

ITINERARY

Day 1

Arrive Bari, Transfer to Hotel

Welcome to Puglia! Upon your arrival at the Bari airport, meet your Guardian Angel and transfer together by private vehicle to your hotel. The balance of the day is yours at leisure to relax at your hotel after your arrival flight.

Accommodation Choices:

Borgo Egnazia: Inspired by Apulia's rich traditions, yet thoroughly contemporary and minimalist in its style, Borgo Egnazia is a true masterpiece of architecture where the main element is the typical white tufa stone. The narrow alleys of the Borgo Village are reproduced according to Apulia's most historic traditions and are surrounded by the most enchanting Arabian gardens. Overlooking San Domenico Golf course, the hotel is just a few steps away from the Adriatic sea and offers magnificent views of the Apulian countryside. The 184 luxurious rooms and apartments are decorated with soothing shades of white, an abundance of tufa rock, soft lighting and white furniture - all adding up to a serene setting. There are four bars and three onsite eateries - the main restaurant, Due Camini, offers traditional Pugliese food, as well as four swimming pools, a 1800-m² wellness centre, three on-site tennis courts and a private beach club in Savalletri, just under a mile away. This family friendly hotel is ideal for guests seeking a sociable and fun stay amidst the stunning Apulian countryside.

Masseria Torre Maizza: Opening in May 2019, Masseria Torre Maizza is located in the most glamorous destination on the Italian Adriatic coast. Inspired by the sensational landscapes of Puglia and the ethos of Rocco Forte Hotels, it exquisitely blends local heritage with contemporary luxury and unparalleled service. Surrounded by ancient olive groves, the renovated 16th century masseria will be filled with thoughtful design accents and details to create a unique sense of place, from the stunning Olga Polizzi-designed rooms and suites to the romantic sunset rooftop bar and elegant restaurant overlooking the swimming pool. The resort also features a 9-hole executive golf course, a private beach club and an indulgent spa.

Accommodation Choices: Borgo Egnazia ; Masseria Torre Maizza

Day 2

Alberobello & Locorotondo B

Founded in the 15th century by the Counts of Acquaviva, the UNESCO World Heritage site of Alberobello contains the largest concentration of perhaps the most famous of all of Puglia's monuments: the cone-shaped dwellings known as trulli. The origin of these charming structures was practical in nature: the Counts granted tax-free land and domicile rights to immigrants from the surrounding lands on the condition that their houses should be easily demolished in the case that the King of Naples ever found out that they were evading taxes!

Their particular construction – without any use of a binding material – ensured that the houses could easily be reduced to a mere pile of stones in a hurry, leaving no trace of their former function.

Continue with your guide to Locorotondo. Officially one of the Borghi più belli d'Italia - the most beautiful villages in Italy - crown-shaped Locorotondo sits majestically atop a hill overlooking the countryside. Whitewashed houses with external stone staircases and balconies adorned with flowers await visitors to the town, which welcomes world-weary travellers to the pleasures of the slow life. (4 hours, driver and guide)

Accommodation Choices: Borgo Egnazia ; Masseria Torre Maizza

Day 3

Monopoli & Polignano a Mare B

Monopoli (from the greek: monos - polis, that is unique city) still preserves those distinctive characteristics which make it one of the most authentic and fascinating maritime cities in Puglia. The town sits tranquilly overlooking the Mediterranean much as has for centuries past, when it was ruled in turn by Greek settlers, Romans, Byzantines, Normans, Angioins, Spanish, Austrians, Bourbons and Venetians. Gazing at the old port today, it's easy to imagine that little has changed over the millennia.

Continue with your guide to Polignano a Mare. Dramatically pitched atop a cliff at the edge of the sea, with white houses huddled atop one another 80 feet above vibrant azure waters, the medieval village of Polignano a Mare is a sight to behold. No mere fishing village, this strategic town of Greek origin was a bishopric for over 1,100 years. With the help of your guide and discover Polignano's historical charm and natural beauty.

