



THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED - PUGLIA

15 - 28 MAY 2018

AUD 7,950 PER PERSON (TWIN SHARE)
AUD 8,900 PER PERSON (SOLO TRAVELLER)





Trulli in the Valle d'Itria

OVERVIEW

15 - 28 MAY 2018

Since 2007, we've been designing itineraries for people who are, like us, fascinated by Italy and believe that a holiday is best experienced in good company. Our small groups (maximum of 12 people) and carefully chosen itineraries ensure you will have a delightful and authentic Italian holiday.

We travel at a relaxed pace so that you can make the most of your time in Italy without racing from one city to another. There is plenty of free time so you can explore that museum that really interested you, indulge in some shopping or just put your feet up and enjoy the view.

The tour begins in the quaint town of Lecce with its wide, pedestrian streets and intricately pretty baroque facades. We visit the area around Lecce known as the Salento and travel to the tip of Italy's heel to see where two seas meet. We visit fascinating museums to learn about a culture that dates to the Bronze Age and see the local art.

The Valle d'Itria, famous for the distinctive stone trulli dwellings will delight you and the spectacular coastal scenery means that your cameras should never be out of reach. We stop to watch local artisans at work and visit some producers to see how the local specialties and wine are made.

We'll be staying in just four hotels over the 14 days to ensure we minimise the time spent packing and moving. Our bases for the tour are Lecce (3 nights), the Valle d'Itria (4 nights), Polignano a Mare (3 nights) and Mattinata (3 nights).

There are 5 lunches and 5 dinners included in the tour in restaurants chosen for their high quality food and wine that is typical of the area we're visiting. And we are always on hand to enjoy a meal together on other occasions.

"For anyone looking for an alternative to the well-known tourist beats of Italy, I can thoroughly recommend The Road Less Travelled tour of Puglia. Luca's vast knowledge of Italian history and culture added to the experience as did all the other things important for an enjoyable visit - staying in high standard accommodation, eating at restaurants specialising in the local food and wine, and travelling on comfortable transport."
Marie (2016)





Baroque architecture in Otranto

ITINERARY

DAY 1 - ARRIVE IN PUGLIA

Our tour begins with three nights based in wonderful Lecce, with its ornate iron balconies overlooking golden stone streets, its Roman ruins and the local 'Leccese' Baroque architecture. On day one we collect you Brindisi airport or you are able to arrive in Lecce on the fast train from Rome. We meet in the evening for aperitivi and welcome dinner.

Overnight: Lecce

DAY 2 - EXPLORING LECCE

We spend the first morning wandering the atmospheric streets of this ancient town, which is even older than Florence, dipping into the churches to discover hidden masterpieces and enjoying coffee in the glorious central piazza.

The rest of the afternoon is free time for you to explore Lecce.

Overnight: Lecce

DAY 3 - PASTICCIOTTO IN GALATINA AND OTRANTO ON THE SEA

On our third day we head out to the small town of Galatina, which is famous for two very different things. The first is a relatively undiscovered gem: a beautiful fresco cycle by Francesco d'Arezzo, which depicts the Franciscan story of the new and old Testaments, in the church of Santa Caterina d'Alessandria.

For the sublime to the gastronomic, our second Galatinese gem is the local pastry, a sweet custard treat called Pasticciotto Galatina. We'll call into Pasticceria Ascalone where it was invented, to indulge ourselves. You might also like to try local pastries and shortbreads flavoured with quince paste, another local specialty.

We'll spend the afternoon at Otranto on the sea, a small fortified town



completely surrounded by medieval walls overlooking water so clear that you can see to the bottom. We'll walk the walls and then visit the Cathedral of Santa Maria Annunziata to see the spectacular *Tree of Life* mosaic that covers three naves in the church. This mosaic is very old, dating from the twelfth century, and was made by a monk called Pantaleone. We'll also see his fascinating zodiac mosaic in the same church.
Overnight: Lecce

