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Italy with Italians

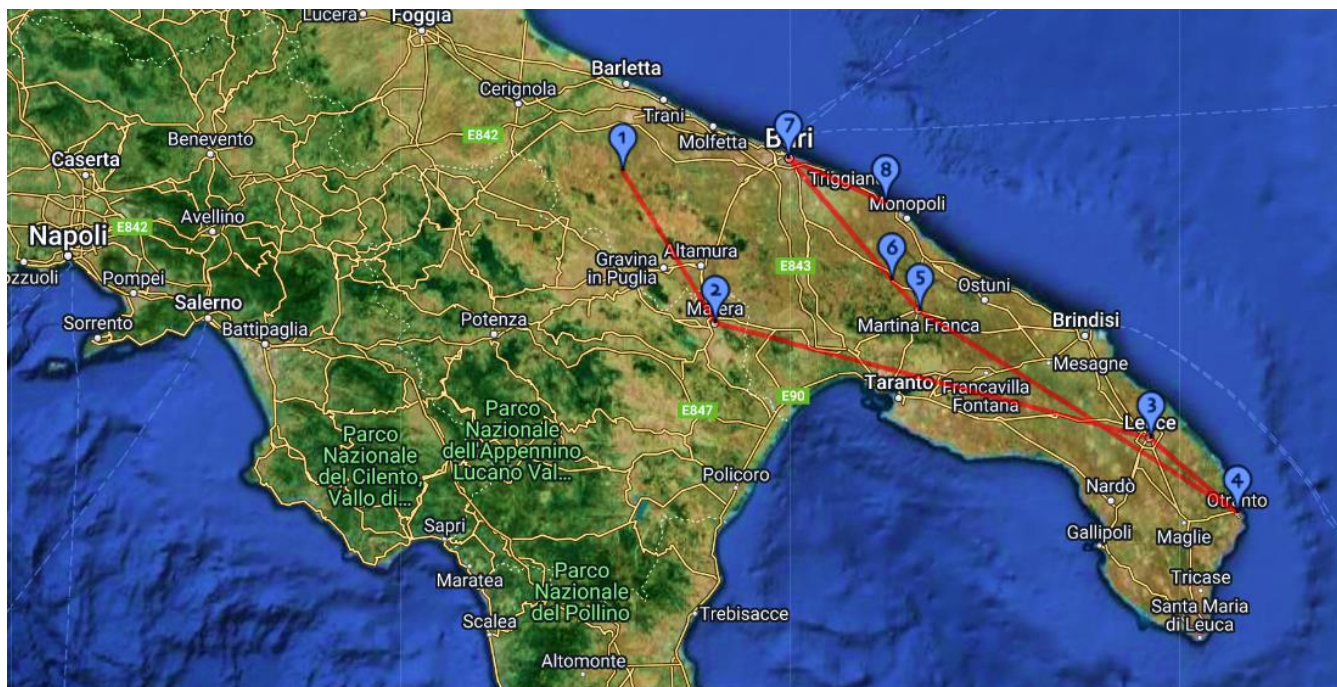
FEDERICO TOUR

Stunning Puglia and Matera in 8 days

DAY-BY-DAY ITINERARY



Eight days at the discovery of Puglia with its seas of olives, transparent seas and exceptional food. From mysterious Castel del Monte to Matera, the perfect set, then Salento with Lecce, the “Florence of the South”. Alberobello and its fantastic houses, and finally Bari, the “door to the East”.



TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

- Castel del Monte, the fortress of mystery
- Matera, the city of stones
- Lecce, the “Florence of the South”
- Salento, crossroad of civilizations
- Alberobello, living in Trulliland
- Martina Franca and Ostuni, the white cities
- Bari, a meeting point between East and West

