di Civiltà Preclassiche della Murgia Meridionale**, showcasing finds from a nearby Paleolithic burial ground, including the skeleton of a 25,000-year-old woman.

Day 6

Egnazia & Monopoli

About 34 km northwest of Ostuni, the **Archaeological**

Park of Egnazia is one of Puglia's most important ancient sites. It safeguards the seafront ruins of Gnathia, once a prosperous Messapian and Roman city. Few intact buildings remain but you can see parts of the original Roman road, Via Traiana, and admire artefacts, including Messapian tombs and painted ceramic vases, in the small museum.

From the site, it's a simple 20-minute drive up the coast to **Monopoli**. This laid-back port will win you over with its vivid colours, pretty **historic centre** and glorious aquamarine waters. Life in the centre revolves around Piazza Garibaldi, from where it's a short walk to the 16th-century **castle** and **Santa Maria seafront**. In and around town there are plenty of fine swimming spots including **Porto Ghiaccio**, known for its cooler waters, and **Capitolo**, a trendy and much frequented spot.



Detour: Ceglie Messapica (half a day)

Some 12 km southwest of Ostuni, Ceglie Messapica merits a quick detour. An ancient agricultural settlement dating to Greek and Messapian times, it initially looks like a typical rural town with its labyrinthine white centre and the usual collection of piazzas, palazzos and churches. However, Ceglie is renowned regionally as a foodie hotspot and it has a number of excellent eateries, including its very own Michelin-starred restaurant. Its culinary calendar culminates in August when prestigious chefs and hungry crowds flock to town for its annual food festival.



Polignano a Mare

Day 7

Polignano a Mare

Celebrated as the birthplace of crooner Domenico Modugno, Polignano (pictured) is dramatically set atop a rocky

outcrop, riddled with marine grottoes and scenic coves. The town's most famous inlet is the **Lama Monachile**, whose surrounding cliffs provide the venue for the Italian leg of the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series.

For a more artistic spectacle, search out the **Fondazione Museo Pino Pascali**, where modern art is displayed in the town's former abattoir.



Lecce

Puglia Routes

3 Best of the Salento

7 days
235 km

Discover the best of Puglia's sun-kissed heel on this 10-day tour of the deep south. Cocooned between the placid waters of the Ionian and the open blue seas of the Adriatic, the Salento is a land of searing colours and stunning seascapes, baroque treasures and some of Italy's most beautiful beaches. Quiet for much of the year, it bursts into life in summer as A-list celebrities and vacationing Italians pour in for the holiday season.

Distances & Driving Times

Brindisi → Lecce: 39 km ⊕ 30 mins
 Lecce → Galatina → Otranto: 59 km ⊕ 55 mins
 Otranto → Santa Cesarea Terme: 17 km ⊕ 26 mins
 Santa Cesarea Terme → Santa Maria di Leuca: 36 km ⊕ 56 mins
 Santa Maria di Leuca → Casarano → Gallipoli: 53 km ⊕ 50 mins
 Gallipoli → Porto Cesareo: 31 km ⊕ 34 mins

Overnight Tips

Base yourself in...

- Brindisi: 1 night
- Lecce: 1 night
- Otranto: 1 night
- Santa Cesarea Terme: 1 night
- Gallipoli: 2 nights
- Porto Cesareo: 1 night

TOP EXPERIENCES IN THIS ROUTE

OUTDOORS (p. 56)

- Biking **2 4**
- Hiking **11**

BY THE SEA (p. 64)

- Diving **1 2 4 5**
- Scenery & Wildlife **7 12 13**
- Boat Tours **18**
- Towns **19 20**

FOOD & WINE (p. 72)

- Food Tasting **3 4**
- Wine Tasting **6 8 9**
- Street Food **11**
- Raw Fish **14 16**
- Local Life **18**

Day 1

Brindisi

An important gateway to the east since Roman times, Brindisi has long been passed over as little more than a transport hub. However, there's more to the city than its ferry port and it rewards some exploration. Highlights include the 12th-century **Temple of San Giovanni al Sepolcro** and the **Provincial Archaeological Museum**, showcasing a comprehensive collection of locally-found artefacts. Nearby, a Roman column marks the end of Via Appia, the ancient Appian Way.

Day 2

Lecce

Celebrated for its baroque beauty, Lecce is known as the 'Florence of the South'. For a whistle-stop tour of its greatest hits start at **Piazza del Duomo** where you'll find the city's much-modified **cathedral** and 17th-century **Palazzo Vescovile** (Bishop's Palace). A short walk away, the remains of a Roman **amphitheatre** provide the centerpiece for Lecce's principal square, Piazza Sant'Oronzo. Continue on to the **Basilica of Santa Croce** and **Church of Santi Niccolò**

e Cataldo for a blast of *barocco leccese* architecture.

Day 3

Galatina & Otranto

About 20 km south of Lecce, **Galatina** marks the Salento's geographic centre. It has a charming historic centre but the real reason to stop is to visit the **Basilica of Santa Caterina d'Alessandria**, a beautiful 14th-century church whose interior is emblazoned with magnificent Gothic frescoes. On the Adriatic coast east of Galatina, **Otranto** is a hugely

BAROCCO LECCESE

The flamboyant architectural style known as *barocco leccese* (Lecce baroque) burst on the scene at the end of the 16th century, first in Lecce, then in the surrounding province. Characterised by floral motifs, mythical figures, friezes and heraldic coats of arms, it was based on the use of *pietra leccese*, a local stone which is soft and malleable when extracted but hardens over time to take on a warm golden hue. Big-name architects associated with the style include Giuseppe Cino, Francesco Antonio Zimbalo and Giuseppe Zimbalo.



Santa Cesarea Terme

popular holiday hangout. If you can drag yourself away from its glorious beaches, it boasts a lovely **historic centre** and a beautiful Norman **cathedral** floored by a stunning 12th-century mosaic. A short hop away, its mighty Aragonese **castle** has guarded the town since the 15th century. Before leaving town, make sure to check out the **Cava di Bauxite**, a former bauxite quarry with a small, scenic lake.

Day 4

Santa Cesarea Terme

On day four, the road leads south along the Salento's rugged Adriatic coast. First stop is Punta Palascia, or **Capo d'Otranto** as it's more commonly known. Marked by a solitary lighthouse, this is Italy's most easterly point, a picturesque spot that enjoys geographic fame as the point where the Adriatic officially finishes and the Ionian

Sea begins. On clear days you can see the mountains of Albania on the horizon, some 70 km away. A short hop to the south, **Porto Badisco** offers some of the coast's finest swimming. Low-lying rocks surround the sheltered cove, providing a wonderful natural platform for diving into the idyllic turquoise waters. As well as glorious swimming, the cove also specialises in delicious sea urchins (*ricci di mare*), served simply



Grotta Zinzulusa

with spaghetti at the basic local trattorias.

Continuing down the coast and you come to the old-fashioned spa town of **Santa Cesarea Terme** (pictured on p. 33). Perched on a rocky bluff, it was frequented by the local nobility in the 19th century and still today it features a number of stately villas, some with Moorish-inspired architecture. For a splash in thermal waters make a beeline for the **Terme di Santa Cesarea**, or grab a sun-lounger at the **Piscina Sulfurea**.

Day 5

Castro & Santa Maria di Leuca

Beyond Santa Cesarea lies the small town of **Castro**, dominated by a forbidding Aragonese **castle** and 12th-century Romanesque **church**. Downhill, its marina serves as a popular hub for the rocky coastline and its many sea caves. The best known of these is the **Grotta Zinzulusa** (pictured above), an echoing complex named after its bizarre rock formations, many resembling limp rags (*zinzuli*

in the local Salentine dialect). From Castro, it's a further 45-minute drive to the tip of the heel and **Santa Maria di Leuca**, known to the Romans as *de finibus terrae* (at the end of the earth). Overlooking the town, which is today a summer holiday resort, is the **Basilica Sanctuary of Santa Maria de Finibus Terrae** (pictured below), an important pilgrimage site built over an earlier Roman temple. Once you've seen this, the main activity in these parts is taking a boat cruise to the nearby sea grottoes.



Day 6

Gallipoli

The next leg takes you on a quick detour inland to the heart of the Salento's scorched hinterland. Here, set amid olive groves, **Casarano** is home to one of the oldest sites in Christendom. The **Church of Santa Maria della Croce** was built between the fifth and sixth centuries and features a series of fantastic early Christian mosaics, as well as Byzantine and Gothic frescoes.

Sated on art, the sea beckons. On the Ionian coast, **Gallipoli** (pictured), the modern vestige of Kallipolis, the ancient Greeks' 'beautiful city', is one of the Salento's top summer destinations. It's especially popular with hip, young holidaymakers who crowd here to party on its lively beaches. Away from the seafront, interest is largely focused on the slightly faded **historic centre**, which balloons out to the east of the Porto Antico. Highlights include the 13th-century **castle** and the art-filled **Church of Santa Maria della Purità**.



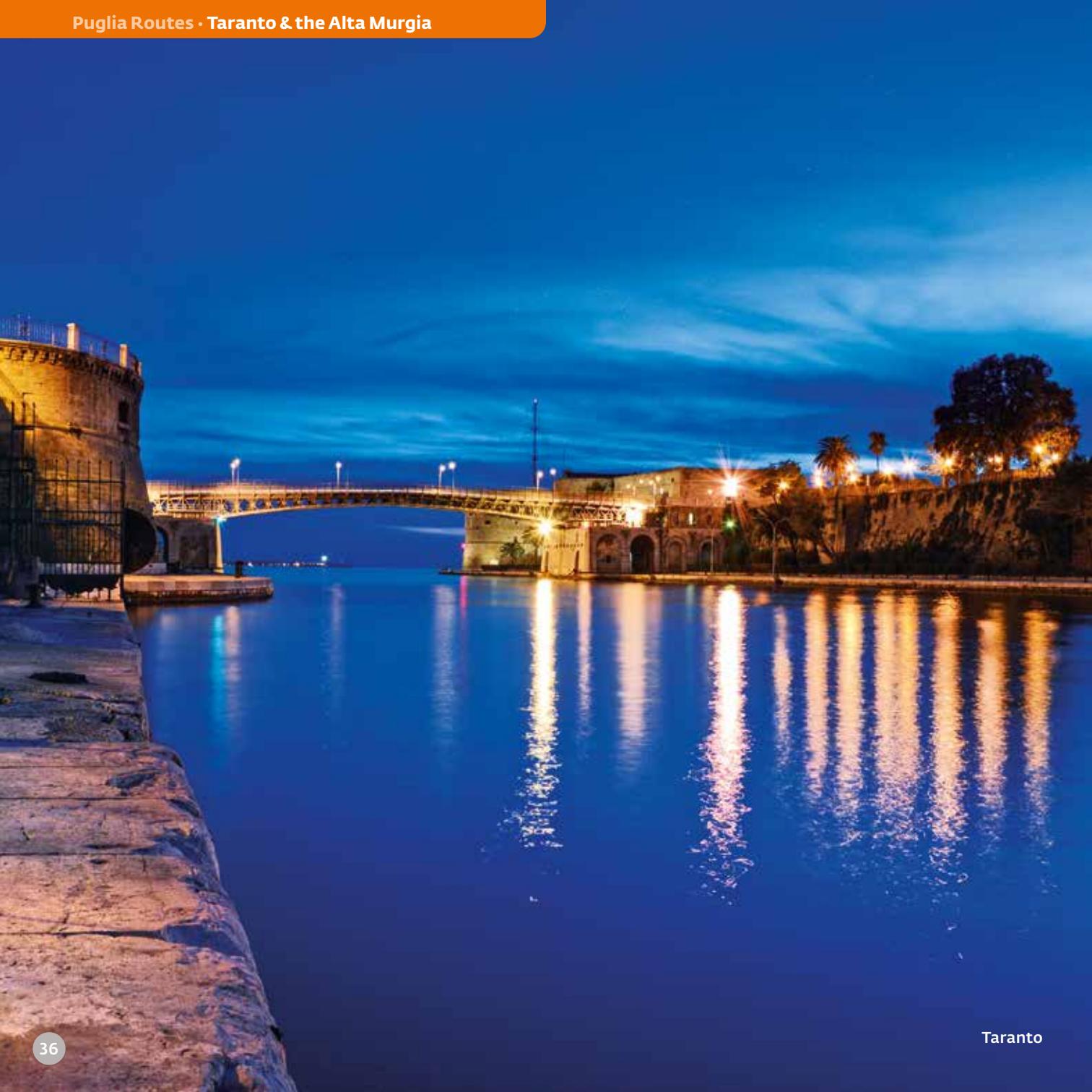
Gallipoli

Day 7

Porto Selvaggio & Porto Cesareo

As you push northwards from Gallipoli, take time for a break at the **Porto Selvaggio Regional Natural Park**. A pocket of 300 hectares of pine woods and 7 km of uncontaminated, rocky coastline, it offers superlative swimming and tranquil walking. Paths meander through the area, some leading to the **Grotta del Cavallo**, a natural cave where Neolithic finds have been unearthed.

For more seaside fun, the popular resort of **Porto Cesareo** can lay claim to some of Puglia's finest beaches. Strips of soft white sand backed by dunes and historic watch towers sprawl lazily along the coast, some 32 km of which falls within the **Porto Cesareo Marine Protected Area**. Beach lovers are spoiled for choice but outstanding spots include the **Spaggia delle Dune** at Torre Chianca and, further up, the Caribbean-like **Punta Prosciutto**.



Puglia Routes

4 Taranto & the Alta Murgia

7 days
248 km

Take in historic Taranto and Puglia's rocky hinterland as you tour the towns and dramatic canyons that crease the harsh landscape of the Terra delle Gravine Regional Natural Park. To the northwest, the rolling expanses of Italy's last remaining steppe await in the Alta Murgia National Park, the southernmost of Puglia's two national parks.

Distances & Driving Times

Taranto → Massafra → Mottola: 33 km ⌚ 40 mins
 Mottola → Castellaneta → Laterza: 35 km ⌚ 35 mins
 Laterza → Gioia del Colle → Altamura: 61 km ⌚ 1 hr 5 mins
 Altamura → Gravina: 14 km ⌚ 20 mins
 Gravina → Minervino: 47 km ⌚ 40 mins
 Minervino → Andria: 30 km ⌚ 40 mins
 Ⓧ **Detour:** Taranto → Grottaglie → Campomarino: 59 km ⌚ 1 hr 15 mins

Overnight Tips
Base yourself in...

Taranto: 3 nights
 Altamura: 2 nights
 Gravina in Puglia: 1 night
 Andria: 1 night

TOP EXPERIENCES IN THIS ROUTE

OUTDOORS (p. 56)

Biking 1 2

Hiking 8 9 10

Nature & Landscape 13 15

BY THE SEA (p. 64)

Scenery & Wildlife 9 10

FOOD & WINE (p. 72)

Food Tasting 1 2 3 4

Wine Tasting 6

Raw Fish 15 16

Days 1 & 2

Taranto

Kick off in the ancient city of Taranto. The city's origins are mired in mystery – legend has it that it was founded by Taras, a son of Poseidon, but historians claim it was established by Spartans during a wave of Greek colonisation in the 8th century BCE. To discover more about its ancient heyday, make for the **MARtA Archaeological**

Museum, home to the city's superb collection of antiquities. Also worth searching out is the **Cathedral of San Cataldo** in the slightly dilapidated old town, and the Aragonese **castle** overlooking **Ponte Girevole**, a swing bridge that spans the waterway between the **Mar Piccolo** (Small Sea) and **Mar Grande** (literally, the Large Sea). On rare occasions, the bridge is opened to let ships sail out of the naval base in the Mar Piccolo.

Day 3

Massafra & Mottola

Some 20 km northwest of Taranto, **Massafra** is known for its *chiese rupestri* (rock churches). Many of these are decorated with Byzantine frescoes and can be visited on guided tours. Visits generally take in the **Gravina di San Marco**, the ravine around which the town is set, and several churches including the **Crypt of Santa Marina** and the **Sanctuary of the Madonna della Scala** (pictured on the right).