Accommodation Choices: Borgo Egnazia ; Masseria Torre Maizza

Day 4

Ostuni & Visit to an Underground Olive Oil Mill B

Known as the “White City”, Ostuni is a charming example of Mediterranean architecture with a gleaming white splash of sun-drenched streets and quaint cobbled alleyways, where hints of the middle ages can be seen around every corner. Along with your guide, visit the Rione Terra district which sits at the heart of the medieval walled village. Narrow streets, stairways and arches unfold between the white of the houses, broken only here and there by the ochre of the monuments.

The Ostuni area is famous for its monumental olive trees: massive contorted giants that can live for over 3,000 years! Today you’ll have the chance to visit an olive oil producer with an ancient underground mill as you take a magical trip back in time to discover how the local peasant culture, based on olive oil production, evolved from Roman times to the present. Did you know that Puglian olive oil was once quoted on the London Stock Exchange and was used to fuel all of the streetlights in London and Paris? This commodity was considered the “liquid gold” of its day. (4 hours, driver and guide)

Accommodation Choices: Borgo Egnazia ; Masseria Torre Maizza

Day 5

Lecce B

After breakfast this morning, check out from your hotel and head south with your driver to Lecce.

The most monumental of all of Puglia’s towns, Lecce is a baroque delight. From imposing and harmonious Piazza del Duomo to the gorgeously masterful Santa Croce, seemingly every building, street and angle of the city is imbued with artistic inspiration and decorative beauty. Known as the “Florence of the South,” both for its walkable scale and for its architectural stagecraft, Lecce is wonderfully poetic by day and particularly suggestive at night, when the town comes to life and the lights add a sense of heightened drama to the nocturnal cityscape.

This afternoon, meet your guide to explore the city on foot. Sights include Piazza del Duomo, the Basilica of Santa Croce and the Roman amphitheater. (3 hours, walking guide)

La Fiermontina Urban Resort: La Fiermontina is an urban resort of 16 unique guestrooms and suites built around a 17th century private home in the heart of Old Lecce, known for its Baroque architecture and storied past. Set amid the baroque structures of Puglia's historic city of Lecce, La Fiermontina is a modern-day masseria that mirrors its storied surroundings. This private retreat makes for a memorable holiday in Puglia. Olive trees surround the swimming pool in the sculpture garden, a rarity in the old quarter and the restaurant offers a modern, light take on traditional Pugliese cuisine.

Accommodation: La Fiermontina Urban Resort

Day 6

Gallipoli Excursion with Wine Tasting B

Of antique eastern origins, the name Gallipoli stems from the Greek Kale' polis, meaning "beautiful city". The historic town center, with its narrow lanes, baronial palaces, dazzling white terraced houses and reflections of the sea, still breathes an ambiance of arresting Mediterranean charm and seaside beauty. Along with your guide, visit the medieval town, actually an island surrounded by high walls, and enjoy a panoramic walk.

The waters off Gallipoli offer up a veritable feast, which you can discover for yourself down at the fisherman's market. Here, it's a local tradition to enjoy a glass of white wine and a dish of crudità di pesce – fish cruditàs – with a dash of olive oil and black pepper directly in front of the stalls.

En route back to your hotel, enjoy a wine tasting at a local vineyard. Vine cultivation in Puglia preceded the first contact between the local population and the Phoenician merchants, who made their way to these shores around 2,000 B.C. Later Greek colonists would bring with them their own vines, and were more than likely astonished to find well-tended vineyards already flourishing in the region. Today's top regional varietals include Primitivo (known in America as Zinfandel), Negroamaro, Aglianico and Susumaniello for the reds, and Falanghina, Moscato Bianco, Minutolo and Malvasia Bianca for the whites. (4 hours, driver and guide)

