



Travel Guide | Puglia

UNLOCKING EUROPE'S MOST SPECTACULAR DESTINATIONS

EXCLUSIVE
INSIDER TIPS

★★★★★

Polignano a Mare, Puglia

Welcome to Puglia

Not so long ago, Puglia was largely unknown amongst international visitors. Yet today, it is a growing holiday destination that boasts amazing beaches, an intriguing history, and a delicious variety of local produce. It's time to discover this enchanting part of Italy and enjoy its abundance of offerings.

Puglia is a unique region of Italy primarily due to the insights it provides into how the locals have inhabited the land. In nearby Matera, one of the most ancient towns in the world, locals have occupied the Sassi caves for 7,000 years until the 1950's. In Alberobello, the iconic trulli housed peasants from the 15th century.



WHO SHOULD VISIT

With an abundance of things to see and do, Puglia has something to offer all travellers. Whether it's your first-time visiting Italy, or you're looking for somewhere new – Puglia will be sure to delight.

History enthusiasts will relish in the ancient towns and architecture. Gastronomes can indulge in a range of wineries, fresh seafood, and a twist on the classics of pastas, breads, and cheese. While families will enjoy the relaxed lifestyle and landscapes with plenty of activities.

WHEN TO GO

Situated in the south-east of Italy, the climate in Puglia is delightful of the year. Highs range from around 21°C in April through to 30°C in Summer and staying at around 22°C until the end of October. The Autumn and Winter seasons are a delightful escape from the cooler European winters, and perfect for cyclists.

Be aware that outside of these warmer months, the region tends to slow-down its trade, with some hotels, restaurants and attractions limiting or closing their doors for the 'winter' months. Be sure to take this into considerations when planning your trip.

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HOW TO GET THERE

PLANE: The easiest option is to catch a flight. There are two main airports to fly in to (Bari & Brindisi). We recommend Bari as it is larger, has more regular flights and is a good starting point for your discovery of the region.

TRAIN: Thanks to the high-speed regional trains you can easily reach Puglia from anywhere in Italy. However, this may take some time (think 5 or more hours depending on your starting location). Trains around the region itself are less frequent and connected than the rest of Italy.

CAR: Puglia is easily reachable by car, making it a great option for those wanting to self-drive around the area. The journey is just 3.5 hours from the Amalfi Coast and 5 hours from Rome. Driving in the region is also simpler with less traffic on the road than other Italian cities. Visitors should be aware that not all rental car companies have pick-up and drop-off locations within walking distance of train stations.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- We recommend staying in at least two locations in Puglia, the North and the South. The driving distances are too large to explore the whole region from a single destination.
- Accommodation is often in historical buildings and many in-demand properties have fewer than 10 rooms. This means there are often stairs and that properties book out quickly. If you want specific properties, you may want to secure them first and then plan your trip around those dates. Be sure to consider mobility when choosing where to stay.
- There are great villa options in Puglia that can accommodate large groups of friends and families. Guests should be aware that villas often require longer stays, like other popular destinations in Italy. Most privately owned luxury villas will only rent their properties for 7 days (commonly only Sat-Sat). If villas are very important to your trip, ensure you plan for this limitation.



Regional Highlights

Polignano a Mare
A spectacular town built on the edge of a craggy ravine pockmarked with caves, well-known for its 'cave restaurant' and beautiful postcard views.

Monopoli
A charming seaside town filled with white stone buildings, friendly fishermen, and historic buildings.

Alberobello
The home of the distinctive conical shaped stone houses called trulli that conjure a charming and unique atmosphere.

Ostuni
A labyrinth of whitewashed buildings perched on a hilltop with glorious views, and an abundance of bars and restaurants.

Lecce
Also known as 'the Florence of the South' with rich Baroque architectural heritage and ancient Greek and Roman roots.

Otranto
Gazing out over the Adriatic Sea, the castle and cathedral offer amazing mosaics dating back to the 11th century.

Santa Maria di Leuca
Sandy beaches & dramatic coastlines make this the perfect spot to enjoy a boat ride and discover the surrounding grottos.

Grottaglie
A small town dedicated to its historic craft of ceramics, where visitors can find some unique and beautiful souvenirs.

Ginosa
A city of cave settlements with breathtaking views where you can find ancient cisterns, dwellings, gardens, and even churches.