This 18th-century sanctuary, built over an earlier medieval church, features a fresco of the *Virgin Mary with Child*, a reference to a miraculous event that supposedly happened here when two deers knelt before a painting of the Madonna.

Yet more rupestrian sights await in **Mottola**, 13 km to the northwest. Dubbed the balcony of southern Puglia, the hilltop town commands sweeping views of the Gulf of Taranto and beyond to Calabria. These



Sanctuary of the Madonna della Scala, Massafra



Gravina di Laterza



Detour: Grottaglie & Campomarino (one day)

If you're after a gift or memento of your time in Puglia, head to **Grottaglie**, 23 km east of Taranto. The town has been famous for its ceramics since medieval times and still today artisans sell their hand-crafted wares in the hilltop **Quartiere delle Ceramiche** (Pottery District). Look out for tableware adorned with blue flowers and the town's signature rooster. To round the day off push on to **Campomarino** where you'll find some beautiful beaches backed by aromatic sand dunes.



SABINO PARENTE / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

can best be admired from the panoramic balcony known locally as '**La Rotonda**' at the top of the historic centre. Just outside town, the **Petruscio ravine** is a spectacular sight, pitted with cave dwellings that were inhabited from the Neolithic period to the Middle Ages. Rupestrian churches lie hidden in the surrounding farmland, including the **Church of San Nicola**, considered the

Sistine Chapel of the rupestrian civilisation thanks to its hypnotic frescoes, all painted between the 11th and 14th centuries.

Day 4

Castellaneta & Laterza

Birthplace of the silent cinema star Rudolph Valentino, **Castellaneta** sprawls around the **Gravina Grande**, a majestic gorge that

plunges to a depth of 145 m at its deepest point. There are several dazzling viewing spots from the historic centre whose tightly packed houses huddle together on the edge of the vertiginous cliffs. In the small town of **Laterza**, the **Gravina di Laterza** (pictured upper right) is the largest and most spectacular of the canyons that cut through the Gulf of Taranto. The lushly vegetated ravine, which



Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, Altamura

stretches for 12 km and reaches depths of more than 200 m, is an important wildlife habitat supporting many species of birds. Various paths traverse it, providing exhilarating hiking and mountain biking. In the town itself, try to visit the **Cantina Spagnola**, a haunting 17th-century crypt adorned with unusual frescoes and sculptural decorations.

Day 5

Gioia del Colle & Altamura

En route to the tablelands of the Alta Murgia, stop off at **Gioia del Colle** to visit its wonderfully preserved Norman-Swabian **castle**. Originally built in the Byzantine age, it was revamped by Frederick II in 1230 and today hosts the town's small **National**

Archaeology Museum. Before hitting the road again, make sure to pick up some of the creamy mozzarella for which the town is rightly renowned. The largest town in the Alta Murgia, **Altamura** boasts a charming **medieval centre**, crisscrossed by narrow lanes and hidden *claustri* (small courtyards). In the heart of the action, pedestrian-only Corso Federico II leads to the **Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta** (pictured), the town's show-stopping cathedral. A 13th-century hybrid of Romanesque and Gothic architecture, it's the only cathedral built in Puglia by the Swabian emperor Frederick II. Nearby, the **Forno Antico Santa Chiara** is a top spot to stock up on Altamura's celebrated bread. Dating to 1423, it's the oldest bakery in town.

Day 6

Gravina in Puglia

Near the regional border with Basilicata, **Gravina** teeters on the edge of a precipitous ravine spanned by a towering Roman-era bridge. Among its highlights

is its landmark **cathedral** and the **Crypt of San Michele delle Grotte**, Gravina's most important rock church and the town's original 8th- to 9th-century cathedral. Visits to the area and the town's fascinating underworld of cellars, cisterns and tunnels can be arranged through **Gravina Sotterranea** (www.gravinasotterranea.it).

Day 7

Minervino Murge & Andria

As you head northwards, stop off at **Minervino Murge** to admire fine views over the **Alta Murgia National Park** (pictured) and visit the locally revered cave church, the **Grotta di San Michele Arcangelo**. Then continue on to **Andria**, the final port of call

on this trip. The city, Puglia's fourth largest, harbours some fine old buildings, including the **Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta** whose origins date to the 11th century. But as much as the architecture, it's the city's cheese that excites visitors. In particular, Andria is renowned for producing Puglia's best *burrata*.



Alta Murgia National Park

LUCA LORENZELLI / SHUTTERSTOCK



Bovino

Puglia Routes

5 From the Gargano to the Daunian Mountains

7 days
205 km

Ancient woods and silent mountains sprinkled with castles, abbeys and medieval villages provide the bucolic backdrop to this tour of Puglia's remote far north. From the lakes of Lesina and Varano, the slow road meanders south through a verdant landscape, seemingly little changed in centuries, to the provincial capital of Foggia from where a helicopter will whisk you off to the Tremiti Islands.



Distances & Driving Times

- Lake Varano → Lesina: 34 km ⊕ 30 mins
- Lesina → San Severo: 27 km ⊕ 32 mins
- San Severo → Lucera: 22 km ⊕ 20 mins
- Lucera → Troia: 20 km ⊕ 24 mins
- Troia → Orsara: 15 km ⊕ 22 mins
- Orsara → Bovino: 15 km ⊕ 27 mins
- Bovino → Deliceto: 16 km ⊕ 24 mins
- Deliceto → Ascoli Satriano: 23 km ⊕ 24 mins
- Ascoli Satriano → Foggia: 33 km ⊕ 35 mins
- Foggia → Tremiti Islands: ⊕ 20 mins by helicopter

Overnight Tips

Base yourself in...

- Lake of Varano: 1 night in a *agriturismo* (p.85)
- San Severo: 1 night
- Lucera: 1 night
- Troia: 1 night in an *albergo diffuso* (p.86)
- Bovino: 1 night
- Foggia: 2 nights

TOP EXPERIENCES IN THIS ROUTE

OUTDOORS (p. 56)

Nature & Landscape **14**

BY THE SEA (p. 64)

Diving **6**

Scenery & Wildlife **8**

Boat Tours **14**

FOOD & WINE (p. 72)

Food Tasting **3 4**

Wine Tasting **5**

Raw Fish **16**



Lake of Lesina

Day 1

Lakes of Lesina and Varano

Backed by sand dunes and typical Mediterranean shrubland, the coastal lakes of Varano and Lesina are a natural paradise. In winter thousands of birds flock to the lakes, the largest in southern Italy, providing fabulous birdwatching opportunities. For information about this and the other activities on offer at the **Lake of Varano** – hiking, cycling, kayaking – stop by the **Museum of the Lagoon Territory and Culture** at Cagnano

Varano. At the **Lake of Lesina** (pictured), you can learn about the area's traditional way of life at the **Gargano National Park Visitor Centre**, and try some of the lake's famous eels (*anguille*). These have been fished for centuries and still today are a mainstay of the local cuisine.

Day 2

San Severo

Situated at the northern end of the Tavoliere plain, San Severo was for centuries an important provincial capital. Its rich history has left a

mark in the form of a maze-like centre and several noteworthy buildings. Chief among these is the **Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta**, which was originally built in the late Middle Ages but now sports a largely baroque look. Wine buffs might also enjoy tasting the local *vino* and visiting the underground cellars used by winemakers.

Day 3

Lucera

Visible from miles around, Lucera's signature **castle** is a formidable sight with its 900 m of walls and 22 towers. It was originally built by Frederick II in 1233 but owes much of its current form to Charles II of Anjou who reinforced it and added the impregnable stone ring. The castle is just one of a number of historical landmarks left by Lucera's rulers. The remains of a Roman **amphitheatre** testify to the town's ancient past while its 14th-century **cathedral** stands on the site of a mosque from the time when Lucera had a sizeable Muslim Saracen population.



Day 4

Troia & Orsara

Surrounded by wheat fields and vineyards at the foot of the Daunian Mountains, the sleepy village of **Troia** showcases one of northern Puglia's great architectural gems. The **Concattedrale**, built between 1098 and 1120, is a masterpiece of Puglian-Romanesque styling, incorporating Arab-inflected Byzantine touches and Pisan-Romanesque influences. Particularly outstanding are its ornamental bronze doors and

the extraordinary rose window. For more earthly pursuits, Troia is on the **Via Francigena del Sud** pilgrimage trail, which offers great hiking as it leads on to Monte Sant'Angelo, about 100 km away. About 15 km south of Troia, the tranquil village of **Orsara di Puglia** sits in woodland in the heart of an area once known as the Capitanata. Its main monument is the **Abbey of Sant'Angelo** which was used in medieval times as a stopover for pilgrims on the road to Monte Sant'Angelo. The complex boasts two churches and

an austere grotto – the Grotta di San Michele – dating to around 1100. Foodies will also enjoy stocking up on goodies from Orsara's traditional bakers', one of which has been producing bread since the 16th century.

Day 5

Bovino & Deliceto

One of Puglia's most fascinating medieval *borghi*, **Bovino** is a classic hillside village, its grey stone houses cascading down the slopes in a helter-skelter of cobblestone alleyways, staircases,

NERO DI TROIA

Less known than Manduria's Primitivo or the Negroamaro from the Salento, the Nero di Troia is one of Puglia's most important wines. An intense ruby red, almost black in colour, it's a robust full-bodied wine that pairs well with lamb and grilled meats or with the iconic *taralli* (pretzel-like snacks) that are produced daily in the area's traditional bakeries.



Deliceto

LUCA LORENZELLI / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

white houses and up to 800 stone portals. Capping everything is the village **castle**. Built over a Roman fort in 1045 and subsequently enlarged by Frederick II, this served as the residence of the aristocratic Guevara family and its heirs until 1961. Nowadays, it houses a small museum displaying religious objects and artworks from the 15th to 17th centuries. Also worth checking out is the village's Puglian-Romanesque **cathedral**. To crown the day off, make a quick detour to hilltop **Deliceto** (pictured) to admire its wonderfully-preserved Norman-

Swabian **castle**. The severe, geometric form of this landmark structure has dominated the village's steeply-stacked centre for centuries, housing a long line of Norman, Swabian, Angevin and Aragon nobility throughout the ages. Castle apart, the village is also known for its annual **costumed procession**, held every 14 August, which re-enacts the investiture of the first Marquis of Piccolomini in 1463. In the Christmas period, Deliceto's *presepe vivente* (Living Nativity Scene) is another popular event, drawing visitors from the surrounding area.

Day 6

Ascoli Satriano & Foggia

Now a tranquil hilltop village, **Ascoli Satriano** has witnessed its fair share of bloodshed and in the distant past it was the site of two major battles: in 279 BCE, Pyrrhus defeated the Romans here, and in 1041 the Normans successfully fought the Byzantines to take control of the surrounding territory. To learn more about its tumultuous past, stop by the excellent **museum complex** which has a collection of ancient finds, some dating to the 4th century BCE.

The final leg of the drive leads up to **Foggia**, the northernmost of Puglia's six provincial capitals. The city's roots date to ancient times and it flourished under Frederick II in the 1200s but history has been hard on it and over the centuries earthquakes and heavy World War II bombing have destroyed much of the historic city. It does, however, retain a few worthy sights. These include its **cathedral**, a hybrid of Romanesque and baroque styles, and the **Civic Museum** whose collection of artworks and archaeological artefacts charts the history and identity of the city and surrounding area.

Day 7

Tremiti Islands

To finish your tour on a high, treat yourself to a day on the Tremiti Islands (pictured). The off-shore charms of this Adriatic archipelago might seem a world away from Foggia but thanks to a regular helicopter service you can be in San Domino in 20 minutes.



Tremiti Islands

Surprisingly, the flights, operated by Alidaunia (www.alidaunia.it), don't cost the earth, and they provide a memorable, time-saving way to fit some beach time into your tour. **San Domino** is the largest and busiest of the islands,

offering superlative swimming and an array of water sports. Neighbouring **San Nicola** has long been the archipelago's historic heart and here you can explore a series of fortifications and an 11th-century abbey.



Vieste

Puglia Routes

6 An Adriatic Cruise

7 days
202 km

You get the best of all worlds on this trip up the Adriatic coast. Beautiful beaches and stunning coastal scenery await in the Gargano while culture buffs can enjoy ancient ruins, haughty Romanesque cathedrals, and a revered hilltop sanctuary. Bari itself ensures a memorable send-off with its highly-charged streets and atmospheric seafront.



TOP EXPERIENCES IN THIS ROUTE

OUTDOORS (p. 56)

- Hiking **6 7**
- Nature & Landscape **12 14**

BY THE SEA (p. 64)

- Diving **1 3 5 6**
- Scenery & Wildlife **7 11**
- Boat Tours **14 15**
- Towns **21 22**

FOOD & WINE (p. 72)

- Food Tasting **1 2 3 4**
- Wine Tasting **7**
- Street Food **10 12**
- Raw Fish **14 16**
- Local Life **17 19**

Day 1

Bari

Kick off with some urban grit in Bari, Puglia's largest city and main international gateway. Pay your respects to the city's patron saint in the **Basilica of San Nicola**, the last resting place of St Nicholas and a fine example of Puglian-Romanesque architecture. Then take some time to explore the labyrinthine alleyways and piazzas of the old town, **Bari Vecchia**, and check out the city's fine Norman-

Swabian **castle** and the beautiful **Cathedral of San Sabino**. Wander the seafront and enjoy a meal of fresh-off-the-boat seafood at one of the city's excellent trattorias. To round your stay off in style, take in an opera performance at the celebrated **Teatro Petruzzelli**.

Day 2

Bitonto & Molfetta

Surrounded by endless swathes of olive groves, **Bitonto** is known locally for its excellent extra-virgin

olive oil. However, it's the town's medieval core that makes a stop worthwhile. The headline act is the magnificent 12th-century Romanesque **cathedral** but you'll also find an impressive 14th-century **tower** and a number of smaller medieval churches to refresh the spirit.

Back on the coast, the colourful fishing port of **Molfetta** rarely draws the crowds of Puglia's better-known towns but that merely adds to its charms. Down by the waterfront, its **historic centre** is an atmospheric tangle of narrow lanes laid out in a 'fishbone' plan typical of the Norman age. Towering over the streets are the twin towers of the port-facing **Duomo of San Corrado**, reckoned to be Puglia's largest Romanesque church. Apart from the cathedral, there are few must-see sights but it's a real joy to stroll around the harbour and explore the skinny alleyways that weave back from the water to reveal balconies, hidden niches, and arches.

**Detour: Ruvo di Puglia & Castel del Monte** (half a day)

For a change of scenery, venture inland. Some 19 km west of Bitonto, **Ruvo di Puglia** merits a quick stop for its attractive old town and Romanesque-Gothic **cathedral** (pictured). Continuing westward and you'll come to **Castel del Monte**, Puglia's most celebrated castle. Lording it over the green landscape of the Murge, this iconic landmark, built by the 13th-century Swabian emperor Frederick II, is an unforgettable sight with its enigmatic octagonal form.



Barletta - The Cathedral

Day 3

Trani

Nicknamed the 'Pearl of Puglia', Trani has a sophisticated feel, particularly in summer when holiday visitors pack the bars on the picturesque **marina**. This is the

place to promenade and watch the boats, while the **historic centre** is ideal for a leisurely stroll with its glossy limestone streets, historic synagogues and faded palazzos. The town's crowning glory is its graceful pink-stone **cathedral** on the seafront.

Day 4

Barletta

Barletta's crusading history is more exotic than the busy, modern-day town, though its historic centre is pretty enough and warrants exploration with

its **cathedral** (pictured on p. 51), 5m-high **Colossus** (depicting a figure thought to be the emperor Theodosius II) and **Norman-Swabian castle**. A short 9 km drive from town is the archaeological site of **Canne della Battaglia** where the Carthaginian general Hannibal famously defeated a Roman army in 216 BCE.