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAY	ACTIVITIES INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAM
Day 1 Castel del Monte & Trani	- Full-day excursion to Castel del Monte and Trani - 1-hour private walking tour of Castel del Monte with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> – Free time in Trani - Transfer to your accommodation in Matera <i>Overnight in Matera city centre</i>
Day 2 Matera	- 3-hour private walking tour of Matera city centre with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> - Transfer to your accommodation in Lecce area <i>Overnight in Lecce area</i>
Day 3 Lecce	- Full-day excursion to Lecce - 3-hour private walking tour of Lecce city centre with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> - Visit of a local wine cellar with tastings <i>Overnight in Lecce area</i>
Day 4 Salento	- Full-day excursion to Otranto area – Free time - Visit of a local olive oil mill with tastings <i>Overnight in Lecce area</i>
Day 5 Martina Franca	- Full-day excursion to Martina Franca – Free time - Mozzarella and Burrata Making Class in an ancient Masseria - Transfer to your accommodation in Martina Franca area <i>Overnight in Martina Franca area</i>
Day 6 Alberobello	- Full-day excursion to Alberobello – Free time - Pugliese Cooking Class in a typical Trullo <i>Overnight in Martina Franca area</i>
Day 7 Bari	- Half-day excursion to Bari city centre - 3-hour private walking tour of Bari city centre with an <u>Authorised Tourist Guide</u> <i>Overnight in Martina Franca area</i>
Day 8 Ostuni & Polignano	- Full-day excursion to Ostuni and Polignano a Mare – Free time <i>Overnight in Martina Franca area</i>

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- **Accommodations with Continental Breakfast (*):**

- Day 1: 3* to 5* Hotel in Matera city centre
- Days 2 to 4: 3* to 5* Masseria in Lecce area
- Days 5 to 8: 3* to 5* Masseria in Martina Franca area

(*) The Hotel list is available upon request

- **Transfers (**):**

- Day 1: Transfer to your accommodation in Matera city centre
- Day 2: Transfer to your accommodation in Lecce area city centre
- Day 5: Transfer to your accommodation in Martina Franca area

(**) All transfers by private car (2 pax) / minivan (3 to 6 pax) / minibus (7 to 10 pax)

- **Private Guided Visits / Tours / Activities (***):**

- Day 1: Full-day excursion to Castel del Monte and Trani - 1-hour private walking tour of Castel del Monte with an Authorised Tourist Guide
- Day 2: 3-hour private walking tour of Matera city centre with an Authorised Tourist Guide
- Day 3: Full-day excursion to Lecce - 3-hour private walking tour of Lecce city centre with an Authorised Tourist Guide - Visit of a local wine cellar with tastings
- Day 4: Full-day excursion to Otranto – Visit of a local olive oil mill with tastings
- Day 5: Full-day excursion to Martina Franca – Mozzarella and Burrata Making Class in an ancient Masseria
- Day 6: Full-day excursion to Alberobello - Pugliese Cooking Class in a typical Trullo
- Day 7: Half-day excursion to Bari city centre - 3-hour private walking tour of Bari city centre with an Authorised Tourist Guide
- Day 8: Full-day excursion to Ostuni and Polignano a Mare

(***) All tours by private car (2 pax) / minivan (3 to 6 pax) / minibus (7 to 10 pax)

- **Admission tickets:**
 - Castel del Monte in Andria area
- **Full emergency assistance 24 hours/day by our Back Office**
- **List of recommended restaurants and deli shops along the itinerary**
- **All taxes**

NOT INCLUDED IN THE PRICE

- All transfers and other services not specifically mentioned in the above program
- Meals, wine and beverages
- Porterage fees at every accommodation
- Camera or Video fees
- Tipping for local guides and drivers
- Laundry, telephone calls and other expenditures of personal nature
- Travel / Vacation insurance

OPTIONS

- Pick up at Bari Airport /Railway Station on the day before the start of the tour
- Accommodation in Trani area the night before the start of the tour
- Drop off at Bari Airport /Railway Station at the end of the tour
- Other options upon request

TOUR MAIN FEATURES

CASTEL DEL MONTE

Recognized as a World Heritage Site in 1996, Castel del Monte is a brilliant example of medieval architecture located on a hill in the Murge area. Commissioned by the eclectic and cultured Frederick II, Duke of Swabia, Emperor of the Sacred Roman Empire, the Castle is an exceptional work for the perfection of its forms and the fusion of cultural elements from different periods and places. The Lions at the monumental entrance are typical of Romanesque art, while the friezes that decorate some parts of the castle belie Classical inspiration. And the floor's design and materials are partly reminiscent of Islamic art.



