



# THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED - PUGLIA

14 - 27 MAY 2024  
16 - 29 SEPTEMBER 2024





Trulli in the Valle d'Itria

## OVERVIEW

**AUD 9, 290**  
(PER PERSON, TWIN SHARE)

**AUD 10, 490**  
(PER PERSON, SOLO TRAVELLER)

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 indulge your own interests.

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 visit the most beautiful towns.

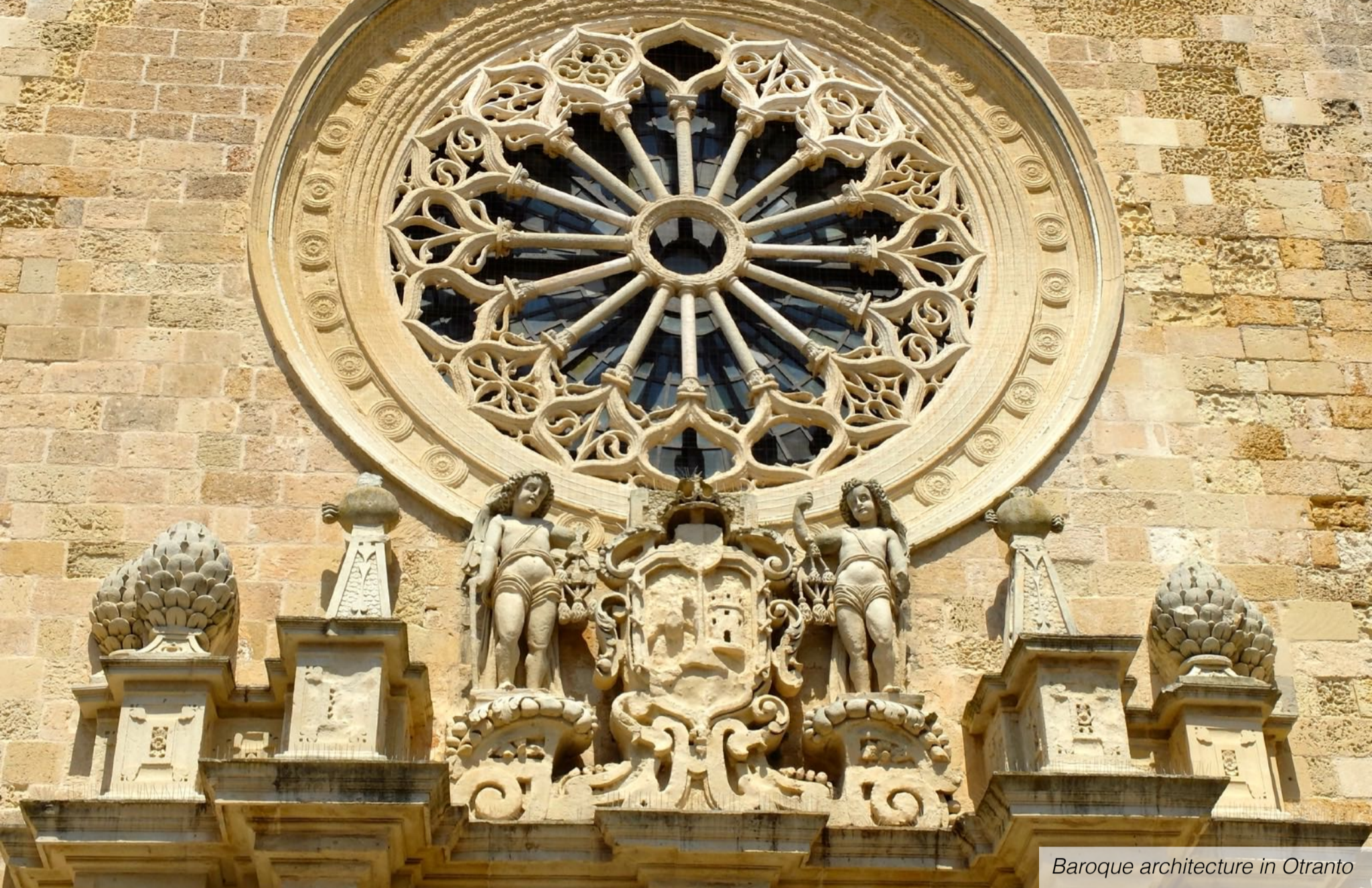
The Valle d'Itria, famous for the distinctive stone trulli dwellings will delight you and the spectacular coastal scenery means that your cameras should never be out of reach. We stop to watch local artisans at work and visit some producers to see how the local specialties and wine are made. And we explore Puglia's spectacular coastline around Polignano a Mare and in the Gargano peninsula.

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 (3 nights), Mattinata (3 nights) and Polignano a Mare (4 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 will collect you at Brindisi airport, or you can arrive in Lecce on the fast train from Rome or Milan. 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, 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.

From 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 speciality.

We'll spend the afternoon at Otranto, a small fortified town surrounded by medieval walls overlooking the water so clear you can see to the bottom. Make sure you 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 ancient, 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 - OLIVE OIL, OSTUNI AND THE VALLE D'ITRIA**

Our first stop today is at an olive farm, where you will see how olive oil has been cultivated over the centuries. You'll have the chance to walk amongst olive trees that are thousands of years old and see the remains of the ancient olive presses. There will also be a tasting of olive oil.