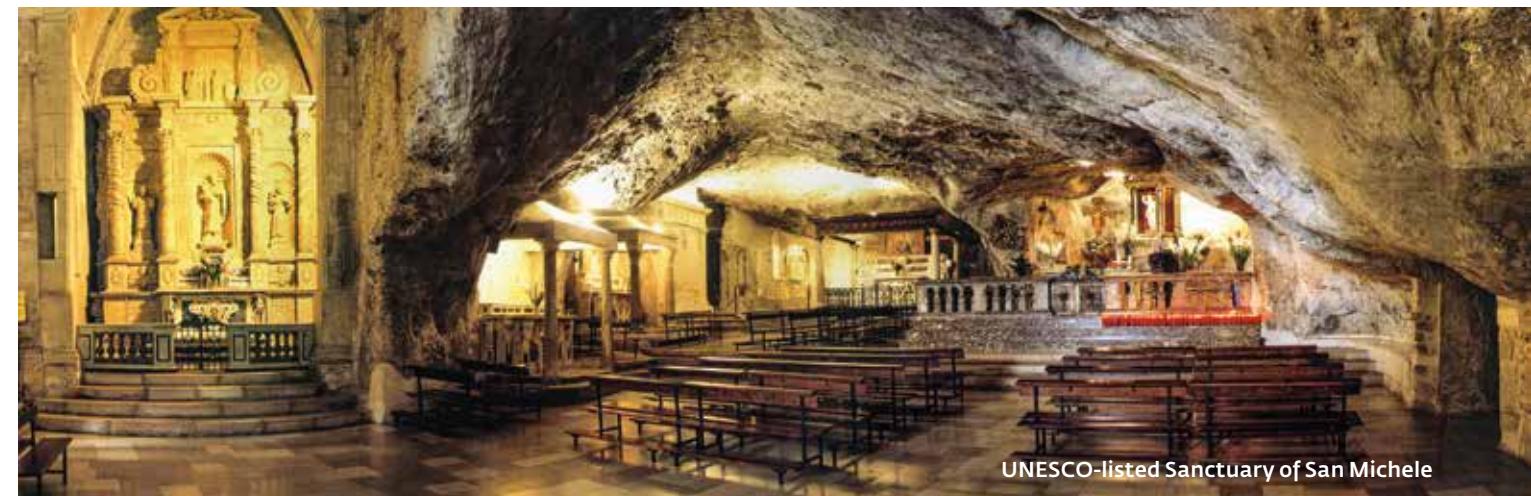
Day 5

Siponto & Monte Sant'Angelo

Another fine archaeological attraction is the **Archaeological Park** at **Siponto** near Manfredonia. This encompasses what's left of the ancient port of Siponto, a city which was founded in about 194 BCE and grew to become an important religious centre before being abandoned after a series of earthquakes in the 13th century. Its main focus is a modern **installation**



(pictured) by artist Edoardo Tresoldi which recreates the structure of an underlying paleochristian church. Made out of wire mesh, it juxtaposes strikingly with the adjacent Romanesque **Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore**. Once you've finished here, continue northeast to **Monte Sant'Angelo**. One of Italy's most enduring pilgrimage sites, this remote hilltop town has been drawing visitors since the Archangel Michael supposedly appeared to the Bishop of Siponto in a local grotto. During



UNESCO-listed Sanctuary of San Michele

the Middle Ages, the faithful would arrive on the Route of the Angel, a pilgrim trail which started in Mont-St-Michel in Normandy and passed through Rome en route to Puglia. The town's main attraction is the UNESCO-listed **Sanctuary of San Michele** (pictured), a remarkable complex of Romanesque, Gothic and baroque buildings centred on the famous grotto. Etched bronze and silver doors open into the cave where a 16th-century statue of the archangel stands over St Michael's footprint.

Day 6

Vieste

Jutting off the Gargano's easternmost promontory, Vieste is a handsome whitewashed town overlooking a lovely beach – a gleaming strip of sand flanked by sheer white cliffs and overshadowed by a towering 25m-high rock known as the **Pizzomunno**. It makes a great base for exploring the Gargano and striking out to nearby beaches: **Spiaggia del Castello**, **Baia San Felice** and **Cala della Sanguinaria**.

Day 7

Peschici

Further around the coast from Vieste, Peschici is another attractive town, sprawled across a cliff-top above a long sandy beach. There's a distinct Arabesque feel about its **old town** with its steeply-stacked white houses and tangled lanes. For an experience to remember, treat yourself to a sunset aperitif or seafood dinner by a **trabucco** (traditional fishing platform) on the waterfront.



Detour: Foresta Umbra (half a day)

The last remnant of Puglia's ancient forests, the UNESCO-listed **Foresta Umbra** extends across the Gargano's hilly interior. Some 30 km north of Monte Sant'Angelo, it's a wonderfully uncontaminated area where Aleppo pines, oaks, yews and beech trees thrive alongside up to 65 different types of orchids. Well-marked trails offer wonderful walking and mountain-biking – you can hire bikes and buy hiking maps at the small **visitor centre** in the heart of the forest.





Puglia
Top Experiences

OUTDOORS
FOOD & WINE
BY THE SEA

With its rugged interior, thrilling coastline and artistic treasures, Puglia offers experiences across the board. Outdoor enthusiasts can cycle Roman roads and cruise with dolphins, gourmets can feast on hand-rolled pasta and heady red wine, while sightseers can take in Norman castles, Romanesque cathedrals and baroque basilicas.



TOP EXPERIENCES BIKING

Puglia Top Experiences OUTDOORS

Boasting wild, wind-swept steppes, vine-clad hills, lakes, forests and dramatic canyons, Puglia's outdoors offer year-round thrills and spills. There's hiking and cycling on trails once trodden by medieval pilgrims and exhilarating climbing on vertiginous rock faces. You can explore ancient woods on horseback or take to the skies in hot air balloons while flocks of migrating birds put on fantastic displays for birdwatchers. Whatever your passion you'll find something to try.



1 Cycling the Alta Murgia National Park

The gentle slopes and sweeping highlands of the **Alta Murgia National Park** (pictured above) set an epic stage for cycling. Routes snake across the harsh landscape whose look changes with the seasons: green and lush in spring, parched golden yellow in summer. Wild vegetation and pockets of oak and conifer woods patch the highlands which are dotted with medieval castles and ancient farms, some of which now offer accommodation for weary cyclists. You can join guided rides led by experienced local cyclists or go it alone.

2 Savour the Wine of the Messapians

Fuel your pedalling with a taste of Puglia's best-known wines on a tour of the sun-baked hinterland between **Grottaglie** and **Lecce**. The route takes in historic towns and flamboyant baroque architecture as well as endless vineyards around **Manduria**, capital of Puglia's prized Primitivo wine. Further east, Primitivo gives way to Negroamaro, a grape used to produce dark, robust reds. This 97 km trail is one of 12 long-distance routes that traverse the region following old pilgrim routes, ancient paths and quiet country roads. For

further information see www.viaggiareinpuglia.it/espebike/211/en/Esperienza-Bike.

3 Follow the Pugliese Aqueduct

Puglia's longest cycle route follows the 500km-long **Pugliese Aqueduct**, built in the first half of the 20th century to transport water from the neighbouring Campania region to Santa Maria di Leuca at the tip of the Salento. The route is divided into several legs, one of which traverses the **Itria Valley** (pictured below) from Figazzano to Ceglie Messapica. Running for just





TOP EXPERIENCES HIKING



over 10 km, this short stretch immerses you in the area's bucolic scenery leading along drystone walls, past vineyards and never-ending olive groves speckled with pointy *trulli*.

4 Discover the Salento's Greek Heritage

Discover the Salento's Greek roots on a ride through the area's hinterland. South of Lecce, you can still hear people speak a neo-Greek dialect known as

grecanico or *griko*, which harks back to the Byzantine culture that once held sway here. Organised cycle tours take you deep into the territory, highlighting many of its fascinating features: stone quarries, centuries-old *masserie*, olive groves, abandoned Byzantine villages, historic water wells and mysterious menhirs.

5 Ride a Roman Road

In the heart of **Regional Natural Park "Dune Costiere da Torre Canne a Torre San Leonardo"**, the park's main **visitor centre** has been transformed into a 'Bike Hotel' where you can hire bikes and join guided rides. Cycle routes showcase the park's highlights or concentrate on specific themes such as extra-virgin olive oil or *masserie* farmhouses. Pedal out on one of these and you'll come across a stretch of the ancient Via Traiana, a Roman road that once connected Rome and Brindisi, as well as thousand-year old olive trees and an underground cave mill complete with an intact olive oil press.



6 Roaming the Foresta Umbra

Extending for 15,000 hectares, the **Foresta Umbra**, listed among UNESCO Primeval Beech Forests, is the green heart of the **Gargano National Park**, and a great spot for walkers. Some 15 waymarked trails lead through the park's wild vegetation and ancient beech woods. Paths take you deep into the thickets that carpet the 832m-high Mt Iacotenente and Mt Barone, as well as the Bosco Quarto, a woodland renowned for its towering Turkey oaks. You can stop off at the small Otri and Umbra lakes, and the Sfilzi Refuge

with its historic fountain. Before hitting the trail, check in at the forest's **visitor centre** to grab a map, or hook up with a local guide.

7 Hiking in the Gargano

The **Gargano Running and Trekking Park** has 160 km of trails, many following ancient tracks used by pilgrims and shepherds. Three stand out. The first is the spectacular trek up the 874m-high Mt Sacro. The route is beautiful between February and September when the wild orchids are out. A second, the Saracen Trail, runs from the centre of Mattinata to the Dauna necropolis on Mt Saraceno where you'll find 500 tombs carved into the rock. A third leads 21 km from Mattinata to four of the Gargano's best beaches: Mattinata, Mattinatella, Baia delle Zagare (pictured right) and Vignanotica.

8 Rambling in the Canyons

The gorges that riddle the limestone landscape of the Murgia

are best explored on foot. These canyons were lived in for centuries, and guided walks take you into their depths to discover the ancient cave dwellings and churches that honeycomb the rock. For the most dramatic scenery, head to **Ginosa, Massafra, Gravina in Puglia** and **Laterza** (pictured left), whose ravine is reckoned to be the largest in Europe. Since 2005 much of Puglia's canyon country has been protected as part of the **Terra delle Gravine Regional Natural Park**.

9 Highland Trekking in the Alta Murgia

Take to the wild expanses of the **Alta Murgia National Park**. A network of trails crisscrosses the





TOP EXPERIENCES NATURE & LANDSCAPE



RACEMAX/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

11 Explore Caves and Seascapes at Porto Selvaggio

Boasting 300 hectares of pine groves and around 7 km of rocky, unspoiled coastline, the **Porto Selvaggio Regional Natural Park** (pictured) offers some wonderful, easy-going walking. Paths, some of which can be slippery, lead to the **Grotta del Cavallo**, a limestone cave where archaeologists have unearthed a series of prehistoric artefacts. As you walk, make sure to have a camera to hand to capture the lovely coastal scenery and seascapes from the 16th-century **Torre dell'Alto**.

park's 68,000 hectares, running past centuries-old farmhouses to landmarks such as the **Pulo di Altamura**, a vast crater-shaped sinkhole that plunges to a depth of 92 m. A 40-minute drive away, there's further walking

in the **Mercadante Forest**, located for the most part in the municipality of Cassano. Planted in the 1930s to counteract soil erosion, the 1300-hectare forest is today laid out with paths and picnic areas.

10 Follow the Cammino Materano

From the mighty Basilica of San Nicola in **Bari** to the UNESCO-listed *sassi* of **Matera** in neighbouring Basilicata, this trail cuts a swathe through the ancient land of Peucetia. The ever-changing landscape is a real highlight, encompassing lush olive groves, oak forests, rugged ravines and the steppes of the **Murgia** plateau. The whole route is 170 km but you can easily break it down into more manageable day-long stretches. For more details on this and other long-distance routes, many of which follow the medieval Via Francigena pilgrim route and the Cammino Materano, check out www.viaggiareinpuaglia.it/idee-di-viaggio/en.



12 Birdwatching on the Adriatic

Encompassing 1040 hectares of coastal wetlands near Manfredonia, the WWF **Oasis of Lago Salso** offers superb birdwatching. It provides a habitat for more than 200 species of birds throughout the year, ranging from ducks and small swamp birds to herons, storks and larger birds of prey such as falcons, harriers and ospreys. For information about the local flora and fauna and the paths that traverse the area, stop by the **visitor centre** on the SP141 road. About 30 km southwest of the Oasis, the **Zona Umida delle Saline di Margherita di Savoia** (pictured) is another prime spot for twitchers. Europe's most extensive salt flats play host to a long list of birds including Italy's largest colony of pink flamingoes and the curlew, a wader at serious risk of extinction. Off-shore, shearwaters are among the many migratory birds you'll find soaring over the **Tremiti Islands**.



Margherita di Savoia

13 Reach for the Skies

For an unforgettable birds-eye view over Puglia, take to its skies in a **hot air balloon**. Flights, which depart shortly after dawn and generally last about an hour, cover four main areas, each showcasing a particular terrain. There are the spectacular canyons and rocky gorges of the **Terra delle Gravine**

Regional Natural Park. Then, to the north, the ancient town of **Gravina in Puglia** provides an unforgettable spectacle on the southern edge of the Alta Murgia National Park. Further northwards, you can float over **Castel del Monte** and admire the mysterious octagonal form of Puglia's most celebrated castle. Yet

more architectural eccentricities await in the **Itria Valley** in the form of the Hobbit-like *trulli* houses. These ancient abodes lie scattered across the landscape, dotted around the Valley's white towns, vineyards and olive groves.

14 Canter through the Daunia

A patchwork of pastures, lakes, green hills and woods roamed by wolves, the northern Daunia (pictured right) is perfect for **horse riding**. On the regional border with Molise, **Lake Occhito** provides the pretty backdrop to a



13km-ride from Carlantino to the Ponte dei Tredici Archi. Atop your steed you'll cross woods of poplars and willow trees, and pass waters in which otters and sea birds happily splash. In the **Gargano**, you can saddle up in the Umbra Forest and explore ancient woodlands around the Sfilzi Refuge, as well as take lessons with qualified instructors. Also in the province of Foggia, a number of *masserie* offer excursions on horseback.

15 Rock Climbing

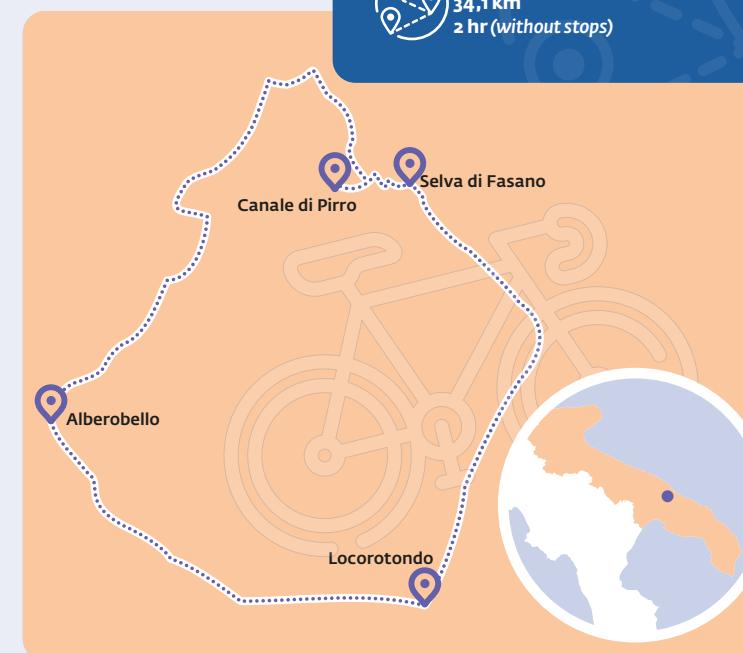
Puglia is considered one of Italy's flatter regions but with stretches of plummeting cliffs and plenty of rocky ravines, it boasts some surprisingly good **rock climbing**. One of the best spots is the **Gravina di Laterza**, which has 22 recognised routes catering to all levels. Near Taranto, the cliffs of **Statte** are another popular site, attracting free-climbers from across Europe and offering wonderful scenery.

