

ITALY – MASSERIE E PIZZICA-CIAO PUGLIA!

ITINERARY

Day 1 – Arrival in Puglia: Bari → Mattinata - 1h40

Pick up your rental car at the airport in Bari, the region's capital city. **Bari** lies on a fertile coastal plain facing the Adriatic Sea and is surrounded by the **Murge Plateau**. **Olive and almond trees** and vineyards paint the vast expanse of the plateau, where ancient *masserie* (farmhouses) served as a means of defense against raids long ago.

While visiting Bari, we suggest you visit **Saint Nicholas Basilica, the Cathedral of Saint Sabino, and the Swabian-Aragonese castle**.

Then, you will drive to the **Villa Scapone in Mattinata** to spend the first night of your journey.

The Villa Scapone is a quiet, exclusive corner located in the heart of the Gargano promontory. It is a unique hotel known for its class and peaceful atmosphere, completely surrounded by nature. From the hotel, walk toward the end of the property. There, you will find a ladder on a rock. Climb up and jump into the sea.

Overnight at the Villa Scapone or similar.

Day 2 – Mattinata → Matera - 2h16

Get up early, enjoy your breakfast, and go hiking in the Gargano.

The **Gargano National Park is a pearl in nature**. It includes the **Foresta Umbra**, the marine reserve of the **Tremiti Islands**, and the coastal **Lakes of Lesina and Varano**. Nature trails abound, making the park perfect for exploring and admiring the lush vegetation that gives shelter to its many animal and bird species.

Peschici is a village perched on a high cliff, overlooking the sea. **Vieste**, with its narrow alleys and ups and downs, is crowned by arches as white as snow, and **Mattinata** is surrounded by an expanse of centuries-old olive groves.

Monte Sant'Angelo is located on the southern spur of the Gargano headland. It overlooks **Tavoliere** on one side and the **Gulf of Manfredonia** on the other.

Overnight in Matera at *la Casa di Lucio* or similar.

Day 3 – Matera → Martina Franca - 1h20 (B)

After breakfast, visit **Matera; declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site** in 1993. The city rises on a limestone plateau, showing a magnificent abnormality – a central fissure, forming a **230 to 260-ft. high canyon**, intersected by the Gravina torrent.

Spend your morning exploring Matera's alleys and staircases, the caves and luxury buildings, the rock-hewn churches with frescoes, and the old houses excavated in the rock.

Then, drive to **Alberobello** and have lunch in a *trullo*, a tiny restaurant. Alberobello is the heart of the **Itria Valley** and is the capital of the **fairytale trulli**, which are conical buildings that symbolize Apulia and a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

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At the end of the afternoon, take a walk through **Martina Franca**, a sumptuous baroque town, interesting for its noble palaces and fascinating monuments.

You will stay 2 nights at *la Masseria Fumarola*. The mansion house includes 14 suites, equipped with all the modern comforts. Sleep in a "palmento," the area once employed for the production of wine, or choose an apartment in which each room is a different "trullo," the traditional cone structure characteristic of the local architecture.

Overnight in Martina Franca at *la Masseria Fumarola* or similar.

Day 4 – Martina Franca → Ostuni → Monopoli → Martina Franca (B)

Today, your first stop will be the **Castellana Grotte**, known for its intriguing underground caves.

Then, visit **Monopoli and Polignano a Mare**. **Monopoli** is a medieval town along the Adriatic Sea, with narrow cobblestoned streets, whitewashed houses, and a Baroque cathedral. It is also the **best place to eat fresh fish**.

A narrow beach enters the bay surrounded by high cliffs, on which the houses of the historical town center of **Polignano a Mare** stand. The town, of Greek origin, stands on a karstic promontory that shows a continuous front of buildings, as impenetrable as a defensive wall against attacks from the sea. Do not forget to taste a wonderful handmade gelato (ice cream), which the town is famous for.

Overnight in Martina Franca at *la Masseria Fumarola* or similar

Day 5 – Martina Franca → Lecce - 1h20 (B)

Today, we suggest you spend most of your day in **Ostuni**, one of the most stunning cities in southern Italy. Ostuni is famous for the **dazzling effect of its whitewashed houses**, and it is a genuine and charming example of **Mediterranean architecture**.

The city of Ostuni is a series of levels, staircases, small roads, alleys, and arches. Hints of the Middle Ages abound – you will notice them in every view to the sea, in the portal of a palace, in the walls of a convent, or the front of a church.