Accommodation: La Fiermontina Urban Resort

Day 7

Otranto & Visit to a Dairy Farm B

Meet your guide this morning and travel to Otranto. The easternmost city of Italy, Otranto has always been the “bridge” that connected Italy and the eastern part of the Mediterranean. Walking through the old town enclosed by Aragonese walls overlooking splendid azure crystalline waters, it’s easy to succumb to the charm of its white houses and alleys paved in stone. Founded by the Greeks, the city assumed increasing importance in the Byzantine period as a commercial, political and religious center as a major port of trade with the Orient. The whole medieval town center, appearing like a giant stronghold, reminds visitors of the permanent menace posed by the Turks which culminating in the tragic invasion of 1480. Otranto’s cathedral, certainly the town’s most important monument, houses a spectacular mosaic pavement from the 12th century: a curious blend of pagan, Old Testament and New Testament imagery which synthesizes the culture and imagery of an era.

En route, enjoy a visit to a local dairy farm located along the gorgeous coastal road known as the Litoranea Salentina. This area is the place where the poet Virgil imagined the landing of Aeneas in Italy in his epic work the Aeneid. Here in this land dominated by scrubland, steep cliffs covered with myrtle plunge into an incredible azure sea, the Cape of Otranto. On the farm’s pasturelands more than a thousand head of sheep graze on the precious Mediterranean flora. Enjoy a visit and cheese tasting in this beautiful corner of paradise whose silence is broken only by the sounds of nature. (4 hours, driver and guide)

Accommodation: La Fiermontina Urban Resort

Day 8

Matera B

After breakfast this morning, check out from your hotel and transfer together with your driver to Matera.

Continually inhabited for over 10,000 years, Matera – La Citta’ dei Sassi – is considered among the most ancient on earth. The city is an authentic open-air museum attesting to the extraordinary human adventure from the Paleolithic to the present. The aura in Matera is, in a word, magic. The town is a disarming blend contrasts, a hymn to beauty, an inimitable tangle of cave-dwellings, magnificent baroque palaces and beautiful stone churches in a land that knows no temporal discontinuity. At dusk the city and its biblical landscape resembles an enormous, stupendous crèche. This UNESCO World Heritage Site, unique in its genre, has been declared the 2019 European Capital of Culture.

This afternoon along with your guide, trace your way through the uninterrupted presence of man in this area, from the Paleolithic to the present day. Witness first-hand the main stages of the evolution of

human history as you make your way through the Sassi: from the dark caves of the Murgia inhabited by our oldest ancestors to the rock-hewn churches of religious communities to the elegant streets of the Piano, rich in seventeenth-century monasteries and palaces. Descend into the large voids of deep cisterns and canals once used for water collection. (4 hours, walking guide)

*Please note that visits to / stays in Matera require steep walking.

Sant'Angelo Luxury Resort: Sant'Angelo Luxury Resort features 21 rooms composed of suites, superior suites and deluxe rooms located in an attractive complex of historical buildings. After careful restoration, the 18th century local Royal court building, the old cave houses and cave church of Sant'Angelo have been given new life and turned into charming spaces. Experience the true magic of the Sassi, with all the comforts of a contemporary and exclusive resort.

Accommodation: Sant'Angelo Luxury Resort

Day 9

Castel del Monte B

Evocative. Spiritual. Indecipherable. Castel del Monte is one of Puglia's most profound monuments. The mysterious origins of the castle, built by Frederick II – one of the most powerful Holy Roman Emperors of the Middle Ages and head of the House of Hohenstaufen – continue to intrigue historians to this day. Many scholars have noticed a fascinating correspondence between the characteristics of the castle and various esoteric, alchemic and astrologic symbols, which in turn speak of the particular nature of the sovereign: an educated man, lover of the arts, close to the East, Islam and the doctrines of magic. It is evident, for example, the repetition of the number eight - the infinity symbol, the compass rose and the number of universal authority - and octagonal in shape was said to be the cup of the Holy Grail. It is also evident how the proportion and orientation of the castle can be linked to particular astrological events, and the ratio of the measurements follow Euclid's rule of the "golden number" or "divine golden proportion". (4 hours, driver and guide)

Accommodation: Sant'Angelo Luxury Resort

Day 10

Depart B

Today your driver will transfer you to the airport to check in for your departure flight.