E-BIKE LOOP IN THE ITRIA VALLEY

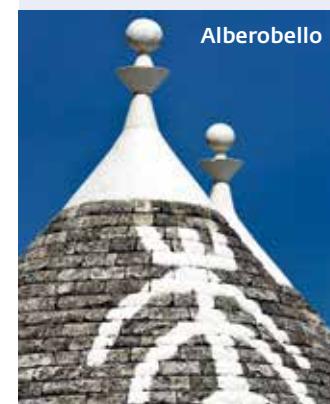
Immerse yourself in the rustic scenery of the Itria Valley on this 34 km route starting and ending in **Alberobello**. Once you've had a look around the UNESCO-listed *trulli* that huddle together on Alberobello's winding streets, hit the road and head out of town. Follow the panoramic **Canale di Pirro**, a valley which looks down towards Fasano, Savalletri, Torre Canne and Pezze di Greco. The countryside here is typical of the area with vines and gnarled olive trees writhing up from rusty-red fields enclosed by grey drystone walls. All the while, the sea beckons on the blue horizon. The route leads on to the **Selva di Fasano**, a woody hill covered with oaks, pines, chestnut and cypress trees. Check out the 17th-century Chiesetta della Madonna del Carmelo and the Trullo del Signore, a modern church designed with a typical *trullo* conical roof. Then start back through the Itria Valley to **Locorotondo**, a picturesque white town known for its *cummers* (tall houses with sloping roofs) and crisp white wine. From here it's a straightforward 9 km or so back to Alberobello, where you can overnight in a *trullo* B&B.

ITINERARY:
• Alberobello • Canale di Pirro
• Selva di Fasano • Locorotondo
• Alberobello

LENGTH:
34,1 km
2 hr (without stops)



ZHUKOVVVLAD/SHUTTERSTOCK



Alberobello



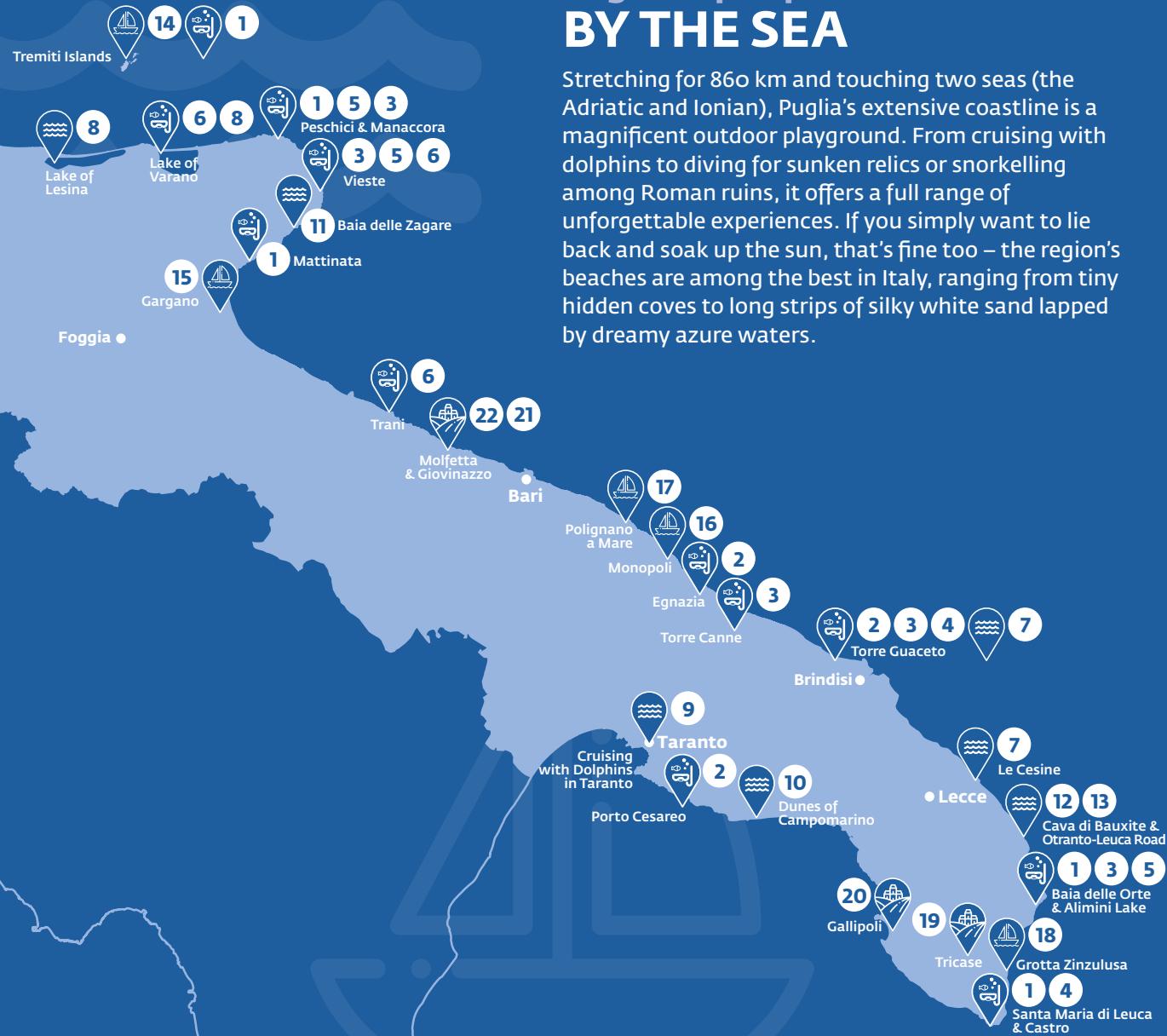
Chiesa di Santa Maria di Barsento



Locorotondo

Puglia Top Experiences BY THE SEA

Stretching for 860 km and touching two seas (the Adriatic and Ionian), Puglia's extensive coastline is a magnificent outdoor playground. From cruising with dolphins to diving for sunken relics or snorkelling among Roman ruins, it offers a full range of unforgettable experiences. If you simply want to lie back and soak up the sun, that's fine too – the region's beaches are among the best in Italy, ranging from tiny hidden coves to long strips of silky white sand lapped by dreamy azure waters.



TOP EXPERIENCES DIVING, SNORKELLING & WATERSPORTS

1 Discover Underwater Worlds

Puglia's waters offer superlative **diving**. In the Salento, you can swim in search of underwater caves and relics in the **Baia dell'Orte** near Otranto, and in the inviting waters off **Castro**, **Santa Maria di Leuca** and **Porto Cesareo**. To the north, the Gargano is another prime spot, particularly between **Mattinata** and **Peschici**. For some of the best diving in the Mediterranean, head to the **Tremiti Islands** (pictured right) where there are more than 50 recognised dive sites, including several around the Island of Capraia. Take to the depths here and you'll discover a



submarine bronze statue of San Pio, venerated worldwide, and a spectacular underwater world around Punta Secca.

2 Snorkelling over Roman Ruins

Snorkelling goes hand in hand with sightseeing at the **Archaeological Park of Egnazia**. Here you can swim over the underwater remains of what was once the Roman port of Gnathia. Elsewhere in the region, guided swims provide a thrilling way of

learning about the marine flora and fauna that thrives in the waters of the **Protected Marine Area of Torre Guaceto**. Over on the Ionian coast, there's great snorkelling at **Marine Area of Porto Cesareo** (pictured left) where the seabeds are rich in underwater life – if you're really lucky you might even spot a loggerhead turtle.

3 Riding the Waves

Surfers, windsurfers and kitesurfers should make a beeline



for **Vieste** where locals take to the waves at the Spiaggia Lunga. The waters here are suitable for all levels, including beginners. More expert surfers can also try their moves in the **Baia di Manaccora**, towards Peschici. To the south, thrill seekers can hit the surf at **Torre Canne**, Apani in the **Protected Marine Area of Torre Guaceto**, and **Frassanito** near Alimini.



4 Sail the Two Seas

Sailors are spoiled for choice in Puglia. If you want to go it alone, you'll have no trouble finding a boat to hire. Good spots for maritime exploration include the Gargano coast and the eastern Salento. Here you can pick up a boat in **Castro** or **Santa Maria di Leuca** and head out to explore the caves and grottoes that pockmark the rocky coastline. However, if you're looking to learn the ropes, there are plenty of sailing schools offering courses for all levels. Good places include the **Protected Marine Area of Torre Guaceto** and Santa Maria di Leuca where you can sail in two seas (the

Adriatic and Ionian). Another Ionian spot worth checking out is the Spiaggia di Torre Chianca at **Porto Cesareo**.

5 Sea Kayaking

One of the best ways of investigating the caves and rocky inlets of the Gargano's plunging coastline is by canoe. During the summer, you'll find numerous outfits hiring out canoes and kayaks on the beaches between **Vieste** and **Peschici**. For a less strenuous workout, head south to the limpid waters of the **Alimini Lakes** which lend themselves to slow-exploration by kayak. You can easily hire canoes on site or sign up for an organised paddle.

6 Fishing on a Trabucchi

For a fishing experience unique to Puglia, join a crew on one of the *trabucchi* (traditional fishing platforms; pictured) that line the **Gargano** coast. During the course of the day you'll work side by side with the experts to drop your nets and haul up the day's catch. More traditional fishing trips can be organised on boats sailing out of **Vieste** and **Trani**. For some lake fishing, make for the **Lake of Varano** where you can learn about the traditional techniques used to catch the lake's prized eels.



TOP EXPERIENCES SCENERY & WILDLIFE

7 Explore Le Cesine & Torre Guaceto

A remaining vestige of the swamplands that once covered much of the Adriatic coast, **Le Cesine Nature Reserve** extends for 348 hectares near San Cataldo. Access to the area is strictly limited, so you'll need to book a visit through the WWF (www.riservalecesine.it). Walking and cycling tours are ideal for exploring the pine and holm oak woods, Mediterranean shrubland and reed banks that cover much of the reserve. To the north, the **Torre Guaceto Protected Marine Area** (pictured below) is another pocket of pristine coastline, boasting kilometres of soaring sand dunes and several fabulous beaches.



8 Live the Lake Life at Lesina & Varano

Surrounded by sand dunes and typical Mediterranean shrubland, the **lakes of Lesina and Varano** are ideal for outdoor enthusiasts. There's easy-going hiking and cycling or you can hire a canoe and take to the lagoons' placid waters. The lakes provide an important wildlife habitat, particularly in winter when flocks of migrating birds swoop in. It's a spectacle much appreciated by local birdwatchers. The lakes are also renowned for their eels which are a mainstay of the local diet. To learn more about the local fauna, stop by the **Gargano National Park Visitor Centre** in Lesina.



that's spread over several sites and runs guided tours. For an incredible look at the local marine wildlife, book a berth on one of the **dolphin-watching cruises** in the Gulf of Taranto that ply the city's fertile waters. Run by an association of local conservationists, these are hugely popular so it pays to reserve in advance.

9 Cruising with Dolphins in Taranto

Taranto's **Mar Piccolo** (Small Sea) is best known for its delicious mussels (*cozze*), but there's more to it than its mollusks. To learn about its extraordinary bio-diversity, the **Ecomuseo Palude La Vela e Mar Piccolo** is an open-air museum

10 Discover the Dunes of Campomarino

Much frequented by day trippers from Taranto, the beaches that sprawl along the coastline east of the city are backed by an extensive system of sand



VOLCUBERO / SHUTTERSTOCK

dunes. Protected as part of the regional **Litorale Tarantino Orientale Nature Reserve**, these are best seen on the coast at **Campomarino di Maruggio** (pictured above) where the white, sandy hillocks tufted with sea juniper and aromatic wild thyme give on to beautiful, Caribbean-like beaches.

11 Revel in the Gargano's Rocky Scenery

Puglia's coast is at its most spectacular in the **Gargano**. Here sea caves and hidden coves sit at the foot of blinding white cliffs as they plunge into the

deep emerald-green waters of the Adriatic. Especially beautiful is the stretch between **Vieste** and **Peschici**. As you revel in the gorgeous scenery, note the free-standing rock stacks that rise out of the water. These are a real feature of the Gargano and many have nicknames. The most famous, a 25m-high stack towering over the beach at Vieste, is known as **Pizzomunno**. Two other well-known landmarks include the Arco di Diomede and Le Forbici (The Scissors) at the **Baia delle Zagare**.

12 Drive the Otranto–Leuca Road

Snaking down the Salento's east coast to **Santa Maria di Leuca**, this road provides some of Puglia's most exhilarating driving. The ancient landscape is as gripping as it is harsh with its bare, wind-swept grasslands, giant prickly pears and scorched rocks baking in the unforgiving sun. Off to your left, cliffs plummet into the sparkling blue sea. The scenery

is the highlight but as you wind ever southwards, take time for refreshing swims at **Porto Badisco** and **Castro**.

13 Photograph Otranto's Red Centre

For a break from the blues and blinding whites of the **Otranto** coast, venture inland for a kilometre or so to the **Cava di Bauxite** (pictured below). This former bauxite quarry is home to a small lake of mossy-green water, scenically surrounded by reed beds and walls of rusty-red rock. The surrounding ground is also a striking ferrous red, providing wonderful photo opps and relaxed walking.



TOP EXPERIENCES BOAT TOURS

14 Tour the Tremiti Islands

A cruise around the **Island of San Domino** is the best way of getting up close to its dreamy coves. You'll have no trouble finding a berth at the port where boats depart regularly during the summer season. Tour highlights include the **Grotta del Bue Marino**, a sea cave named after the monk seals and sea lions that once frequented it, and the **Scoglio dell'Elefante**, a rock formation shaped like an elephant.

15 Boat Tripping on the Gargano

Pitted with spectacular marine grottoes, the coastline between **Mattinata** (pictured) and **Peschici** is a favourite with boat trippers. Cruises depart from **Mattinata**, **Vieste** and **Peschici** and are hugely popular, stopping to take in the colourfully-named grottoes and hidden beaches, some of which can only be accessed by sea.

16 A Sunset Aperitif

Sipping a seaboard aperitif as you watch the sun set over



Monopoli is an experience you won't forget in a hurry. Several outfits offer sunset cruises along the coast between **Monopoli** and **Polignano a Mare** allowing you to enjoy the sea in the soft golden light of dusk.

17 Cave-hopping at Polignano

It's only by taking to the sea that you'll discover how many caves honeycomb the cliffs around **Polignano a Mare**. Grottoes like the **Grotta delle Rondinelle**, where local daredevils dive off a 6m-high natural vault into the sea, and the **Grotta della Chiangella**, named after the cries

of mothers whose children were abducted by Saracen raiders.

18 Cruise by the Grotta Zinzulusa

The largest, busiest and most spectacular of the sea caves around **Castro**, the **Grotta Zinzulusa** features on the boat tours that ply the Salento's eastern waters from **Castro Marina** and **Santa Maria di Leuca**. Cruises take in the cave and other grottoes as well as **Porto Miggiano**, a beautiful inlet with crystalline waters. For a foodie slant to your tour, many operators offer Salento delicacies as part of their package.



TOP EXPERIENCES SEASIDE TOWNS & VILLAGES

19 Fishing Traditions at Tricase Porto

With its blue fishing skiffs and picturesque harbour, tiny Tricase Porto is an ideal place to learn about the Salento's fishing traditions. The pocket-size marina forms part of the **Porto Museo di Tricase**, an open-air museum spread across several village sites that illustrates the area's fishing way of life. Once you've finished at the museum, head to the nearby **Marina Serra** for a swim in its amazing rock pool.