The number 8 is the principal factor in the castle's plan: 8 sides of the castle, 8 rooms on the ground floor and first floor, arranged to form an octagon, and 8 the massive octagonal towers.

It is still unclear what led Frederick II to build this brilliant piece of architecture. An air of mystery surrounds it and is thus the fount of many legends and the charm of this unique place.

MATERA

Matera is one of the oldest cities in the world, whose territory holds evidence of human settlements from the Paleolithic and has been without interruption until today. Touring Matera is like experiencing a forgotten past - you feel like setting foot in a nativity scene when you visit this charming city in Lucania. It's no coincidence it's referred to as "the second Bethlehem" and was the setting for Mel Gibson's movie "The Passion" and the last James Bond, "No time to die".

Matera is widely known as the city of the "**Sassi**", the original urban nucleus, developed from the natural caves carved into the rock and subsequently modelled in increasingly complex structures.



In the 1950s, when the inhabitants who lived in the caves dug out of the mountain were forced to abandon those dwellings to settle in modern districts, no one would have ever thought that those grottos - the Sassi - would have become the symbol of a reborn city. UNESCO added the Sassi of Matera to its list of World Heritage Sites in 1993 as a whole and a millennial way of life to be preserved and handed down to our descendants. In fact, it was recognized as a model for living harmoniously with the environment while integrating with it and taking advantage of resources without disturbing the environment.

Geologists call it calcarenite, and ordinary folk refer to it as "tuff": it's the rock surrounding

Matera that this land's master artisans learned to work with in ancient times. This brittle, adaptable material is abundant in the mountain that dominates the city, so it seemed only natural for the people from Matera to go up there and dig out that rock to build a home. The extracted material was processed to make the façade of the dwelling. After the first home, others were constructed until the network of houses, tunnels and alleyways became that magical place called Sassi - a gigantic sculpture, a miracle of town planning!

In Matera, you'll discover one of the most beloved Italian breads. "Pane di Matera" is a bakery product for which only hard wheat semolina and sourdough are used. The characteristics to recognize the bread of Matera are the shapes, croissant or high bread, and a straw-yellow crumb. But besides bread, you'll not miss other local specialities such as the Caciocavallo cheese or the "Lucanica" sausage.

LECCE

Lying on a plain at the foot of the Salento Plateau is Lecce - the "**Florence of the South**" - one of the most exciting cities in the region for its architecture, typical of the 17th century.

Of ancient origins, the city experienced two distinct periods of prosperity: the Roman era and the Kingdom of Naples. Under both, the construction of buildings, monuments, and mansions increased significantly. These new structures were characterized by magnificent and rich ornamentations that earned this typical architecture the definition of "Leccese Baroque". The imaginative and meticulous sculpting work was facilitated by the fact that the local stone is 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. The grandeur of the Duomo, the work of Zimbalo, Cino and Penna, the five-story-tall bell tower, Palazzo Vescovile (Bishop's Palace), and Palazzo del Seminario (Seminary) mark the perimeter of the square, one of the monumental works that best represent the magnificence of Lecce's style.



Not far away, Piazza Sant'Oronzo narrates the city's entire history. The Roman period is visible in the ruins of the Amphitheatre that becomes the exceptional stage for theatrical performances in the summertime, and in part by the high Column - on which stands a bronze of St. Orontius, depicted in the act of blessing - erected in the 17th Century utilizing some of the Roman columns positioned on the Ancient Appian Way. Palazzo del Seggio, known as the "Seat," hosting important art exhibitions, and the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie, with its interesting frescoes and works sculpted in wood, are the very symbols of the Apulian Renaissance.

Not to be missed is 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 splendour of Lecce's Baroque.

SALENTO

Southern Puglia, also called “**Salento**”, is an actual 'region inside the region'. It is the area with most municipalities in Italy, almost all consisting of small or tiny villages, each jealous of its patronal feast, dialect and typical products. A holiday in Salento can be a once-in-a-lifetime travel experience. In addition to Lecce, you can not help but see Otranto and Gallipoli.

