

EXPLORE!

NEW

Highlights of Puglia
8 days

Italy - Trip code PUL



Highlights of Puglia

The 'heel of Italy' is an area more densely populated by olive trees than by people; it has a relaxed atmosphere, sunny climate, attractive coastline and rolling countryside. This trip is designed to give you a great introduction to the highlights of Puglia and Basilicata, staying in the quirky trullis and sassis, as well as in the beautiful Baroque city of Lecce. We'll take a coastal walk in Otranto and there will be the chance to visit the Castellana Caves, as well as the opportunity to sample traditional bread and locally produced olive oil, cheese and wine along the way.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Matera** - Discover the fascinating UNESCO World Heritage Listed ancient troglodyte sassi quarter
- ★ **Alberobello** - Explore the unique beehive-shaped trulli houses and enjoy a wine tasting
- ★ **Lecce** - Take a guided walking tour of the 'Florence of the south' to see the Baroque architecture
- ★ **Otranto** - Relax on the sandy beaches or take a coastal walk to the scenic bauxite quarry in Otranto
- ★ **Food** - Sample delicious Altamura bread, taralli biscuits, olive oil, homemade cheese and wine

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

TRIP PACE:**Moderate**

Moderate pace tours are ideal if you want a holiday which combines exciting activities and experiences with plenty of time to relax and unwind. Typically you'll be active and busy for part of the day but then also have time to rest and recharge your batteries.

GROUP SIZE:**12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip in Bari

Join the trip in the Adriatic port city of Bari and check-in to our hotel. The transfer from Bari Airport to the city centre will be by train. Our Explore Leader or an English speaking representative will meet you at the airport to give instructions on which train to catch and to supply you with your train tickets. It'll be a short 5-minute walk from the train station to our hotel. The old town area of Bari Vecchia is located next to the harbour and is a tangled maze of old streets. One of the main highlights is the Basilica of San Nicola, which legend has it, contains some of the bones of jolly old Saint Nick. The Lungomare seaside promenade is a great place for an evening stroll. Tasty culinary options include orecchiette pasta (known as small ear pasta due to its shape), which is normally served with a sauce made from turnip tops or you could try meat and rice stuffed peppers or a large array of seafood dishes. In Puglia the food revolves around local produce, so the dishes on offer will vary depending on what's in season. A lot of the cuisine is vegetable or cheese based and of course they make good use of all the olive oil produced from the 60 million olive trees in the region. Over the next week you could sample a range of dishes such as fried polenta, tubs of ricotta and mozzarella balls stuffed with cream. The wine is also delicious with Primitivo red wine being a popular choice.



Accommodation: Hotel Adria (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Food tasting in Altamura and visit to the medieval Castel del Monte

This morning we leave Bari and drive to Altamura, which is a city famed for its bread and we'll get the chance to try it along with a selection of other specialities like taralli savoury biscuits flavoured with fennel seeds, focaccia, pizza and wine. Pane di Altamura is a very filling bread and loafs on average weigh a kilo and traditionally would have been eaten by workers out in the fields. The bread is cooked in 'forni' stone oven using oak wood. Next we have a guided visit of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Castel del Monte. It is one of the best preserved medieval castles in Southern Italy and is an unusual octagonal shape with a tower in each corner. The architectural design suggests Arabic influences as well as more classical Italian features. Later this afternoon we arrive in Matera, which is just over the regional border in Basilicata and where we will spend the next two nights. The town is impressively located on the side of a gorge eroded by the Gravina River and is famous for its ancient sassi, a UNESCO-Listed troglodyte quarter, which originates from prehistoric times. Stepping into the city is like stepping back in time, and it feels as though the cobbled narrow streets and meandering buildings have changed little over the past 7,000 years. It's a place that has to be seen to be believed and we have the wonderful experience of staying in a hotel within these ancient sassi cave dwellings.