20 Party in Gallipoli

Quiet for much of the year, Gallipoli (pictured upper right) explodes into life in the summer



when crowds of holidaymakers descend on its Ionian beaches. The town, which dates to the time of Magna Graecia, is renowned for its animated nightlife which creates a real festive air in the peak months of July and August. Partying apart, you can top up your tan on the popular **Spiaggia della Purità** or at the nearby **Baia Verde**. The **old port area** is also worth checking out, as is the **historic centre**.

21 An Evening in Giovinazzo

Little known to foreign visitors but much appreciated by the Pugliese, Giovinazzo is a charming seafront town. It's particularly popular with young crowds from Bari who flock here on warm summer

nights to hang out around the picturesque **port** and **medieval centre**. Down by the seafront, the town's handsome **cathedral** merits a look before you select your evening's bar or restaurant.

22 Sunset at Molfetta

Molfetta's historic **port** (pictured left) is an uplifting sight with its bobbing fishing boats, palm trees and Romanesque **cathedral**. Attractive any time of the day, it's especially lovely in the evening when the sun sets and the limestone walls and stone buildings take on a soft, orange glow. The scene, once described by the poet Lord Byron, is one that will remain with you long after you've returned home.

BEST OF BEACH-HOPPING DOWN THE HEEL

Revel in the beauty of Puglia's two seas on this dash down the heel. Start on the Adriatic, discovering the various beaches of the Gargano. Favourites include the **Spiaggia di Vignanotica**, a cliff-backed beach with lovely green-hued waters, and the **Baia delle Zagare**, overlooked by two landmark rock stacks. Continuing down the coast, you can stop for a splash at **Lama Monachile** in Polignano a Mare and in the cooler waters of **Porto Ghiacciolo** at nearby Monopoli. Further south, crystalline blue waters await in the **Protected Marine Area of Torre Guaceto**. From here, head across the heel to the Ionian, where the fabulous white sandy beaches of **San Pietro in Bevagna** and **Punta Prosciutto** are quite magnificent. Push on down the coast and you come to **Gallipoli**, a hip summer hangout within easy striking distance of some of the Salento's best beaches. Chief among these are **Punta della Suina**, known as the 'Ionian Caribbean', and **Torre del Pizzo**. To finish on a real high, double back to the east coast and **Porto Badisco**. You'll have a great time here diving off the rocks into its transparent topaz waters and eating delicious sea urchins.



ITINERARY:

- Spiaggia di Vignanotica
- Baia delle Zagare • Lama Monachile
- Porto Ghiacciolo • Torre Guaceto
- San Pietro in Bevagna
- Punta Prosciutto
- Punta della Suina • Porto Badisco

LENGTH:
488 km
6 hr 46 mins (without stops)

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ROBERTOZILLI / SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Punta Prosciutto



Punta della Suina





TOP EXPERIENCES WINE TASTING

5 San Severo Cellar Tour

Go underground in the cellars that honeycomb the foundations of San Severo. These labyrinthine grottoes have been utilised by local winemakers for centuries and still today producers use them to store their wares. Chief among these are bottles of the town's prized *spumante*, made from the indigenous Bombino Bianco grape, and robust, full-bodied reds made from the Nero di Troia vine.

6 Primitivo in Manduria

In the province of Taranto, Manduria is the capital of Puglia's Primitivo production. Primitivo wines tend to be darkly-coloured, high in tannin and strong in both alcohol and flavour. Most are dry but there is a sweet variant, the Primitivo di Manduria Dolce Naturale, one of only four Pugliese wines to carry the DOCG (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita*) designation. To taste for yourself, and learn about the role wine-making has played in local life over

the years, visit the **Museo della Civiltà del Vino Primitivo**.

7 Sweet Wines

Puglia is best known for its strong, dry reds but the region's wine producers also cater to the sweet-toothed. Alongside the Primitivo di Manduria Dolce Naturale, the Moscato di Trani is a well-known sweet wine. Made from the white Moscato Bianco grape, it comes in two forms: Dolce Naturale, a naturally sweet table wine, and Liquoroso, a fortified liqueur wine. To get the best out of their sweet notes, try them with a plate of almond pastries or dried figs stuffed with almonds.

8 Taralli & Negroamaro

For a typical Salento pairing, take a dark Negroamaro wine, perhaps a Salice Salentino, and add a bowl of freshly-baked *taralli* (crispy, ring-shaped snacks made from flour, white wine and extra-virgin olive oil, and seasoned with fennel seeds or chili pepper). Taralli are served in bars and cafes across the region.



9 Susumaniello Vineyard Visit

One of Puglia's least known grape varieties is the Susumaniello. This native vine is used to make red and rosé wines, as well as sparkling rosés. It's often blended with Negroamaro grapes to produce intense, dark wines with aromas of cherry and raspberries. To taste for yourself, book a cellar tour at a Susumaniello vineyard in the province of Brindisi or Lecce.



TOP EXPERIENCES STREET FOOD

10 Made in Bari

Bari's vivacious streets are a paradise for street food fans. Wherever you go you're always within easy striking distance of a bakers' shop, a takeaway, or even a street seller, offering tasty local snacks. For a typical local bite order a slice of the city's celebrated *focaccia* (pictured). This comes with a thick, soft base topped with olives, sweet tomatoes, oregano and extra-virgin olive oil. Then there are *sgagliozze*, squares of salted fried polenta, and *popizze*, sweet balls of fried dough, sold in the streets of **Bari Vecchia**. Not forgetting, of course, the delicious local *panzerotti*.

11 Fast Food in Lecce

To accompany the city's baroque architecture, Lecce boasts some fine snacks. For something savoury, try a *rustico*, a pocket of puff pastry wrapped around a rich mix of tomato, mozzarella and béchamel sauce. You could also order a *puccia*, a flat bread typical of the Salento that makes great sandwiches. For something sweet,

you can't beat a *pasticciotto*, a case of crumbly shortcrust pastry filled with yellow, yolky pastry cream.

12 Gargano Goodies

To ward off hunger in the Gargano, the answer is a *paposcia*. Served in pizzerias in **Vieste** and across the area, this is a ciabatta-like sandwich made with focaccia-bread which has been baked in a wood-oven. Typical fillers include sweet, plump tomatoes, *caciocavallo* cheese, and turnip tops, known regionally as *cime di rapa*, but you'll find plenty of other options to choose from.

13 For meat lovers: Fornelli in the Itria Valley

As well as its mythical *trulli* houses, the Itria Valley is famous for its *fornelli* (butchers' shops where meat is sold, grilled, and served straight away). They're casual affairs but hugely popular with visitors, particularly in **Cisternino** where they're a veritable institution. Local specialities to try include *gnumareddi* (small rolls of lamb entrails) and *bombette* (balls of *capocollo* salami, ideally from **Martina Franca**, stuffed with cheese).





TOP EXPERIENCES RAW FISH & SEAFOOD STAPLES



14 Breakfast on Sea Urchins

There are more ways to enjoy raw fish than sushi and sashimi. The fishing folk of **Bari** have long enjoyed their snacks straight from the sea and it's a quintessential city experience to swallow down some fleshy sea urchins (*ricci di mare*) at the fish market on the Molo San Nicola. For a more relaxed vibe, head to the Salento where the beautiful cove of **Porto Badisco** is another top spot to sample delicious sea urchins.

15 Mussels in Taranto

Mussels (*cozze*) are a staple of menus across Puglia. But the

region's finest come from Taranto where they have been cultivated since time immemorial. They thrive in the waters of the Mar Piccolo thanks to the sea's temperature and particular salt levels. These are conditioned by the presence of 35 natural submarine springs, known locally as *citri*, which pump millions of litres of freshwater into the sea every day. The resulting mussels are prized for their delicate flavour and typically served in a tomato sauce with *tubettini* (mini-tubes of pasta).

16 Octopus Panino

Have a break from the usual round of pizza, panzerotti and focaccia and treat yourself to one of Bari's least-known street foods, a panino with *polpo* (octopus; pictured). There are variations on the theme but the traditional version, known in city dialect as *u' panin cu pulp arsteut*, comes with grilled octopus seasoned with extra virgin olive oil and perhaps a splash of freshly-squeezed lemon juice. To wash it down, the usual accompaniment is a jug of local craft ales.

SEAFOOD DECODER

Allievi Baby Cuttlefish – served whole, often raw, in Bari.

Cozze Mussels – star of many dishes, including Bari's famous rice, mussels and potato combo.

Polpo Octopus – this regional favourite appears in various guises: grilled, stewed, skewered, raw, in salads, as a panino filler.

Ricci di Mare Sea Urchins (pictured) – best eaten raw or in a simple spaghetti dish.

Tagliatella di mare Adult Cuttlefish – another Bari speciality, the cuttlefish is cut into strips and served raw.



TOP EXPERIENCES LOCAL LIFE

17 A Trabucco Sunset in Peschici

A feature of the Gargano's seascapes are the traditional fishing platforms that pepper the coastline between **Vieste** and **Peschici**. Known as *trabucchi*, these ancient contraptions are anchored to the rocks and with their complex system of beams, ropes and pulleys were used to haul up catches of mullet, seabream, redfish, and mackerel. Nowadays, they form an atmospheric backdrop for sunset aperitifs and seafood dinners on the Peschici waterfront.

18 Caffè Lecce

Few drinks are better suited to combatting the heat of a Salento summer than Lecce's signature iced coffee (pictured upper right). A silky combination of coffee, ice, and sweet almond milk, the *caffè leccese*, or *caffè salentino* as it's sometimes called, has earned renown across Italy since it was first mixed around 70 years ago. For the full Lecce experience, pair it with a rich, creamy *pasticciotto*.

19 Rolling Pasta in Bari

The pasta ladies of **Bari Vecchia** are as much a part of the local cityscape as the nearby Basilica of San Nicola. Sitting on the skinny lanes of the old town, they expertly hand-roll thousands of *orecchiette* (ear-like pasta shells; pictured below) a day. As tradition dictates they use only durum wheat flour and water to make the dough, and nothing more high-tech than a knife to shape the pasta shells.

20 Caffè Speciale in Polignano

Stopping off at a bar for a quick coffee is one of the great rituals of Italian life. Normally the coffee



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would be a short espresso or, in the morning, a cappuccino, but there are regional variations. One such is Polignano a Mare's *caffè speciale* (special coffee). First created by a local bar-keeper, this is made by adding lemon zest, sugar, whipped cream and a drop of Amaretto liqueur to a regular espresso. The result is a lovely, creamy *caffè* with just a hint of the hard stuff. And while you're in Polignano, make sure to sample some of its fantastic artisanal *gelato* (ice cream).



LIKE A LOCAL

Cook Pugliese-style

There's no better way of tapping into Puglia's culinary culture than by getting your hands into a pack of durum wheat flour. This is the prime ingredient of the region's famous *orecchiette* pasta, made so skillfully by the old girls of Bari Vecchia. To learn how they do it and to get an insight into the secrets behind the region's signature pastas, focaccias, and other specialities, don an apron and join a cooking class. Many *masserie* and *agriturismi* offer these or you sign up with a local cookery school.

Break Bread in a Pugliese Home

A meal in a Pugliese home is a promise of good things to come. To get the most out of the experience you should prepare yourself for a long, convivial affair. You'll also need to pace

yourself to get through the never-ending stream of dishes: *antipasti* (starters), *primo* (a pasta or rice dish), *secondo* (meat or fish), and *dolce* (dessert). Coffee and a *digestivo* (liqueur) round things off. And note, if you're ever invited to break bread in a Pugliese home, it's polite to take a tray of sweets from a local *pasticceria*.

A Morning at the Market

For a memorable Pugliese shopping experience head to a local produce market. These noisy, vibrant affairs are a regular feature of regional life. Their bumper stalls provide a multi-coloured showcase for fruit and vegetables, all local and all strictly in season, as well as cheeses and cured meats. You might also come across counters of glistening, silver-skinned fish and large buckets of mollusks and writhing octopuses.



21 Learn to Tie Tomatoes

As Pugliese as *trulli* and *taralli* are the bunches of tomatoes you'll often see hanging in trattorias and white farmhouses. The art of plaiting these bunches, known locally as *ramasole* or *'nzerte*, dates from the time when cotton was grown in the region and used to make thread to tie the tomatoes. To see how it's done, look out for courses and workshops run in *masserie* and *agriturismi*. To taste the tomatoes, you can't top a classic plate of *pasta e pomodoro* (pasta and tomato), perhaps in **Torre Canne**, famous for Puglia's prized *regina* tomatoes.

PUGLIA IN A BOTTLE

Work your way through Puglia's wine list on this head to heel tour of the region. Start with some *spumante* in **San Severo**, ideally after visiting the town's underground cellars. Then head down to **Lucera** to sample some ruby red *Cacc'e Mmitte*, produced mainly from the local Nero di Troia vines blended with Montepulciano and Sangiovese. Further south, **Trani** offers a sweet break in the form of its Moscato dessert wine. Inland, Nero di Troia, Bombino Nero and Aglianico vines thrive alongside white grapes such as Bombino Bianco, Greco, and Malvasia Bianca in the **Murge**. Three wines produced in this area carry the prestigious DOCG (*Denominazione di Origine Controllata e Garantita*) rating: Castel del Monte Bombino Nero, Castel del Monte Nero di Troia and Castel del Monte Rosso Riserva. Enjoy these and views over **Castel del Monte** in the area's vineyards.

Descending further, make for **Manduria** in the Province of Taranto. This is the capital of Primitivo, a dark-skinned grape that produces strong, intense wines such as the Primitivo di Manduria and the sweet DOCG-rated Primitivo di Manduria Dolce Naturale. South of here, you can try deep-red Negroamaro wines such as Salice Salentino in the sun-scorched **Salento**.



ITINERARY:

- San Severo • Lucera • Trani
- Murge • Castel del Monte
- Ruvo di Puglia
- Manduria • Salento



LENGTH:

439 km
6 hr (without stops)

Alberobello



Locorotondo



TRADITIONAL CUISINE & LOCAL PRODUCTS



TATIANA CUTRONE / SHUTTERSTOCK ©



Mussels

Mussels are one of Puglia's great seafood staples. They're especially prized in **Taranto** where they're famously cultivated in the placid waters of the Mar Piccolo. Hardcore aficionados might eat them raw but most people cook them and they work brilliantly well with spaghetti, black pepper and parsley. In Taranto, the local speciality is *tubettini con le cozze*, a delicious mix of mini pasta tubes with mussels and sweet tomatoes. In **Bari** they like their mussels oven-baked with rice and

potatoes, a dish known as *riso, patate e cozze* (pictured upper left).

Handmade Pasta

Puglia's signature pasta is its *orecchiette* (pictured upper right). A classic of the region's *cucina povera*, these 'small ears' of pasta are made with a bare minimum of ingredients, just durum wheat flour and water, and rolled by hand. They can be served with tomato sauces such as *ragù di brasciole*, a rich slow-cooked meat sauce prepared with veal rolls, but they're most famously partnered

with *cime di rapa* (turnip tops). Another famous pasta, typical of the Salento area, is *sagne ncannulate*. These rolled ribbons of pasta are traditionally served with tomato sauce and a topping of salted *caciocotta* cheese.

Beans and Chicory

The skillful use of humble greens has long been a hallmark of Pugliese cuisine. Turnip tops are served with *orecchiette*, and chicory, which flourishes in the Salento area, features in one of the region's oldest signature dishes – *capriata*

pugliese. This is a simple combo of chicory with a purée of fava beans (pictured), crowned by a generous drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil. Fava beans are grown across the region, from the Gargano, where Carpino's beans are recognized as a Slow Food speciality, to the dry fields of the Salento. Their creaminess combines with the slight bitterness of the chicory and olive oil to produce a tasty and surprisingly complex blend of flavours.

Pasta and Chickpeas

With its roots in Puglia's *cucina povera* and Arab-inflected history, *ciceri e tria* is a pasta speciality of the Salento. It's a flavoursome and typically simple dish which combines chickpeas with strips of pasta, some of which has been fried to provide a crunchy texture. There are several versions which include breadcrumbs or fried bread, or mix in salted anchovies.