Tonight you will stay at the Palazzo Casotti. In the heart of the historic center of Lecce, in front of the Celestini Palace and the Basilica of Santa Croce, the highest expression of the Baroque stands the ancient residence that bears the name of the noble 18th-century family from Venice: Palazzo Casotti.

Overnight in Lecce in the Palazzo Casotti or similar.

Day 6 – Lecce → Uggiano - 50 min (B)

After breakfast, explore Lecce.

Lying on a plain at the foot of the Salento Plateau is **Lecce** – the "**Florence of the South**" – one of the region's most interesting cities and especially known for its typical **17th-century architecture**. The city is characterized by magnificent and rich ornamentation that made this typical architecture the definition of "**Leccese Baroque**." The imaginative and meticulous sculpting work was facilitated by the use of local stone, flexible and easy to inlay.

A visit to Lecce can begin with **Piazza Duomo**, once used as a fortress and today considered the most elegant "salon" in the city.

Not far away, **Piazza Sant'Oronzo** displays the city's entire history. The Roman period is visible in the ruins of the Amphitheatre that becomes the exceptional stage for theatrical performances.

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Not to be missed is a visit of the **Basilica di Santa Croce**, where the inspiration of master masonry is visible in every part of the monumental façade that anticipates the beauty of its interior, a harmonious balance between the sobriety of the classical style and the splendor of Lecce's Baroque.

In the afternoon, drive **from San Cataldo to Otranto**. The Adriatic coast offers landscapes of extraordinary beauty: **white cliffs contrast with the blue of the sea** and are interrupted occasionally by a **sandy shoreline, the green of the maquis**, or pools of brackish water separated from the sea by narrow strips of land.

Overnight at *the Masseria Montelauro* – Masseria Montelauro was originally a traditional farmhouse, built in 1878. The striking light and local colors are reflected in its design, which has retained the ancient stone walls and attractive old olive trees. It is a charming and peaceful place to end your stay.

Day 7 – Uggiano → Otranto → Santa Maria di Leuca → Gallipoli → Uggiano (B)

After breakfast, we recommend a visit to **Otranto**, Italy's most eastern town. The historic city center is surrounded by mighty walls and dominated by a **castle built in the 15th century** by Ferdinand I of Aragon, as well as a cathedral with a **beautiful mosaic floor** (12th century) depicting the history of the period.

Then, have a nice lunch in **Santa Maria di Leuca**, which sits on the edge of Puglia, the “**heel of the boot.**”

In the afternoon, visit **Gallipoli, the Pearl of the Ionian Sea**. You will pick up on Gallipoli's oriental influences – in its scents, in its alleys rich with monuments and churches, and in its crystal clear sea.

Overnight at *the Masseria Montelauro*.

Day 8 – Uggiano → Brindisi –Final day in Puglia

Drop off the rental car at the airport in Brindisi.

DETAILS

- ❖ **Tour duration:** 8 days
- ❖ **Group Size:** 1 person minimum
- ❖ **Start on:** All year long
- ❖ **Country visited:** Italy – the Puglia region only
- ❖ **Comfort:** Medium to high – 4 star-hotels
- ❖ **Level of difficulty:** Easy
- ❖ **Transport:** Automatic rental car
- ❖ **Accommodation:** Private double room

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❖ **Additional Information:** Passport needed at the moment of booking

❖ **What's included:**

-7 hotel nights in Masserie, Hotel, Palazzo

-7 breakfasts at the hotels

-8 days of automatic rental car: VW GOLF PLUS 2.0 TDI (A) or similar.

(Superior car category on request.) Unlimited Mileage - CDW - Liability reduction any standard -TP liability reduction standard - Theft charges airport 16%- 21% of VAT.

❖ **What's not included:**

-International airfare. We strongly advise that you purchase an open-jaw flight; arrival in Bari, departure from Brindisi.

-Lunches and dinners

-Tips and personal expenses

-Personal insurance

Tips from the team:

-Puglia is a popular destination for Italians during weekends. If you plan to spend your day on the beach, arrive early in the morning or you might not be able to find a spot available (especially during summer!).

-At restaurants, you will often be charged for bread, tap water, and kitchen cutlery. So do not be surprised!

-When you park your car, pay attention to the signs and ask a *carabiniere* (policeman) if necessary. Vehicles are towed away easily!

-La siesta italiana: most stores and supermarkets close from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. so it is best to go shopping in the morning. This is the South of Italy, and the sun shines hot.

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