Matera (BASILICATA)
Renowned for its cave-like dwellings, Matera offers a truly unique and magical experience just outside the Puglia region.

Bari
Combining seaside charm and historical appeal as you get lost in the Old Town alleyways and discover its multicultural past.

Travel Information:
 - 5hr drive Bari to Rome
 - 4hr train Bari to Rome
 - 1.25hr flight Bari to Rome
 - 50min drive Bari to Matera
 - 5.5hr train Rome to Brindisi
 - 30min drive Brindisi to Lecce
 - 1.5hr drive Bari to Lecce
 - 3.5hr drive Bari to Amalfi Coast

Stay somewhere unique

With a distinctive and diverse history, the region of Puglia offers some truly magical accommodation types that are characteristic of each city. From traditional trulli houses in Alberobello, to cave dwellings in Matera, agriturismos in the countryside, and even tree houses in the natural parks. Each accommodation style offers a unique and authentic experience, creating memorable moments to be cherished for years to come.



SLEEP INSIDE HISTORICAL CAVE DWELLINGS

Matera's Old Town is said to be the third oldest town in the world and has been UNESCO World Heritage Listed since 1993. The two Sassi districts are the most well-known part of Matera, and what most tourists come to visit for.

"Staying in a cave is a truly unique and memorable experience, as it allows you to step back in time and imagine how people lived in the past. A cosy atmosphere with the Old Town located at your doorstep."



The caves have been inhabited since the Palaeolithic period, until the 1950's when they were evacuated by the Italian Government. Due to highly unsanitary conditions, and outbreaks of disease, around 15,000 inhabitants were forcibly relocated. For many years locals wanted to forget their history. However, with interest from archaeologists and other intellectuals, and UNESCO's listing of the area, the city began thriving.

Today, many of these caves have been meticulously converted into homes, boutique hotels, and restaurants, with modern amenities, all while preserving the traditional architecture.



INHABIT A TRADITIONAL TRULLO

Puglia may be best known for its iconic trulli homes found in Alberobello and the Itria Valley – but how did they come about and why are they so unique?

Many of the trulli found today, especially in the old towns of Alberobello, date back to the fourteenth century. It is said that in order to evade paying taxes to the king, all locals were ordered to build their homes in the 'trullo' style, without mortar.

The idea behind using the trulli structure stemmed from both available local resources, and the idea that the trulli could be dismantled easily in the event of a royal inspection. It is therefore a great testament that many of the trulli remain standing today!

"A unique architecture style and traditional charm, the trulli homes are comfortable, well-equipped and add a sense of historical significance to your stay. It really is a once in a lifetime opportunity!"

Of course, many of the trulli today have been restored and now have mortar holding their walls together. You can now stay in an authentic trullo in the oldest trulli districts of Alberobello. Rentals offer modern amenities while preserving the traditional architecture.

Must-do experiences

1 GET LOST IN THE SASSI DI MATERA

Matera is a UNESCO site known for its ancient cave dwellings carved into the rocks, known as sassi. They are a unique and rare example of human habitation dating back to the Paleolithic era. Walking through the narrow streets and alleys of the sassi is like stepping back in time. The cave dwellings are now converted into museums, hotels and restaurants, making it possible to explore them while also enjoying the modern comforts.

2 DISCOVER ALBEROBELLO

Alberobello is a UNESCO site known for its unique and well-preserved trulli, which are traditional conical-roofed houses made of limestone. The trulli are a unique and rare example of human habitation and architecture and walking through the streets offers an opportunity to discover the local culture and history. Discover the local handicrafts, such as pottery and textiles, and even stay in a traditional trulli home for a truly unique experience.

3 SET SAIL ON A BOAT TRIP

This is a unique and exciting way to explore the beautiful coastline. Admire the stunning scenery and crystal-clear waters of the Adriatic Sea, whilst visiting the hidden coves, grottos, and caves that can only be accessed from the water. Along the way, you may spot a wide variety of marine life, including dolphins and sea turtles. Our favourite locations to do this are Santa Maria di Leuca or Polignano a Mare.

4 FLORENCE OF THE SOUTH

Lecce is famous for its baroque architecture, ornate buildings, churches & palaces adorned with intricate stone carvings & sculptures. The Basilica di Santa Croce is considered one of the most beautiful in Italy. Known for its local cuisine, Lecce is a cultural hub, home to several museums and art galleries displaying the works of local artists. The city also has a lively nightlife scene, with many bars and restaurants to choose from.