Friselle

One of the Salento's most quintessential staples are its *frise*. Known also as *friselle* (pictured on p. 82 left) or, in the local dialect, *friseddhe*, these are rusks of dried, twice-baked bread. To eat, they are first softened in water and then dressed, typically with sweet cherry tomatoes, a drop of extra-virgin olive oil and a dash of oregano. Tuna, mixed with cucumber and chili pepper, is another favourite topping.

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In the past, they provided labourers and fishermen with a nutritious, easy-to-carry meal. Nowadays, they are popular as an *aperitivo* snack or a quick summer lunch.

Check out the Cheese

Puglia's cheeseboard is rich and varied, ranging from pear-shaped *caciocavallo podolico* (pictured upper right) and its spicy relative *pallone di Gravina* to flaky *cacioricotta* and delicate, cow's milk mozzarella. Particularly prized are the cheeses prepared with stretched curd (*pasta filata*), such as *mozzarella*,

stracciatella and *burrata*. To learn more about the age-old techniques used by the region's cheesemakers, search out a *caseificio* (dairy). Alternatively, stop by one of the many family-friendly *masserie didattiche* (educational farms) dotted across the region.

Sweet Treats

Even Italian speakers need a dictionary to navigate Puglia's vast dessert menu. Every city, town and village seems to have its own sweets and pastries, often named in the local dialect, and every

festival demands a specific *dolce*. *Pettole*, deep-fried dough balls, are a Christmas favourite, as are *cartellate*, shallow crowns of pastry which are fried or baked and sweetened with honey or *vincotto* (cooked red-grape must). *Scarcella* is an Easter treat, a sweet biscuit decorated with an egg. Then you have *sospiri*, mounds of sugar-glazed sponge cake filled with vanilla-infused cream, from Bisceglie, and *sporcamuss* from Bari. Meaning 'dirty your mouth' in the local dialect, these are small puff pastries filled with custard and sprinkled with icing sugar.

REGIONAL DELIGHTS

Several of Puglia's regional products are recognised by the Slow Food organisation and/or carry a protected designation of origin.

Gargano Citrus Fruits Oranges and lemons thrive in the Gargano, the only place on Puglia's Adriatic coast where citrus fruits are cultivated.

Clementines from the Gulf of Taranto

A cross between an orange and a mandarin, clementines are grown in the fields and rocky canyons of Palagiano, Massafra, Ginosa, Castellaneta, Palagianello and Statte.

Almonds Almonds flavour many Pugliese sweets and pastries. Particularly prized are the almonds from Toritto.

Tomatoes Important varieties include small, sweet Fiaschetto di Torre Guaceto tomatoes, good for sauces; the yellowish-orange Giallorosso di Crispiano tomatoes; and Manduria's sweet cherry tomatoes, traditionally eaten raw.

Figs from Fasano The area around Fasano and Torre Canne is known for its *fioroni*, large figs that are delicious eaten raw or as a gelato flavour.

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PUGLIA OVERNIGHT

From historic hotels to baroque B&Bs, seaside campsites and magnificent rural hideaways, Puglia's accommodation caters to all tastes and budgets.

Alternative options come in the form of tree-houses, castles and the Itria Valley's *trulli*. So whether you want to lie back on the coast, luxuriate in the country, or live it up in the city, there's an option out there for you.



A Pugliese masseria in the Itria Valley

Dwell in a Trullo

For an experience unique to the **Itria Valley**, book a room in a *trullo*. These centuries-old houses with their conical drystone roofs were designed to deal with Puglia's torrid summers and biting winters so while you won't find air con, their thick walls ensure a cool night's sleep in summer and a cosy sojourn in winter. Many have been resurrected as B&Bs or holiday rentals. UNESCO-listed **Alberobello** is Puglia's *trulli* capital but you'll find plenty of others dotted around the Itria Valley. Also in the valley, in **Locorotondo**, you can bed down in a *cummersa*, a white house with a steep, slanted roof.

Luxuriate in a Masseria

Puglia's *masserie* started life as farm estates, their stone buildings designed to house labourers and animals. Nowadays, many offer atmospheric holiday accommodation in the form of luxurious five-star resorts, rustic *agriturismi* (farmstays) or self-



catering apartments. They're a great choice if you want to experience a slice of traditional Pugliese life and indulge in authentic local food – some even offer cooking classes and wine and olive oil tastings. *Masserie* are spread across the region but hotspots include **Savelletri** near Fasano and the **Itria Valley**.

Bed down in Baroque Style

Lecce is Puglia's classic baroque city and many of its city-centre hotels and B&Bs are housed in handsome, baroque palazzos. You'll also find some wonderful baroque accommodation in **Nardò**

and other Salento towns. To the north, **Martina Franca** is another town whose baroque centre (see Palazzo Ducale; pictured upper left) offers atmospheric accommodation, mainly in B&Bs and apartment rentals.

Sleep in a Historic Centre

To experience the full Puglia effect, there's nothing like staying in one of its historic centres. These are generally the most beautiful part of any town or city, typically threaded through with narrow lanes, piazzas, churches and aristocratic palazzos. In Bari, for example, you can stay in **Bari Vecchia** (pictured upper right),



Bovino Castle

the historic heart of the city and epicentre of its modern bar scene. But wherever you go in the region, from Vieste to Gallipoli, it pays to check out the *centro storico*.

Alberghi Diffusi

A recent trend in Puglia's accommodation scene has seen the arrival of *alberghi diffusi* (literally 'scattered hotels'). These are hotels with rooms spread over several sites in a town or village, usually in old buildings that have been specially restored for the purpose. They provide an excellent way of staying in traditional style while

contributing to the upkeep of the local area. So whether you want to stay in a suite in a historic palazzo or an apartment by the sea, they're well worth considering. You'll find them across the region, from Troia and Peschici in the north to Altamura and Monopoli (pictured right) further south.

Tree Houses in Daunia

For an unforgettable experience, head north to the **Daunian Mountains**. Here, near the lovely village of **Biccari**, dubbed Puglia's 'Little Switzerland', you can overnight in a tree house.

These treetop lodges, which can accommodate families of up to four, promise a beautiful setting – in uncontaminated woods near Lake Pescara – and total tranquility. You really are off the beaten path here. But if a tree house is too mainstream for you, push the boat out even further and book a night in Biccari's bubble – a round, tent-like structure that offers sublime night-sky views.



Lay up in a Wine Resort

Wine buffs are well catered to in Puglia. As well as one or two wine resorts offering smart, country-chic accommodation on their country estates, many top-end *masserie* can arrange winery visits, tastings and courses run by local sommeliers.

Escape to the Country

Some of Puglia's best deals are to be had in the region's *agriturismi* (farmstays). These provide accommodation in traditional farmsteads and are often well-suited to families travelling with

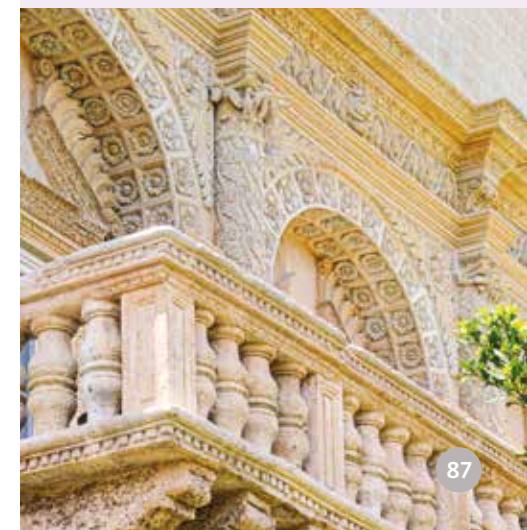
kids, with swimming pools and play areas. Some also have farm animals that the kids can pet, and organise fun, family-friendly activities. Others are more sophisticated, resembling upmarket rural resorts with facilities to match. As a rule, *agriturismi* serve excellent farmhouse food.

Wake up to the Sound of the Sea

Puglia boasts a whole host of seasonal campsites offering bargain accommodation and brilliant seaside locations. Most are large self-contained complexes with pitches for tents and mobile-home style bungalows, as well as pools, pizzerias and shops. They get very busy in high summer when many impose minimum-stay requirements. At the other end of the spectrum, the region has some fantastic beach resorts. Much frequented by Italian holidaymakers in the summer, these are often well-suited to families with child-friendly facilities and full-board packages available.

Castles & Monasteries

History has left Puglia's landscape dotted with medieval castles, convents and monasteries. Many are open to the public but some are in private hands and offer hotel or B&B-style accommodation. Comfort levels vary but what makes these places so special is the sense of history that pervades them and the original touches you'll find in their rooms and hallways – wood-beamed ceilings, original fireplaces, frescoes dating back hundreds of years.



PUGLIA THE RIGHT PLACE FOR YOUR EVENT

With its mild Mediterranean climate, fabulous cuisine, and fantastic array of indoor and al fresco venues, Puglia is an ideal location for your event. Whether that's a wedding, business conference or cultural event, the region offers excellent facilities and experienced planners who can ensure everything runs smoothly. The region is also well connected with international airports at Bari and Brindisi providing excellent transport links.



Venues

Puglia offers the full range of venues, from city-centre business hotels to gorgeous seaside resorts, from medieval castles to baroque palaces. Particularly popular are the region's atmospheric *masserie*. These are ancient farmsteads that have been converted into hotels and resorts. Many boast excellent business facilities as well as bucolic grounds ideal for weddings and romantic receptions. You'll find *masserie* dotted around the region, with some of the best in the Itria Valley and at Savelletri near Fasano.

A Taste of Puglia

Fabulous food is an integral part of the Puglia package. The region produces a wonderful seasonal larder for its army of chefs who are well-practised in event catering, whether that's serving a ceremonial wedding banquet or orchestrating dinner for a thousand conference-goers. Cooking classes and food tours are great group activities that work well as team-building exercises or as fun outings for wedding guests.



Teatro Petruzzelli, Bari



Lecce



MICE

Puglia is becoming an increasingly popular MICE destination, offering good transport links, inspirational venues, professional service and certified technical support. It's particularly well-suited to small to medium-sized events but can also cater to larger gatherings. For more detailed information, check out www.weareinpuglia.it, which has comprehensive information about the region, including useful contact details and accommodation lists.

Dramatic Venues

A recurring feature of many Pugliese cityscapes are the castles that loom over their historic centres. Ranging from hilltop forts to portside sentinels, these *castelli* provide epic settings for conferences and meetings. A good example is the Castle of Charles V in **Lecce**. Further north in **Bari**, you can give free reign to your creativity at the city's celebrated opera house. The Teatro Petruzzelli, Italy's fourth largest



CENTRO CONGRESSI FIERA DEL LEVANTE

Strategically located on the **Bari** waterfront, the Centro Congressi Fiera del Levante is Puglia's largest events venue. The sprawling site, within easy reach of the city centre, boasts 300,000 sq m of exhibition space and has up to 24 meeting rooms with seating capacity from 40 to 4000 people. Its main exhibition hall is a contemporary multifunctional space furnished with support facilities and cutting-edge conference technology.

theatre, sets a dramatic stage and has seating for 1500 people. Nearby, the Teatro Margherita has space available for events overlooking the sea.

Team Building

Puglia's great outdoors provides multiple opportunities for team-building fun. To shape a crew ready to tackle new challenges and stormy seas, there's wonderful sailing on the region's waters. For land lubbers, you can take to the countryside on horseback, cruise around the **Itria Valley** in a vintage convertible, or pedal along on a cycle tour. For an altogether different experience, you could learn how to make *orecchiette* pasta and other regional dishes by taking cooking classes.

Excursions

Once you've finished the business of the day, there are many opportunities for excursions to Puglia's historic towns and natural sites. Alternatively, you could take a tour of local wineries or olive oil producers to sample their wares straight from the press.



SHOPPING

Puglia's shops and markets provide plenty of scope for souvenir-hunting. From designer boutiques showcasing the latest fashions to artisanal workshops selling hand-crafted ceramics or delis specialising in local delicacies, you're sure to find something to take home.

Catch a Festival

Time your trip right and you could catch one of Puglia's great annual events. The region has a full calendar of food fairs, religious

TECH SUPPORT

As well as professional service, Puglia's venues provide the latest tech, ranging from free wifi to microphones, monitors and maxi-screens. Audio and visual systems can be provided along with teams of support staff to help with any hitches. Simultaneous translation is offered by some of the larger venues.

ceremonies, music fests and traditional celebrations, ranging from spooky Easter processions to wild summer concerts.



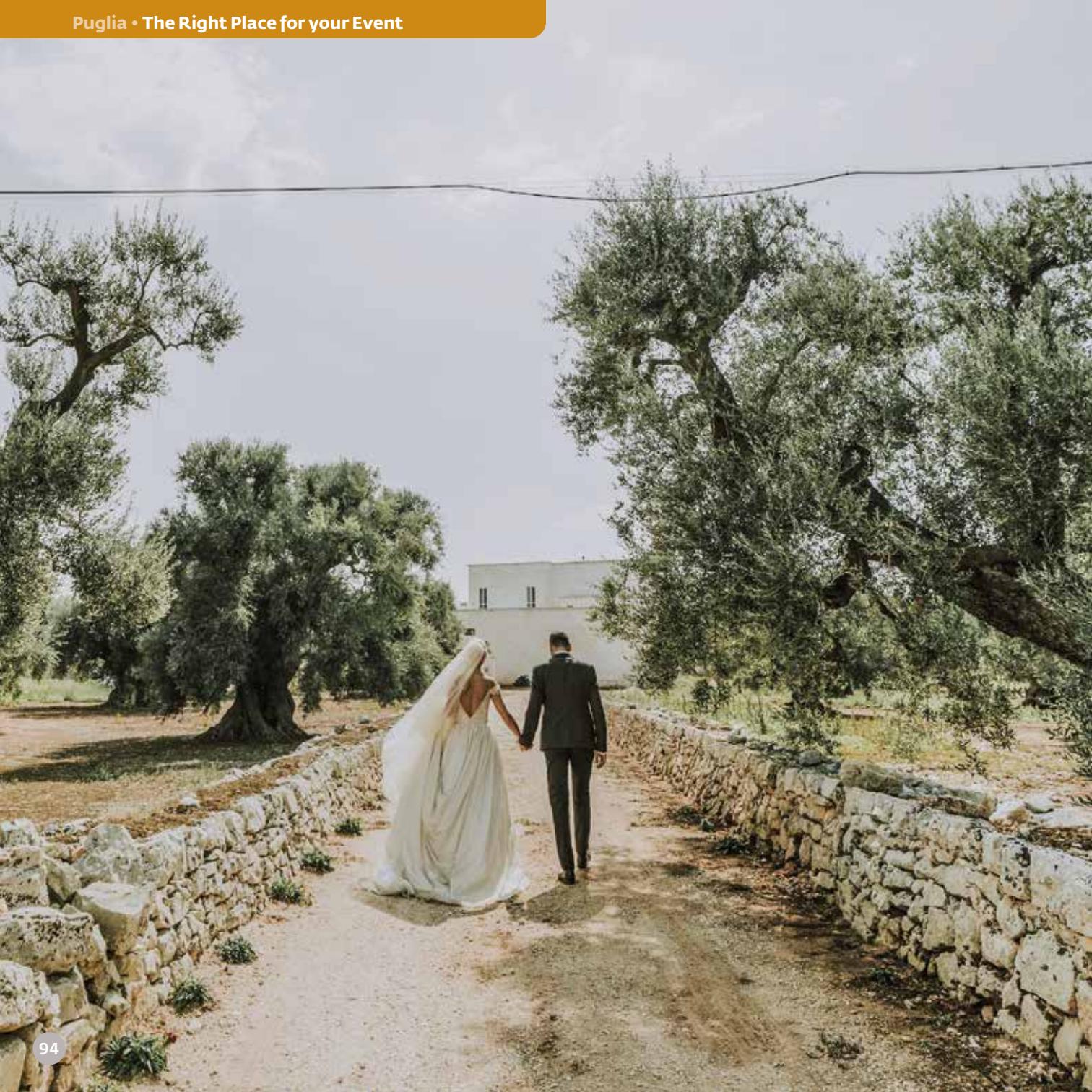
WEDDINGS

Follow in the footsteps of Justin Timberlake, Jessica Biel, Willem Dafoe and Maggie Gyllenhaal and tie the knot in Puglia. The region has all the ingredients for a spectacular wedding – stylish and romantic venues, high-quality accommodation and English-speaking professionals ready to help plan every detail. Puglia also has a long history of hospitality and civil ceremonies can be provided as well as religious services for all faiths.