DAY 4 - AN INTRODUCTION TO PUGLIESE WINE AND OUR MASSERIA

On day five we depart Lecce and drive first to Masseria Li Veli, one of the top producers of wine in the Salento area. We have a guided tour of the winery, before sitting down to a relaxing lunch and to try the wines. Well fortified, we move on to our fabulous masseria accommodation in the Valle d'Itria. Masserias are common in this area, and best described as fortified plantation-style farmhouses once owned and occupied by wealthy barons-farmers. Much of the accommodation is within the trulli, the famous conical dwellings that are particular to this region. There'll be time enough for a swim in the pool before dinner. We are based in this very comfortable accommodation for the next four nights.
Overnight: Valle d'Itria

DAY 5 - OLIVES, OSTUNI AND APERITIVI IN MARTINA FRANCA

Today we explore the surprising towns of this region, but first we stop at an olive farm, where you will see how olive oil has been cultivated over the centuries. The farm is just outside Ostuni, which will be our next stop. This architectural jewel is known as the 'white city'. As we approach you'll notice the town from afar because all the buildings are painted white and it absolutely gleams in the sunlight. We return to our masseria for some free time in the afternoon, before venturing into Martina Franca in the late afternoon. We'll enjoy the piazza, appreciate the elegant Baroque architecture and wander around its picturesque streets. We'll stay in town for dinner in a Slow Food restaurant.
Overnight: Valle d'Itria

DAY 6 - ALBEROBELLO AND LOCOROTONDO

This morning we visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Alberobello. This town has been listed because of its high concentration of over 400 trulli. Make sure your cameras fully charged for this ridiculously pretty town! We head on to Locorotondo in the afternoon, another pretty town in the area where you will have some free time to

explore the town. delightfully pretty town!
Overnight: Valle d'Itria

DAY 7 - A WORKING FARM, TARANTO AND THE MARTA MUSEUM

This morning we head off to visit a local farm that specialises in the production of local cows milk cheeses and olive oil. We'll arrive in time to see the cheese makers producing the mozzarella and other cheeses. In the afternoon we visit Taranto, first colonised by the Greeks who arrived in 700 BC, and the location of one of the highlights of our visit to this area: the MARTA museum. Luca compares the collection and curation of this museum with the British Museum in London. The collection is of extremely high quality, partly because much of it was hidden underground and only rediscovered with the arrival of modern plumbing. Surprised workmen unearthed a cemetery laden with riches including gold jewellery, precious jewels, mosaics and a hoard of Greek and Roman artefacts. It is beautifully displayed with extensive, well written explanations in English.
Overnight: Valle d'Itria

DAY 8 - BARI

Today we pack up and leave our masseria and head towards the region's capital city, Bari. We will spend most of the day in Bari, this fascinating old city, with its atmospheric medieval centre. There will be a walking tour with a local guide, where we will visit the basilica of San Nicola, the original Father Christmas, who had a reputation for secret gift giving, see the local women making pasta in the laneways and generally learn about the history of this town. There will be some free time for lunch and to have a look around the town on your own, before we drive on to our next base in Polignano a Mare.
Overnight: Polignano a Mare

DAY 9 - POLIGNANO A MARE

Polignano a Mare is one of the prettiest towns on the east coast and we won't move from here today. which will be all about relaxing. We'll take a wander through the town together in the morning so you can get your bearings and then the rest of the day will be free time to relax and enjoy the town. You may wish to take a dip in the ocean or the more active can head off for a walk along the pretty coastal walkway to check out the views.
Overnight: Polignano a Mare





Bari

DAY 10 - MATERA

We visit another UNESCO World Heritage site today: the ancient city of Matera – and also the location for Mel Gibson's film 'The Passion'! Matera is internationally famous for its ancient town, known as the Sassi, which translates as 'stones'. The Sassi began life as a prehistoric troglodyte settlement mined into the rocky face of a ravine but over the centuries many groups of people lived in these cavernous dwellings. The inhabitants were forcibly removed in the 1950s but today much of the area has been regenerated and there are small business, hotels and bars there. To see this area properly we'll be dedicating the entire day to our visit with a local guide.

Overnight: Polignano a Mare

DAY 11 - AN EMPEROR'S CASTLE AND THE GARGANO PENINSULA

We drive on to our final destination today, Mattinata on the especially beautiful Gargano Peninsula.