5 LOCAL COOKING CLASS

A local cooking class with an Apulian family is a great to learn about the culture and cuisine. You will learn how to cook traditional dishes, as well as about the history and ingredients that make Apulian food so special. Cooking classes are a fun and interactive experience for all ages. Plus, at the end of the class, you get to enjoy the delicious meals that you have cooked together as a family. And it will be a great memory to take home with you.

6 DINE AT GROTTA PALAZZESE

This cave restaurant in Polignano a Mare is known as one of the most beautiful and romantic restaurants in Italy. Open from Jun-Sep, it offers a unique dining experience on its terrace looking across the sea and coastline. The restaurant serves seafood and traditional Puglian dishes. Although it is not hatted, it is very popular for its location & stunning views, so we recommend making a reservation in advance.



Enchanting Puglia

At the heel of Italy's boot, discover beautiful, whitewashed villages, stunning coastlines with turquoise-coloured waters, ancient ruins, and gastronomical delights. The magic of Puglia has long been known to the Italians, but now the secret is out, and it awaits you on this magnificent regional discovery. As one of our best-selling small group journeys, our Puglia tour offers an unforgettable experience that captures the essence of this enchanting region.

Please see our website for the most recent itinerary, departure dates, availability and prices. Scan the QR code:



9 DAYS



Trulli of Alberobello



Basilica di Santa Croce, Lecce

Ormina Highlights & Inclusions

- > Experience the region's 'must see' towns including Bari, Matera, Lecce, Ostuni, Alberobello and Polignano a Mare.
- > 8 nights in a boutique property and 5-star hotels including a Trullo.
- > 8 breakfasts (B), 2 lunches (L), 2 dinners (D).
- > Guided sightseeing of Bari, Matera, Lecce, Ostuni and Alberobello.
- > Private cooking class to make traditional orecchiette.
- > Winery restaurant lunch paired with wines.
- > Visit the charming seaside villages of the Salento Peninsula.
- > Private boat excursion in Santa Maria di Leuca and Polignano a Mare.
- > Entrance to Casa Grotta & Chiesa Rupestre, Basilica di Santa Croce, Lecce Cathedral and Trullo Sovrano.
- > Visit the UNESCO World Heritage sites of Matera and Alberobello.
- > Deluxe VIP transport.
- > Arrival and departure transfers on the first & last days.
- > Note: hotel city taxes, if applicable, are not included.

DAY 1 Bari

Welcome to Puglia, a region less travelled and bursting with stunning landscapes and history. On arrival, transfer to your centrally located Bari hotel.

STAY OVERNIGHT iH Hotels Bari Grande Albergo delle Nazioni 5-star or similar.

DAY 2 Bari – Matera (B, D)

Enjoy a half-day guided tour of Bari's historic old town and seaside promenade including Piazza's del Ferrarese and Mercantile, Bari Cathedral and Castello Svevo. In the afternoon, transfer to ancient Matera to relax and freshen up before a welcome dinner.

STAY 2 NIGHTS Le Origini Suites & Rooms or similar.

DAY 3 Matera (B)

Enjoy a walking tour of Matera, a UNESCO World Heritage listed city and one of the oldest continually inhabited settlements in the World. Discover the Sassi and its prehistoric cave dwellings as well as the Church of Saint Peter Barisano, San Nicola dei Greci, Matera Cathedral, Church of Saint Mary of Idris, San Pietro Caveoso, Casa Grotto and Piazza Vittorio Veneto. Enjoy leisure time in the afternoon.

DAY 4 Matera – Ginosà – Grottaglie – Lecce (B, L)

Venture into the UNESCO Listed Murgia National Park famous for its caves and rock formations, as well as the limestone shaped caves of the Sassi rock. Visit the Crypt of Original Sin, considered the 'Sistine Chapel of Rock Churches' for its fresco paintings dating to the 8th century. Continue to Ginosà for a private orecchiette (hand made fresh local pasta) cooking class and lunch. Afterward, pass through Grottaglie, for a visit to a famous Ceramics producer to observe the craftsmen and perhaps purchase a souvenir. Continue to Lecce for an evening at leisure.

STAY 3 NIGHTS Patria Palace Hotel 5-star or similar.