Tying the Knot in Puglia

Puglia's iconic *masserie* are among the region's hottest wedding venues right now. They're ideal for hosting traditional Pugliese weddings, complete with al fresco dining, beautiful country-chic backdrops, and, of course, plenty of music and dance. Organisers can set you up with local musicians but for a truly unforgettable experience go for a band specialising in the *pizzica*. This traditional Pugliese folk





music will have your guests up and dancing in seconds with its surging beats and infective rhythms.

Beachside Vows

To add a touch of movie magic to your big day, go for a beach wedding. There are numerous resorts and *masserie* in the region which have private beaches and staff skilled in organising seaside weddings. Prime areas to consider include the **Gargano**, **Polignano a Mare**, and the sun-kissed **Salento** in the south of the heel.

Trulli Venues

For an exotic and brilliantly unconventional location, you can't beat a *trullo*. With their pointy drystone roofs, these ancient whitewashed houses are unique to the **Itria Valley**, about an hour's drive south of Bari. Several venues in the area boast their own *trulli*.

Wedding Fashions

As well as venues, music and food, Puglia's got your wardrobe covered

too. The region's designers create some of Italy's most in-demand bridal fashions.

The town of **Putignano** is renowned for its bespoke wedding dresses, while ateliers in **Martina Franca** produce gowns for a number of big international designers.

Flower Design

For bouquets and floral arrangements, **Terlizzi** is the place to go. Dubbed the 'city of flowers', the town is known for its greenhouses and nurseries and you'll find a number of flower designers ready to advise and cater to your floral requests.

Honeymoon

To round off your Puglia trip on a high note, follow your wedding with a honeymoon in the region. Depending on your style, that could be a dreamy beachside holiday, a cultured city break, a regional road trip or an adrenalin-soaked activity vacation.



THE PUGLIESE MENU

Nowhere puts on a better wedding spread than Puglia. Typically your feast will start with an aperitif and a lavish *antipasto* buffet. This might include freshly-made mozzarella, local cold cuts, tempura-fried seafood and *panzerotti* made to order. After this, you'll probably be invited to take your seat for the formal meal. This will usually comprise a choice of fresh pasta dishes, meat or fish mains, and a sumptuous selection of desserts. Events will eventually culminate with the ceremonial cutting of the wedding cake.



Puglia Discovering

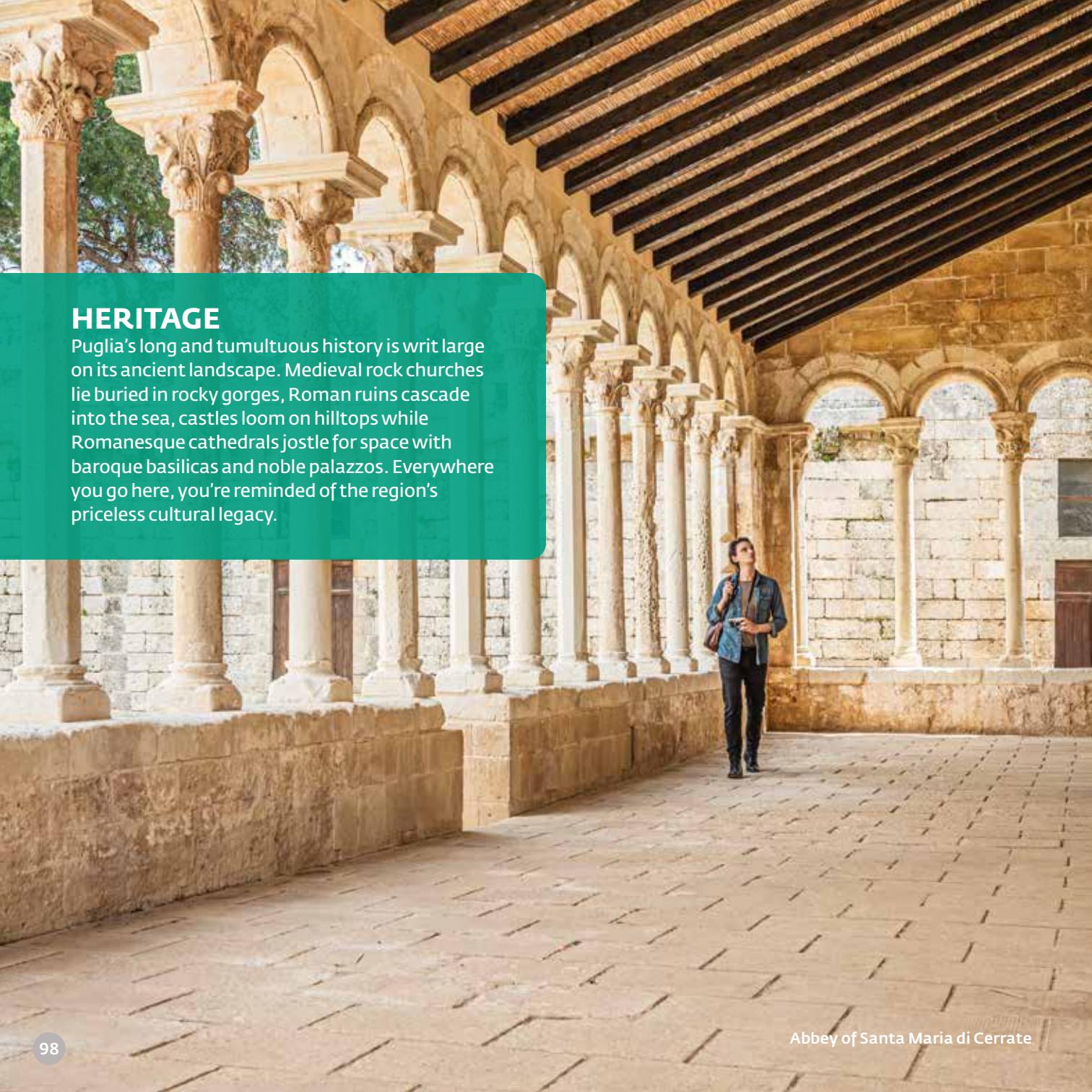
HERITAGE HANDICRAFT & DESIGN CINEMA

CELEBS & LOCAL
AMBASSADORS

Travel in Puglia and you don't need to dig deep to discover its remarkable historical legacy. Traditional arts and crafts point to the region's rural past while Norman castles and medieval cathedrals dot the landscape, reminding of turbulent times and providing inspiring locations for modern-day film-makers.

HERITAGE

Puglia's long and tumultuous history is writ large on its ancient landscape. Medieval rock churches lie buried in rocky gorges, Roman ruins cascade into the sea, castles loom on hilltops while Romanesque cathedrals jostle for space with baroque basilicas and noble palazzos. Everywhere you go here, you're reminded of the region's priceless cultural legacy.



Abbey of Santa Maria di Cerrate

Visit Puglia's Seaside Archaeological Site

On the coast near Fasano, the **Archaeological Park of Egnazia** showcases the ruins of Gnathia, an ancient Messapian and Roman city. Parts of the city walls (pictured) and necropolis remain from the Messapian age while panels describe the layout of its Roman-era buildings. Artefacts unearthed on the site are on display in a small museum. To explore further you'll need a swimming costume and snorkel – the ruins of the port and acropolis lie on the seabed just off the small beach.

Marvel at Modern Art and Ancient Ruins at Siponto

Contemporary art goes hand in hand with classical architecture at the **Archaeological Park of Siponto** near Manfredonia. The park showcases the scarce remains of Siponto, an ancient Roman port and important medieval religious centre. Dominating the site is the Romanesque **Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore** and

VOLOBERO / SHUTTERSTOCK ©



artist Edoardo Tresoldi's clever **installation**. This, set over the ruins of a paleochristian basilica, recreates the church's original form in wire mesh.

Rocking around Puglia's Rupestrian Churches

The ravines that carve up the province of Taranto are home to a series of atmospheric *chiese rupestri* (rock churches). Particularly impressive are the medieval churches that lie hidden in the rocky landscape around **Massafra** and **Mottola**. Guided

tours take in these cavernous *chiese*, the best of which feature wonderful Byzantine-style frescoes. For some especially striking artwork search out the **Church of San Nicola** near Mottola.

Castle Cruising

From the iconic **Castel del Monte** to the Norman castle of **Deliceto**, Puglia is awash with medieval forts and castles. Built by the region's Norman, Swabian and Aragonese rulers, these remain landmark sights to



this day. **Bari** and **Taranto** both boast formidable castles as do several of the region's smaller towns, including **Conversano** (pictured bottom right), **Gioia del Colle** and UNESCO-listed **Monte Sant'Angelo**.

Roaming around Romanesque Cathedrals

You don't need to be an architect to appreciate the stark beauty of Puglia's Romanesque cathedrals. Most of these date to the 11th and

12th centuries when they were built as part of an ecclesiastical drive to impose the authority of the Roman Church. The result of this medieval building boom was a string of magnificent Romanesque churches, including the Basilica of San Nicola in **Bari** and the cathedrals of **Trani**, **Bitonto** (pictured left), **Ruvo di Puglia**, **Molfetta** and **Troia**.

Revel in Baroque Beauty

Baroque architecture found fertile soil in Puglia when it swept into the region in the 17th century. It flourished in towns like **Martina Franca**, **Francavilla Fontana** and **Nardò**. However, it was in **Lecce** that it reached new heights, as *barocco leccese* gave rise to a series of monumental churches and palazzos. Buildings such as the **Basilica of Santa Croce** and the **Duomo** embody the style in all its exuberant glory.

Discover Trani's Jewish Quarter

An elegant coastal town best known for its seafront cathedral,

Trani has a fascinating Jewish history. In the heart of the historic centre, you'll find two synagogues, the **Synagogue Scolanova** and the **Synagogue of Sant'Anna**. This latter houses a small museum charting the history of the town's Jewish community, from its origins as a group of exiles from Muslim Spain to its forced expulsion in 1510.

On the San Nicola Trail in Bari

It's a long way from the North Pole but **Bari** is the last resting place of the saint the world reinvented as Santa Claus. The relics of St. Nicholas were brought from Turkey in 1087 and have been housed in the **Basilica**



of San Nicola ever since. Bari's great signature cathedral also plays a starring role in the events held to celebrate the saint's feast day on 6 December. These kick off with a special dawn mass which draws crowds of devoted locals despite the early 5am start.

Watch out for Puglia's Coastal Watchtowers

Travel Puglia's lengthy coastline and you'll notice that many cliffs and beach fronts are guarded by stubby watchtowers (such as Torre Santa Maria dell'Alto near Nardò; pictured). These were constructed between the 11th and 16th centuries to warn against enemy attacks, first by Saracen pirates, then by Turkish invaders. They eventually fell into disuse in the 18th century. Since then, villages have grown up around some, while others have been used to house small museums. Many simply stand as landmarks.

Uncover Isolated Gems

Away from the tourist spotlight, Puglia harbours many historic and



architectural gems. Two striking examples, managed by the FAI (the Italian National Trust; www.fondoambiente.it), are the **Abbey of Santa Maria di Cerrate** and the **Abbey of SS Trinità di Monte Sacro**. The first, 7 km from Squinzano, is a restored Norman abbey featuring fine Byzantine frescoes and a 13th-century loggia. The second, a ruined 11th-century monastic complex near Mattinata, enjoys an atmospheric location on Monte Sacro and can only be reached on foot.

Follow Puglia's Drystone Walls

A distinct feature of Puglia's rural landscape are the grey drystone walls that snake across the stony countryside. The techniques used to construct these, the same as those used in the *trulli* of the Itria Valley, have long been passed down from one generation to the next. In 2018 UNESCO added 'the art of dry walling' to its list of customs, arts, events and practices that collectively comprise the 'Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity'.

HANDICRAFT & DESIGN

Puglia's rural history and folk traditions have given rise to a vibrant arts and crafts scene. Artisans working across the region produce everything from hand-woven baskets and embroidered lacework to ceramics, saintly sculptures and papier-mâché dolls. Style-conscious visitors can also choose between cutting-edge fashions and furnishings created by Puglia's trend-setting designers.



Grottaglie

Hand Embroidery

The traditional art of hand embroidery has deep roots in Puglia and still today regional artisans produce high-quality lace, embroidered goods and crochet items. **Locorotondo** is a traditional production centre renowned for its lace, bedspreads, curtains and embroidered sheets. Nearby, **Alberobello**, **Cisternino** and **Martina Franca** are also known for their needlework traditions. Other notable centres include **Triggiano** and **Capurso** near Bari and, in the Salento, **Maglie**, **Galatina** and **Nardò**. In the deep south, producers in **Tiggiano** supply textiles to the Parisian fashion house Dior.

Weaving

Puglia has a long history of artisanal weaving, and some manufacturers still use ancient techniques to produce traditional patterns on hand-operated wooden looms. You'll find boutiques selling hand-woven fashions throughout the region, but for some of the best, head to **Vico del Gargano** and **Otranto**.



Ceramics

Ceramics have been made in Puglia since the time of the ancient Messapians. The region's signature style features cream colours and simple blue patterns. Many items are also emblazoned with a cockerel, a traditional symbol of fertility. Puglia's ceramics capital is **Grottaglie**. Here you can pick up crockery and ceramic homeware

in the 50 or so workshops that dot its Ceramics District. Other renowned ceramics towns include **Cutrofiano**, **San Pietro in Lama**, **Martina Franca**, **Canosa**, **Lucera**, **Lucugnano**, and **Laterza**, known for its exquisite majolica pottery. Nearby, **Gravina in Puglia** specialises in rooster-shaped whistles, once used by shepherds.



PUGLIA'S PUMI

To take home an authentic piece of Puglia, consider buying a *pumo* (plural, *pumi*). You'll see these colourful ceramic buds all over the place, displayed on balconies, placed on stairways, in gift shops. Named after the Roman goddess for fruitful abundance, these ancient good luck charms were traditionally given as wedding gifts.

Basket-Making

The rural craft of basket-making makes good use of Puglia's natural assets, incorporating wicker and rush along with twigs of olive wood. As well as baskets, these

age-old weaving techniques are now used to make mannequins and even small artworks. Towns to look for wicker-ware include **San Severo**, **Cassano**, **Alberobello**, **Trani**, **Monopoli** and **Castellana Grotte**.

St. Michael Figurines

Since the Middle Ages, **Monte Sant'Angelo** has been home to craftsmen known as *sammecalère*. These artisans specialise in crafting statuettes depicting the Archangel Michael. Traditionally, they would use marble or wood but figurines are now mostly made from plaster, alabaster or synthetic materials. Look hard enough, though, and you can still find the odd example of a hand-crafted statuette.

Paper Dolls

Traditional hand-painted paper dolls once served as amulets. People would use them to keep pebbles they'd collected at the Sanctuary of San Michele to ward off evil spirits. To get your hands on one of these ancient good luck charms try **Peschici** and the towns around the **Gargano**.

Papier-mâché and Lecce Stone

Crafting papier-mâché models is no child's play in Puglia. **Lecce** has a tradition of papier-mâché model-making that dates back to the 17th century and still today you can buy papier-mâché figurines in the city. For models on an altogether larger scale, check out the vast figures that star in **Putignano's** famous carnival parades.

Lecce is also renowned for its local stone (*pietra leccese*). Stone quarrying is one of Puglia's historic industries and with 399 quarries spread across the region, it remains an important business. Lecce stone is much appreciated for its malleability and appears in many creative guises, including as popular lamps.