Walking in the oldest part of **Otranto**, enclosed by the Aragonese walls, you will enjoy its millennial charm, with the white houses and the maze of streets paved with stones that converge towards the Romanesque Cathedral, characterized by the imposing Renaissance rose window. Inside, you will discover the precious mosaic floor made in the 12th century by the monk Pantaleone, depicting the tree of life with scenes that mix sacred and profane. Then, the

Castle built by Alfonso of Aragon at the end of the 15th century, in close relationship with the city walls, which is the background to art exhibitions and events.



Salentine cuisine is more characterized by the region's geographical location than any other Southern Italy gastronomic tradition. Over the centuries, Puglia and Salento have been a crossroads of peoples with very different cultures that have contaminated many aspects of everyday life, and therefore also food, with cooking methods, ingredients and customs, giving life to natural mixtures of flavours and smells that still delight the palates of locals and visitors. Salento cuisine is characterized

above all by vegetables, the real foundation of the traditional diet of this area: turnip top, green cabbage, thistle, peppers, eggplants, artichokes; all legumes, from beans to chickpeas, peas and fava beans, fresh in spring and dry in winter. Fish is excellent, especially in areas close to the coast: bluefish dominate, but molluscs and crustaceans are also common. But the real king of the Salentine cuisine is bread from unrefined wheat flour, with a particularly dark colour due to bran.

Puglia is famous for its *orecchiette* pasta, the glorious sandy beaches and the “Pizzica” dance, to name a few. Still, nothing is quite as Puglia-defining as the 50 to 60 million olive trees (no one seems to know for sure how many) that carpet the region, from the north to the south. The sheer number of trees is impressive, but so, in many cases, are their size and age. We will come across *ulivi secolari* (literally “centuries-old olive trees”), big trees with knotted, gnarled, robust trunks that have been twisted into grotesque shapes by a mix of time, wind, sun and man’s hand. They give an impression of wizened sagacity, seen-it-all tiredness and patient acceptance of the immutability of time. Finally, we will visit an olive oil mill to delight in the strong taste of the local olives.

ALBEROBELLO & MARTINA FRANCA

The **Trulli** are famous worldwide for their beauty and unique characteristics and represent one of the most extraordinary examples of Italian folk architecture. They were built in a particular historical period when the construction of stable dwellings was highly taxed; the region's inhabitants thus boasted a great capacity to adapt and an exceptional cleverness in coming up with the Trulli, temporary houses built with the local stone. From precariousness to stability - the process of transformation and recovery and the deference to the originality of the work earned the Trulli of Alberobello their recognition as a World Heritage Site.



In Alberobello, the capital of the Trulli, each Trullo has a different shape and size. Unique constructions are sometimes combined in a complex of communicating houses, while others are built on two levels. Most feature a grey cone-shaped roof, ending with a sphere or hemisphere shape. The interior, arranged as a single chamber, comprises niches for a fireplace, bed and furniture. The structure assures excellent indoor climate control: cool in summer and warm in winter!

Martina Franca is a charming baroque town 400 metres above sea level. The era of greatest splendour for this city was undoubtedly the 18th century when the most important monuments and churches still dominating the historic centre were built. Baroque is the predominant style; it can be seen in many buildings, and in this city, it has taken on characteristic connotations that distinguish it from the other variations of this artistic and architectural current; in fact, we speak of "Martinese" Baroque.

POLIGNANO, LOCOROTONDO & OSTUNI

White and perched on a cliff overlooking a dreamy inlet, **Polignano a Mare** is one of the most beautiful Apulian villages overlooking the Adriatic Sea, offering emotions with every visit.

The 11th edition of the Traveller Review Awards 2023, compiled by Booking.com, named Polignano a Mare the world's most welcoming resort for 2023. The ranking is based on 240 million verified reviews left by customers on the site and rewards the natural and cultural heritage of localities and territories, food and wine and local traditions, as well as the facilities and services provided to welcome tourists and travellers.