First however we stop at Castel del Monte, 'a unique masterpiece of medieval military architecture' and the third UNESCO World Heritage site that we visit on this tour. Castel del Monte is located on a gentle hill that overlooks the

surrounding flatlands. It comprises a 13th century citadel and castle built by Emperor Frederic II. Many people describe it as 'a copybook castle' because of its pleasing octagonal design, and perfect symmetry. Luca describes it as 'Essentially a medieval Stonehenge, in the middle of an otherwise empty landscape, with great atmosphere and a mysterious significance'.

Our accommodation in Mattinata, which means 'morning', is in self contained apartments with stunning views along the blue coastline from their balconies. While the area is a huge drawcard for Italians seeking sun and sea in summer, inland it remains a big agricultural area where they grow oranges, grapes, olives and a type of dairy cattle particular to the area. The Parco Nazionale del Gargano is a short drive away. Overnight: Mattinata

DAY 12 - A PILGRIM'S CHURCH, THE SHADY FORREST AND DINNER AT A TRABUCCO

This morning we drive up to Monte Sant'Angelo, a pilgrim destination where the faithful came to visit the sanctuary of St Michael Archangel, built in 13th century by Charles I of Anjou, and now a World Heritage site.

We drive through the the Parco Nazionale del





Castel del Monte

Gargano to the Foresta Umbra (the Shady Forest). The road takes us through brilliant green forests to a lovely tableland and then we take a short stroll through the forest.

Last stop for the day is at a *trabucco* an old fishing station, where we will enjoy an early dinner as the sun sets.

Overnight: Mattinata

DAY 13 - THE GARGANO COAST

This morning we climb aboard our private charter boat and work our way along the coast to enjoy the stunning limestone cliffs and caves of the peninsula. We disembark at the typical fishing village of Vieste, where we have lunch overlooking the coastline. Weather permitting we'll have an opportunity for swimming in the dazzling blue sea of the Adriatic before we return to Mattinata for our farewell dinner.

Overnight: Mattinata

DAY 14 - FAREWELLS

On the last day of the tour we provide a transfer back to Bari for your departure by air or train.





Alberobello



Luca and Philippa



Ostuni

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- ◆ Experienced and bilingual tour leader on hand for duration of tour
- ◆ Transfer at the start and end of the tour as per the information below
- ◆ Accommodation (on a twin-share basis) in charming 3 or 4 star hotels
- ◆ All breakfasts, 5 lunches and 5 dinners (wine, or something softer if you would prefer, is included with all lunches and dinners)
- ◆ All land travel in Italy in private, air-conditioned mini-coach
- ◆ Entry fees to all attractions listed in the itinerary
- ◆ Expert, local guides at many attractions
- ◆ All gratuities and local taxes

GETTING TO PUGLIA AND DEPARTING

At the start of the tour we will provide a transfer from Brindisi airport to our accommodation in Lecce. Brindisi is well serviced with flights from Rome, Milan and elsewhere in Europe. Or there is a fast train from Roma Termini station all the way to Lecce station, from where you can get a taxi to the hotel.

At the end of the tour, we provide two transfers to Bari airport and train station, one arriving at approximately 10am and the other at approximately 12pm. Please book your onward travel accordingly.

If you have any questions, please talk to Philippa before booking your travel!

WEATHER

Spring is a great time to visit Puglia - the days should still be warm without the scorching heat of high summer. Most days should be in the mid-20s, so very comfortable weather for travelling.

PHYSICAL FITNESS

We don't place any age limitations on the tour and welcome anyone with a moderate level of physical fitness. Specifically, you should be comfortable on your feet for up to 3 hours with short breaks and confident on the cobblestones and uneven surfaces.

SINGLE SUPPLEMENT

We try to keep our single supplement as low as possible, passing on only the additional costs charged by hotels. The single supplement is AUD950.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

Travel insurance is compulsory when travelling on one of our tours. Please contact us if you need help arranging travel insurance.

BOOKING

If you would like to book a place on this or any other tour, or if you have some questions about the itinerary, please don't hesitate to contact Luca or Philippa at Italian Tours.

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