The farm is just outside Ostuni, which will be our next stop. This architectural jewel is known as the 'white city'. As we approach Ostuni, you'll notice the town from afar because all the buildings are painted white, and it absolutely gleams in the sunlight.

After some time to explore Ostuni, we'll travel to our next base in the Valle d'Itria, checking into our hotel in the countryside.

Overnight: Valle d'Itria

#### **DAY 5 - A CHEESE PRODUCER AND GROTTAGLIE**

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 the nearby town of Grottaglie, which is the centre of the local ceramics production. Artisans have been working here for over 1,000 years. Before we return to our accommodation, there will be time to wander through the town and look at one or two local producers.

You'll have some free time to relax in the afternoon at the resort.

Overnight: Valle d'Itria

#### **DAY 6 - ALBEROBELLO AND LOCOROTONDO**

This morning we visit the UNESCO World Heritage site of Alberobello. This town has been included on the register be-

cause of its high concentration of over 400 trulli. Make sure your cameras are fully charged for this charming town!

We head on to Locorotondo in the afternoon, another pleasant town in the area where you will have some free time to explore the winding streets, churches and squares.

In the early evening, we'll venture into Martina Franca, the largest town in the Valle d'Itria, where there will be time to look around the town before a group meal.

Overnight: Valle d'Itria

#### **DAY 7 - AN EMPEROR'S CASTLE AND THE GARGANO PENINSULA**

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

First, however, we stop at Castel del Monte, a unique masterpiece of medieval military architecture and the second UNESCO World Heritage site that we visit on this tour. Castel del Monte is on a gentle hill overlooking the surrounding flatlands. It comprises a 13th-century citadel and a castle built by Emperor Frederic II. Many people describe it as 'a copy-book castle' because of its octagonal design and perfect symmetry. Luca describes it as "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 or gardens. While the area is a massive drawcard for Italians seeking sun and sea in summer, inland, it remains an extensive 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 8 - THE FORESTA UMBRA, A TRABUCCO AND THE GARGANO COAST**

This morning we head into the hinterland of the Gargano peninsula, driving through the suggestive Foresta Umbra, and stopping at a pretty hamlet, Vico del Gargano. We then stop for lunch at a "trabucco", an old wooden fishing platform built over the sea that has been repurposed as an excellent restaurant specialising in the local seafood.

We drive home along the picturesque Gargano coast to Mattinata.

Overnight: Mattinata





Bari

## DAY 9 - THE GARGANO COAST AND A PILGRIM'S CHURCH

This morning we climb aboard our charter boat and work our way along the coast to enjoy the stunning limestone cliffs and caves of the peninsula. Weather permitting, we'll have an opportunity to swim in the dazzling blue sea of the Adriatic and to stop for lunch on one of the rocky beaches before driving back to our hotel.

In the afternoon, we drive up to Monte Sant'Angelo. At this pilgrim destination, the faithful visited St Michael Archangel's sanctuary, built in the 13th century by Charles I of Anjou, and now a World Heritage site.

Overnight: Mattinata

## DAY 10 - BARI

Today we pack up, leave the Gargano, and head towards the region's capital, Bari. We will spend some time 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. We will 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 11 - 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. Today is a "free day", but we suggest you wander through the town in the morning to get your bearings and then relax and enjoy the town the rest of the day. 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





*Castel del Monte*

## **DAY 12 - A WINERY AND TRANI**

We start today with a visit to the town of Trani where we will wander along the bustling port where the fishermen sell their catches on benches in front of their boats. We will visit the centre of town and stop at the Cathedral of Trani, one of Puglia's most important examples of Romanesque architecture.

After some free time for lunch, we will leave Trani to visit a leading winery in the area, where we will have a guided tour and tasting.

Overnight: Polignano a Mare

## **DAY 13 - 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 old 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 businesses, hotels and bars there.

To see this town properly, we'll dedicate most of the day to our visit, spending the morning with a local guide and having some free time to explore on our own.

Overnight: Polignano a Mare

## **DAY 14 - FAREWELLS**

On the last day of the tour we provide a transfer back to Bari train station and Bari airport.





*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 4 and 5 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 key attractions
- ◆ All gratuities and local taxes

## GETTING TO PUGLIA AND DEPARTING

At the start of the tour we will provide a private transfer from Brindisi train station to the hotel in Lecce. You can also arrive in Lecce on the high-speed train from Rome or Milan.

At the end of the tour, we provide a transfer to Bari train station for departure on the fast trains and to Bari airport.

Please check the timing of these transfers with Philippa at Italian Tours once you have made a booking on the tour. If you need to arrive or depart at another time, we can organise a private transfer for you.

## WEATHER

Spring and autumn are great times to visit Puglia - the days should be warm without the scorching heat of high summer. Most days should be in the mid to high 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 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 AUD1200.

## 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.

P 02 9358 4923

E [ciao@italiantours.com.au](mailto:ciao@italiantours.com.au)

W [www.italiantours.com.au](http://www.italiantours.com.au)