DAY 5 Lecce (B, L)

Lecce, known as the 'Rome of the South' with its ancient Roman amphitheatres, 17th century Baroque style churches and Palaces, surrounded by stunning countryside, coastlines and small towns. Enjoy a guided walking tour that includes the Basilica di Santa Croce, Castello di Lecce, Roman Amphitheatre, Teatro Romano, Lecce Cathedral, Teatro Paisiello and Palazzo Loffredo Adorno. Afterwards, transfer to the Lecce countryside for a gourmet lunch paired with wine belonging to a prestigious local winery.

DAY 6 Lecce – Santa Maria di Leuca – Otranto – Lecce (B)

Enjoy a full day excursion exploring the beautiful villages and coastline of the Salento Peninsula that resides on the UNESCO Listed tentative list for its Barocca Leccese architectural achievements. Visit Santa Maria di Leuca for a private boat

ride, including time to swim off the boat in amazing waters. Afterward, enjoy time for an independent lunch before visiting the picturesque village of Otranto, where you have time to explore before returning to Lecce.

DAY 7 Lecce – Martina Franca – Ostuni – Alberobello (B)

Depart late morning for Martina Franca, an old town surrounded by stone walls and featuring piazzas and narrow, winding streets. Enjoy time for an independent lunch and leisure time before freshening up in your Alberobello Trullo for an evening excursion to the beautiful, whitewashed town of Ostuni. Enjoy a short orientation tour and visit its local treasures such as the Cathedral and the baroque Church of Santa Maria Maddalena, before enjoying an organised dinner.

STAY 2 NIGHTS Le Alcove Luxury Resort 5-star or similar.

DAY 8 Alberobello – Polignano a Mare – Alberobello (B)

Discover Alberobello and its traditions with a guided walking tour. Afterward, travel to the beautiful seaside village of Polignano a Mare with leisure time for independent discovery, a swim at its amazing beach with pristine turquoise water and possibly independent lunch at its world-renowned Grotto Palazzese. Afterward, be treated to a short boat trip for magnificent views of Polignano a Mare from the sea, before returning to Alberobello.

DAY 9 Alberobello – Bari (B)

If you are not extending your stay with us in Puglia, depart the hotel for your transfer to Bari where the tour ends on arrival at Bari airport or the Bari centre.

Twin Share per person from \$6,590 AUD

Discover more

RECOMMENDED TOUR ADDITIONS

Join a pre-tour discovery on Highlights of Italy (North) or enjoy back-to-back touring on our best-selling Sicily Bella Small Group Journey for an effortless transition between destinations.



ADD AN EXTENSION IN MONOPOLI

Unwind at the end of your Apulian discovery by the ocean. We recommend staying at: **Locanda Don Ferrante 5-star**. As the best hotel in Monopoli be sure to secure your spot early!



Continue your journey

Make your road trip a little more interesting. If you are coming from (or heading to) the Amalfi Coast, we recommend these stops on the way.

BUFFALO CHEESE FARM

Visit the capital of ancient mozzarella made with buffalo milk including ancient techniques and traditions, handed down between generations.



RUINS OF PAESTUM

An overlooked UNESCO World Heritage site with breathtaking ancient Greek temples, houses, ancient city piazzas and artifacts.



Group accommodation

If you are looking for a slower paced stay in the region, or perhaps you're travelling with a family or group of friends and want a central location to stay, a villa or masseria could be the perfect option.

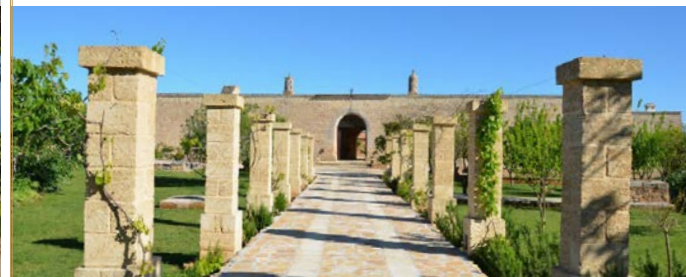
VILLA STAY

Puglia has a number of villas scattered across the landscape, but the best ones are often found around Ostuni. Be aware that many villas only rent Sat-Sat. Get in contact with us to help find something to suit your needs.



MASSERIA FARM STAY

Many local families have converted their working farms into luxury accommodations called 'masseria'. These amazing properties are a great countryside option for bigger groups, with organic produce for all guests to enjoy.





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Roman amphitheater, Lecce