Accommodation: Hotel Sassi (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Guided tour of the caves and rock carved churches of Matera

This morning a local guide will take us on a walking tour of the sassi quarter which is split into two halves - Sassi Caveoso and Sassi Barisano, with the cathedral sitting between them. The city is so unchanged over the centuries that it has frequently been used as a film set for biblical scenes. It's hard to believe it now, but in the 1950s Matera was an embarrassment to the Italian authorities, as many families were living in one room caves, in poor conditions and poverty was rife. The families were helped and re-housed and the city cleaned up and it's now a treasured historic city that will become the European Capital of Culture in 2019. After spending the morning exploring the cobbled lanes, rock carved churches and caves we have the afternoon free to discover more or you might choose to take a train to neighbouring Gravina (the journey is around 45 minutes each way). Gravina is also an ancient town that has retained much of its character. The buildings are stacked on top of one another along the sides of river gorge with Roman bridge connecting the two sides. You could visit Gravina Sotterranea, which is an underground network of meandering passageways that run beneath the city.



Accommodation: Hotel Sassi (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Cheese and wine tasting; walk through the trullis of Alberobello

This morning we drive to an agriturismo in Putignano for a cheese tasting. Agriturismos are traditional country farms that have opened up their doors to visitors, everything here is homemade. After seeing how the cheese is produced and exploring the farm and gardens we'll sample their delicious food, which usually includes freshly braided mozzarella. Our first stop in the UNESCO World Heritage Listed town of Alberobello is in the Cantina Albea Winery and Museum. After having a guided tour and learning about the different wines of Puglia we'll then get to sample the award-winning wines that they produce. The small town of Alberobello is famous for its unusual trulli round houses with their white washed dry stone walls and pointed 'witches hat' tiled roofs and we spend the next two nights in these unique buildings. After our wine tasting we will take a pleasant walk through the trullis to our hotel. Trullis or trullas as they're also known are either built singly or in groups of up to five which would have originally been occupied by a single family. After checking in to our trullis our Explore Leader will take us on a walk of the town to learn about the history and to help us get our bearings. The town is divided into two districts - Rione Aia Piccola and Rione Monti. On our walk we'll see Trullo Sovrano, built by a wealthy priest in the 18th century it is the only two floor trulli house and it's now a museum, and the Trullo Church with its domed towers and curved windows it looks like a stretched trulli and was built far later in 1927. This evening is free for you to experience more of the town. There are a number of restaurants and shops and typically Italian bars along the main street of Largo Martellotta.



Accommodation: Hotel Trullidea (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Free day in Alberobello; chance to visit the Castellana Caves

Today is free for you to relax among the trullis or perhaps to travel further afield for more sightseeing. You could take the train (around 10 minutes each way) to the pretty town of Locorotondo. Although it's only a short distance from Alberobello a completely different building style has been used with tall, narrow rectangular buildings packed together with their tiled gable roofs and whitewashed walls. The formation of them and their hilltop location makes the town resemble a white fort. Alternatively, you might like to take the train to the Castellana Caves (taking about 35 minutes per way). You can join an English speaking guided tour of one of the most amazing natural wonders in Puglia and see the array of stalactites, stalagmites and fossils that can be found in this underground grotto which started to form about 90 million years ago. Or perhaps you'd like to spend the day on the coast and take a taxi to Monopoli, which is approximately 30 minutes' drive away, and home to defensive sea walls, a cathedral and even a castle. The tall white buildings and rocky walls are offset by the bright blue waters of the Adriatic Sea dotted with traditional fishing boats and lined with narrow sandy beaches from where you can take a dip in the sea.



Accommodation: Hotel Trullidea (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Olive oil tasting; visit to Otranto and chance for a coastal walk

We leave the trullis and head to Masseria Frantoio Ipogeo, which an underground olive press originally created by monks in the limestone caves that form here naturally. The monks released the importance of keeping the olive oil at a constant temperature in order for it to last and to get the best flavour, and the caves offered the perfect solution. We'll have the chance to sample the olive oil with taralli biscuits and wine. We drive on to the historic seafront town of Otranto where our Explore Leader will take us to visit the cathedral to see the amazing 'tree of life' mosaic floor and to have a brief orientation walk through the maze of the narrow alleys. After free time for lunch there's the chance to take an easy coastal walk along flat, gravel roads to the old bauxite quarry lake before returning back to Otranto. The almost turquoise waters of the lake are surrounded by the red earth of the old quarry walls, which makes it a very photogenic spot. Along the way to the lake there are spots ideal for swimming or paddling along the coast. The route takes around an hour each way, covering a total distance of seven kilometres. If you don't fancy joining the walk then you can further explore the town or relax on the sandy beaches. Later this afternoon we drive on to Lecce, which is nicknamed the 'Florence of the south' due to its rich Baroque heritage seen in the city's palaces, churches and statues made from the local cream coloured limestone. This evening is free for you to have dinner and explore the city.