Another opportunity to dedicate a day to visiting the Apulian city birthplace of Domenico Modugno, legendary author and singer of Volare, one of the most famous Italian songs internationally, and to admire live the vertigo of its blue painted blu or the wonder offered by the town's many panoramic views, which dominate that stretch of coastline from above.



Locorotondo is nestled in the Itria valley, and its evocative name anticipates its conformation. From the various vantage points, you can enjoy the typical rural landscape characterised by 'casedde', masserie and small trulli.

In the historical centre, organised with concentric lanes, the low houses with pointed roofs and whitewashed walls (the cummerse, originally to fight the sun and the plague) have become, over time, the very symbol of the village. Entering through the Porta Napoli gate, between open spaces and houses, you come to the Palazzo Comunale (early 18th century) and then Palazzo Morelli, with elegant Baroque

balconies. The heart of the village is the mother church of S. Giorgio, dating back to the late 18th century, while the church of Santa Maria la Greca is of Roman-Gothic inspiration and features a splendid rose window.

The typical products and dishes are strongly linked to the local tradition: the white wine Locorotondo D.O.C., oil, orecchiette pasta with turnip tops, and mashed broad beans with wild chicory.

Ostuni leaves those vi siting it for the first time open-mouthed. The white stone buildings in its historic centre reflect the sun's rays, providing almost mystical views. Strolling through the village's narrow streets on the Murge plateau, you can enjoy magnificent views of vast olive groves, trulli and the Adriatic Sea.

The historical centre is full of interesting locations, like the Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta with its 15th-century large rose window. The Bishop's Palace, in the same square overlooked by the cathedral, bears witness to the period of splendour of the 1700s.

Further down is the heart of Ostuni's historic centre is the elegant Piazza della Libertà, embellished with some of the city's most important monuments: the obelisk dedicated to Saint Oronzo, the Church of Santo Spirito, the Town Hall and the Church of San Francesco. Those who want to learn more about the history of the White City will enjoy the Museum of Preclassic Civilisations of the Southern Murgia and the Diocesan Museum in the heart of Ostuni. On the city's outskirts, the archaeological site of Agnano is also worth a visit.

BARI

Benvenuti in Italia, welcome to Bari!

Bari, an important religious and commercial centre defined as "the door to the East", presents a significant ancient town centre in terms of historical and urban heritage. The city's mild climate makes it a top-rated destination, with many tourist and cultural attractions and numerous beaches.

The city has ancient origins and takes its name from the Greek **Barion**; it was a Roman municipality taken over in later times by Byzantines and Swabians, which became the heart of Italian Orthodox Catholicism and a place of pilgrimage for the three monotheistic religions during the Middle Ages. One of its many symbols is, in fact, Basilica di San Nicola (St. Nicholas), which was erected in the heart of the old city in Romanesque style towards the end of 1200 to house the relics of St. Nicholas, which according to tradition, were stolen by devout sailors from the city of Myra (now Turkey) and brought to Bari in 1087.

Another Romanesque building showing a majestic rose window is the Cathedral of San Sabino. In contrast, different styles characterize the following impressive buildings: the Palace of the Apulian aqueduct, Palazzo Mincuzzi, both in an eclectic style, Palazzo Fizzarotti, whose three floors are in Venetian style, and the 19th-century neoclassical Palazzo de Gemmis.

The coast around Bari is dotted with several medieval towers built for defensive purposes against the Saracen pirates. However, the most important defensive construction is still that of the Norman-Swabian castle and its long wall surrounding the old city, which dates back to the twelfth century.



Evenings are given over to strolling along the promenade in the mild climate, followed by a visit to one of the many restaurants in the city centre offering local dishes of raw fish and “poor” cuisine centred on “orecchiette” pasta. Alternatively, try one of the many places offering a typical aperitif accompanied by “tarallucci” (savoury round pretzels) and “friselle” (a ring-shaped hard bread that requires dipping in water).

The tour is over, but the memories of a fantastic journey will accompany you for a lifetime!

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VITOR s.r.l. - Via A. Moro 16 - 25124 Brescia - Italy
Tel +39 030 2055874 - info@vitor.it