Lights & Furniture

If you're in the market for an original light fitting, look no further. In **Lecce**, you'll find a wide choice of lamps sculpted out of the local stone, while in **Polignano a Mare** you can marvel at the exquisite glass and tin creations of designer Peppino Campanella.



Puglia also excels in the production of stylish furniture. Its most famous exponent is Natuzzi, the celebrated brand founded in Taranto in 1959 and now based in **Santeramo in Colle**.

Puglia Design Store

In **Bari**, the Puglia Design Store showcases the creations of regional artisans and designers. Items on sale range from framed prints to fashions and modern furnishings. The store, backed by the Puglia Region and Municipality of Bari, was

conceived as part of a development project to create a zone around the former Teatro Margherita and fish market dedicated to contemporary art and culture.

Social Art

Shopping goes hand in hand with social support in **Lecce**. At Div.ergo you can buy everything from wall clocks to papier-mâché puppets and dolls, all designed and made by people with mental disabilities as part of an on-going social inclusion initiative.



TUPUNGATO/SHUTTERSTOCK ©

Clothing and Accessories

Shops and boutiques across the region carry the latest fashions as well as handmade clothes and accessories. In **Lecce** you can shop for hip bags and bijou jewellery as well as funky, hand-woven clothes. **Martina Franca** is known for its leather upholsterers, many of whom export across the world. Similarly, **Putignano** is renowned regionally for its high-quality, custom-made wedding dresses.

CINEMA

Puglia lends itself perfectly to set-jetting. With its handsome cities and rugged landscapes, the region has long provided inspiration for film-makers and recent years have seen it provide the backdrop to a number of high-profile productions.



The filming of *Loose Cannons*

Apulia Film Commission

The Apulia Film Commission (www.apuliafilmcommission.it) is the region's main reference point for producers and film-makers. Its role includes promoting Puglia as a location, organising logistical support, providing funding and sponsoring regional film festivals. In just over 10 years it has been involved with more than 500 productions.

007 – A License to Thrill

Cinema's most famous spy dropped into Puglia in autumn 2019. **Gravina di Puglia** set the epic stage for several scenes in *No Time to Die*, the latest James Bond film. Star of the show was the town's spectacular Aqueduct bridge which appeared in one of the film's headline stunts. This breathtaking sequence involved Daniel Craig leaping off the towering structure as his trigger-happy enemies close in.

Wonder Woman

Castel del Monte doubled as part of the fictional island of

Themyscira during the 2016 shoot of *Wonder Woman*. Puglia's signature castle was one of several Italian locations used in the blockbuster, alongside Matera in neighbouring Basilicata and Palinuro in Campania.

Fairy-Tale Settings

Castel del Monte also appeared in director Matteo Garrone's 2015 *Tale of Tales*. It was one of two regional *castelli* that provided a suitably medieval setting – the other was **Gioia del Colle's** formidable Norman-Swabian castle. Garrone returned to Puglia with Roberto Benigni in 2019 to film his version of *Pinocchio*. Several regional locations were used on the shoot including **Ostuni, Polignano a Mare, Fasano, Noicattaro, Altamura** and the **Alta Murgia National Park**.

Loose Cannons

Another big-name Italian director who knows Puglia well is Ferzan Ozpetek. His 2010 comedy *Loose Cannons* – Special Jury Prize at Tribeca Film Festival – featured

locations in **Gallipoli** and **Lecce**, a city to which he returned for his 2014 film *Fasten Your Seatbelts*, along with locations in **Otranto** and **Maglie**.

Walking on Sunshine

Coming in the wake of Abba tribute film *Mamma Mia!*, the feel-good 2014 musical *Walking on Sunshine* sets 80's hits against Pugliese backdrops. Locations in **Lecce, Nardò** and **Presicce** are jauntily juxtaposed against a soundtrack of pop classics by the likes of Simple Minds, Human League, Wham and many others.

TV Series

As well as cinema films, Puglia has also starred in TV productions. UK viewers were introduced to the delights of its regional cuisine by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver in an episode of his 2018 series *Jamie Cooks Italy*. A different perspective to the region was provided by *Homes by the Med*, a British Channel 4 series which dedicated an episode to the region, showcasing property in **Polignano a Mare** and **Alberobello**.

Itria Valley

CELEBS & LOCAL AMBASSADORS

In recent years, Puglia has become a favourite stomping ground of the rich and famous. Hollywood royals, rock icons and supermodels have all holidayed here while several A-list stars have put down roots in the region, buying houses in the Salento. Some have even tied the knot here, kick-starting a trend for country-chic weddings in the region's luxury masserie.

Hollywood in the Salento

'The Queen' is a big fan of Puglia. The Oscar-winning actress Helen Mirren is one of several Hollywood stars who have bought properties in the region. She and her husband, US director Taylor Hackford, purchased a 16th-century *masseria* near **Tiggiano** in 2007 after she'd fallen for the area on a promotional visit to the Salento International Film Festival.

Nearby, **Tricase** is another favourite with cinema royalty. Meryl Streep has a *masseria* there and, in 2020, Whoopi Goldberg was reported to be looking for a holiday home in the area. Other cinema stars at home in the Salento include Gerard Depardieu, who adores staying in **Lecce's** baroque centre, and legendary director Francis Ford Coppola who is said to have a property near **Ugento**.

VIP Holidaymakers

Puglia is one of Italy's hottest holiday destinations and every summer its coast hums with activity. In the past few years, a Who's Who of international VIPs has been spotted vacationing here. Celebrity sightings have included David and Victoria Beckham who recently travelled to the region to hang out with their children at a luxury *masseria* at **Savelletri**. Madonna also brought her kids to the region when she celebrated her 59th birthday in a Pugliese *masseria* in 2017. Fellow rock icon, Bono was spotted in the region in 2018 as he and his entourage boated into **Gallipoli** on the Ionian coast.

Celebrity Weddings

After a series of A-list celebs got married in Puglia, the region has become the destination of

choice for a statement wedding. Willem Dafoe married Italian actress Giada Colagrande here in 2005 and then, in 2009, Maggie Gyllenhaal exchanged vows with Peter Sarsgaard in a 15th-century convent in the **Salento**. More recently, Justin Timberlake and Jessica Biel stole the spotlight when they tied the knot in a famous five-star *masseria* in the province of **Brindisi**.

Fashion Show

The eyes of the fashion world turned to **Lecce** in summer 2020 for the Christian Dior fashion show. Models showcased the maison's haute couture collection in the baroque Piazza del Duomo which had been spectacularly illuminated for the occasion.

PUGLIA FESTIVALS & LOCAL TRADITIONS



San Marco in Lamis's *fracchie*

EVENTS CALENDAR

February

🌟 **Carnival Putignano** puts on Puglia's most extravagant carnival celebrations. The highlight are a series of parades featuring fantastical floats peopled by giant papier-mâché figures. **Manfredonia** is another town known for its exuberant carnival floats and costumed fun.

March

🕯️ **Holy Week** The run-up to Easter is marked by events across the region. Particularly dramatic are the nocturnal processions in **Taranto** which see teams of barefoot penitents march through the streets in sinister white robes. Elsewhere, white-robed *pappamusi* parade through **Franca Villa Fontana**, costumed actors recreate the Passion in **Troia**, and confraternities chant their way around **Vico del Gargano**.

DAYS OF FIRE

Travel to Puglia in winter and you'll find fires blazing across the region. On **11 January**, firestarters in **Castellana Grotte** light up to a 100 bonfires (*fanove*) to celebrate the Madonna of Vetrana, the town's patron saint. Five days later, it's the turn of **Novoli** in the Salento. To honour St Anthony the Abbot, a huge 20m-high bonfire or *focara* (pictured), reckoned to be the largest in the Mediterranean, is burned all night, warming the crowds who come to fan its flames. In the Gargano, **San Marco in Lamis** plays host to one of the region's great Easter spectacles. On Good Friday a series of vast torches (*fracchie*) are lit and transported through town to light the path for the Virgin Mary to search for Jesus.



April

🍴 **Libando** Fast food fans can eat their fill at **Foggia's** street food festival. Expect tastings, workshops and demonstrations by international chefs.

🌟 **Bifest Bari's** International Film Fest draws directors and

cinema buffs to the city, hosting premieres, movie labs, meetings and retrospectives.

🏰 **Federicus** Costumed parades and historical re-enactments take to the streets of **Altamura** as the city pays homage to its medieval founder, Frederick II.

EXPERIENCE A RELIGIOUS FESTIVALS

Puglia's villages, towns and cities take their duties seriously when it comes to celebrating patron saints and important religious events. Festivities are heartfelt affairs, involving church services and solemn processions as well as street decorations and specially-prepared food. High-profile examples include the San Nicola celebrations in **Bari** and **Taranto**'s somber Easter processions. For a really illuminating experience, **Scorrano** puts on a spectacular lightshow to commemorate St Dominica (pictured), while events get racy in **Ostuni** when costumed horse riders take to the streets to celebrate Sant'Oronzo.



May

 **Festa di San Nicola Bari** celebrates its patron saint with services in the Basilica of San Nicola and costumed processions. To commemorate the arrival of St Nicholas' relics from Turkey, a flotilla of boats accompanies a statue of the saint to the shore.

 **Palio di Taranto** Costumed oarsmen from **Taranto**'s 10 traditional districts take to the sea for boat races held to commemorate the city's patron saint, St Catald.

 **Festa del Soccorso** Daredevils known as *fujenti* run through an obstacle course of fireworks at **San Severo**'s big annual celebration. Much noise and smoke ensue.

 **Maggio Musicale Salentino** Jazz, pop, classical, even rock concerts are staged at the Teatro Paisiello in **Lecce** for this annual music festival.

 **Festival del Cinema Europeo** Cinema buffs descend on **Lecce** for a week-long binge of film screenings, debates and meetings.

June

 **Regata Internazionale Brindisi-Corfù** One of the principal regattas in the Adriatic, this international sailing event draws teams from across Europe to **Brindisi**.

 **Festa dei Lampioni** On the night of the summer solstice, **Calimera** bursts into colour as light sculptures (*lampioni*) go on display in the historic centre. Made out of paper, they are a haunting spectacle.

July

 **Viva! Festival** Dance beats echo around the picturesque streets of **Locorotondo** as this important electronic music fest moves into town.

 **Valle d'Itria Festival** One of Puglia's biggest summer events, this music festival sees classical music and opera take to the piazzas and palaces of **Martina Franca**'s baroque centre.

 **Festa di Santa Domenica** Visitors flock to **Scorrano** in the first week of July to marvel at the stunning light displays put on in honour of St Dominica.

 **Accadia Blues** This renowned blues festival, held on the third weekend of July, draws international performers to the small village of **Accadia** in the Daunian Mountains.

 **Orsara Musica Jazz Festival** Big name jazz artists play to enthusiastic audiences in the Dauni village of **Orsara di Puglia**.

 **Festa di Cinema del Reale** Experimental cinema by Italian and international filmmakers headlines at this

four-day **Salento** film fest. It moves around but recent editions have been held at Corigliano d'Otranto.

 **Locus Festival** From David Byrne to Ms Lauryn Hill, this hip music festival attracts international stars and homegrown bands to **Locorotondo** in late July.

August

 **Torneo dei Rioni** Costumed processions take to the streets of **Oria** to commemorate the wedding of Frederick II and Isabella of Brienne as the town's four historic neighborhoods battle it out for the prized Palio.

 **Notte della Taranta** First held in 1998 as a homage to the *pizzica* folk dance, this itinerant festival is hugely popular as it travels through the region. It culminates in a mega-concert in **Melpignano**.

 **Festa di San Rocco** Crowds gather outside the Santuario di Torrepaduli in **Ruffano** on the night of 15 August to watch duelling couples perform a traditional 'knife dance' to the sounds of the *pizzica*.

THE PIZZICA, PUGLIA'S SPIDER DANCE

Dating from ancient times, the *taranta* folk dance, known as the *pizzica* in the Salento, is a staple of Puglia's festivals. It has its origins in a kind of musical exorcism that was traditionally used to treat victims of spiders' bites.

The spider's venom was thought to induce a state of hysterical apathy – a condition known as *tarantism* – for which the only known cure was to dance frenziedly for hours on end, spurred on by musicians playing tambourines at breakneck speed. To try for yourself, join the massed ranks of concert-goers who flock to **Melpignano** in August for the huge **La Notte della Taranta** festival.





CELEBRATE THE GRAPE HARVEST

Wine buffs coming to Puglia in early October can celebrate the grape harvest. A number of regional wine producers open their doors to visitors, offering guided cellar tours and tastings. For more information, check the website of the Movimento Turismo del Vino Puglia (www.mtvpuglia.it), an organisation dedicated to promoting wine tourism in the region.

 **Mercatino del Gusto di Maglie** Stalls showcasing the tastes of the Salento provide rich pickings for food fans in the historic streets of **Maglie**.

 **Raduno dei Suonatori di Tarantella** UNESCO-listed **Monte Sant'Angelo's** medieval castle provides the atmospheric setting for two days of *tarantella* folk music and dance.

 **Carpino Folk Festival** One of the most important folk music festivals in Puglia, in the heart of a small village of **Carpino**, Gargano.

 **PhEST** An International festival of photography and arts which is set in **Monopoli**: dozens of expositions displayed in several locations in the historic centre. From August to November.

September

 **Festa del Pescatore** The fishing folk of **Manfredonia** pay homage to their protector, St Andrew, on 1 September. A statue of the saint is borne through the streets and

CANTINE APERTE

More than 50 wineries open their cellars at the end of May for the annual Open Cellars event, promoted by the Movimento Turismo del Vino. A second edition is held in late September to mark the autumn grape harvest.

escorted out to sea. Music and fireworks add to the fun.

 **Disfida di Barletta** Costumed performers in **Barletta** re-enact a legendary duel that saw 13 Italian knights take on 13 French soldiers in 1503. This highlights three days of fun and medieval mayhem.

 **Red Bull Cliff Diving** The world's top cliff divers provide thrills and gasps of awe as they plunge into the waters of **Polignano a Mare** from heights of up to 27 m.

 **Castel dei Mondi** Experimental theatre takes to the historic streets of **Andria**

for this annual cultural bonanza. Occasionally, events are staged at the nearby Castel del Monte.

 **I Dialoghi di Trani** Renowned writers and intellectuals take to the stage in **Trani** for this dialogue-driven event featuring performances, exhibitions, tours and tastings.

October

 **Cardoncello on the Road** In the last week of October, **Minervino Murge** pays homage to its juicy autumnal mushrooms, a mainstay of the local diet.

 **World Press Photo Bari** This well-known annual press photography contest is held in **Bari** by World Press Photo Foundation, an independent, non-profit organization founded in 1955 and based in Amsterdam.

November

 **Fucacoste e Cocce Priatorije** Lanterns and bonfires are lit in **Orsara di Puglia** to mark the union between the living and the dead. Locals feast on grilled meat and a special pastry called *muscetaglje*.

VISIT A PRESEPE VIVENTE

As traditional to an Italian Christmas as *panettone* and midnight mass are the *presepi* (nativity scenes) that adorn many homes. In Puglia they take the tradition even further and re-enact the nativity in what's known as *presepi viventi* (living nativity scenes). These are staged in grottoes and atmospheric outdoor settings across the region, from **Deliceto** in the Daunian Mountains to **Tricase** and **Sanarica** in the Salento. Other towns renowned for their *presepi* include **Canosa di Puglia**, **Mottola**, **Massafra**, **Crispiano** and **Pezze di Greco** near Fasano.



December

 **Lights of Christmas** The pointy roofs of **Alberobello's** UNESCO-listed *trulli* are bathed in light and Christmas motifs as the festive season gets into full swing.

 **Presepi viventi** Grottoes across the region double for Bethlehem as actors recreate the nativity scene. A popular *presepe* is staged in **Crispiano** near Taranto.

 **Alba dei Popoli** See in the new year in **Otranto**. DJs and bands fuel the festive mood with events held through to Epiphany on 6 January.



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