Accommodation: Hotel Eos (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Walking tour of Lecce; free afternoon to visit the Museo Faggiano

We start today with a guided walking tour of Lecce to see the Basilica di Santa Croce, Piazza del Duomo (cathedral square) and the cathedral itself. The Baroque basilica took over two centuries to construct and has a richly decorated facade with carved figures and topped with a large rose window. Following our tour the rest of the day is free. In the city you'll find a Roman amphitheatre, a statue of Saint Oronzo, which is said to have healing powers and the Triumphal Arch, which is one of the three main gates into the old centre. You might choose to visit the Museo Faggiano, which will give you an even greater insight into the city's long history.



Accommodation: Hotel Eos (or similar)



Premium Hotel



Single room available



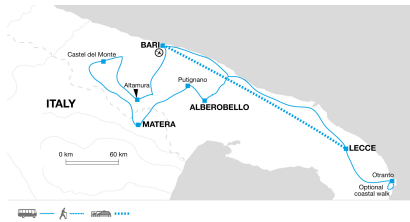
Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Train to Bari where the trip ends

This morning we will take the train to Bari Central Station with our Explore Leader where our trip ends. For those departing early you will continue by train straight to Bari Airport. If your flight isn't until later today then there are luggage storage facilities at the station that you could use and then go into the city for your free time. Your Explore Leader will give you your train ticket for the journey to the airport and advise you on when the trains will be departing.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

This trip offers the perfect balance of culture, food and drink and the stunning Adriatic coast. You'll get to stay in the remarkable trulli and sassi buildings, which are unique to the 'heel of Italy' and not an experience that is offered by most other operators.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7



Transport

Bus
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

5 nights standard hotel
2 nights premium hotel

Trip information

Country information

Italy Holidays & Tours

Climate

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Italian

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

Matera: Gravina Sotterranea entrance with guided tour €7.00. Please note that the cobbled streets in Gravina can be slippery and due to its gorge location there are a number of steps around the town and also down into the Sotterranea. Alberobello: Train to Locorotondo is approximately €1.10 per way. Train to Castellana Caves is approximately €1.80 per way and the entrance and guided tour for the partial route is €12.00 and full route is €16.00. The times for the English speaking tours can be found here: <http://www.grottedicastellana.it/en/timetable/> Taxi to Monopoli is around €25.00 per vehicle per way. Bari: Bari Centrale Train Station luggage storage is open daily from 08.00-20.00 and is €6.00 for five hours.

Clothing

July and August are the hottest months and lightweight cotton clothing is best. During spring and autumn temperatures can be lower or drop during the evenings and there is also a stronger possibility of rain. You'll need your swimming costume and light rainwear may be needed at any time of year. A warm fleece is recommended for cooler evenings.

Footwear

We recommend taking comfortable walking shoes for exploring and trainers or sandals for relaxing.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a day pack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Equipment

We advise taking a water bottle for our included walks as well as sun glasses, sunscreen and a sun hat. In case of emergency we recommend that you carry a first aid kit and a torch. Bring a swimming suit and towel for taking a dip in the Adriatic Sea. You might find walking poles useful, as some of the towns visited are cobbled, hilly and have a number of uneven steps.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly please allow £20.00 for tipping. In order to make

things easier for you, the Explore Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Country Information

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Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Dinner price

£10.00 - 14.00

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£1.00 - 2.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

ATM Availability

Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

In Alberobello we will stay in traditional trulli houses. Our group will be split between several different houses, but they're only a short distance apart and are all of a similar size and standard. Each trulli has its own bathroom, but this may be shared between two bedrooms within the same trulli. In Matera we will stay in original sassi cave buildings. At this unique hotel each of the rooms are different sizes and layouts and some are located within the caves themselves and others in the ancient entry buildings attached to the caves. They are all only a short distance apart and rooms are en suite. There are excellent views from the hotels' terrace over the surrounding cave dwellings and Matera Cathedral.

Essential information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice click [here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa Information

Italy: Visas are not required by UK, E.U. Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US or Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. Read more about them [here](#).

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Included activities

A number of the towns and cities visited on this trip have cobbled streets that can be uneven and slippery underfoot. This is especially true of Matera where the hilly streets also include a number of irregular steps.

Non refundable permits

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Vaccinations

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider.
