

EXPLORE!



Puglia on Two Wheels

Cycling along quiet provincial roads we discover the 'heel' of Italy in the sun-drenched region of Puglia. On easy rides we enjoy wide panoramas and big skies as we traverse a gently rolling land with endless fields of grain, gnarled olive trees and ancient vines. We explore Alta Murgia National Park, the famous ancient 'sassi' troglodyte town of Matera, whitewashed villages and the rugged Adriatic coastline. Along the way we introduce the superb Pugliese cuisine with cheeses from a local 'caseificio', a visit to a family-run bakery and wine tasting.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Alta Murgia National Park** - Ride through a perfect example of Mediterranean Steppe to impressive castle
- ★ **Matera** - Ancient city 'sassi' cave dwellings, one of Europe's oldest settlements
- ★ **Local delicacies** - Primitivo wine, mozzarella di bufala, fresh antipasti
- ★ **Tastings** - Visit, explanation and tastings of local bread, cheese and wine
- ★ **Centenary olive groves** - Gnarly odd-shaped olive trees
- ★ **Alberobello and Monopoli** - Whitewashed towns with the fairytale-like 'trulli' dwellings
- ★ **Adriatic coast** - Superb coastal vistas and crystal-clear waters

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.

CYCLING GRADE:

Easy

Suitable for anyone who enjoys easy and relatively short rides on flat or gently undulating terrain. Ideal if you simply want to explore a region by bike at a relaxed pace.

GROUP SIZE:

10 - 16

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 Airport

Arriving at Bari Airport (BRI), the transfer to our first hotel base in Altamura will take just under an hour. A quaint small town located on the Murge plateau, Altamura is renowned for its cartwheel size bread, Gothic Cathedral and for the nearly intact skeleton of the 'Altamura Man' that was found here dating back 400,000 years. There will be time for an introductory briefing either before or after we settle into our rooms. Time to relax and unwind and enjoy our first evening meal (not included).



Accommodation: Hotel Svevia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Castel del Monte and the Alta Murgia National Park

After breakfast we have a short (1 hour) bus ride to Castel del Monte - a 13th century citadel situated on a hill, towering over the edge of the Alta Murgia National Park. The imposing castle is a UNESCO World Heritage site and source of inspiration for the novel 'The Name of the Rose'. Around the castle fine wines are produced of the 'uva di Troia' (Troy) grape variety. There will be free time to visit the castle (optional). Our first cycle ride starts from the castle and we make our way along remote roads gently winding through the soft hills lined with ancient stone walls, dotted with small trulli huts and huge abandoned sheep farms. There are not many people around here and the vast open views are spectacular. Our route takes us through Alta Murgia National Park and leads us eventually to our hotel back in Altamura. Today's ride is accompanied by a support vehicle. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 53 kilometres (total ascent 560 metres and descent 530 metres).



Accommodation: Hotel Svevia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Cycle south to Matera

Before leaving Altamura this morning, we pay a visit to a bakery for a guided visit to learn all about the local art of bread making and to taste their various products. Afterwards we head south into the wide open countryside and on remote roads, crossing grassy meadows and wheat fields as we ride to Matera. On the way we will enjoy marvellous panoramas of endless fields and immense blue skies dotted with small white clouds above. The remote back roads lead us to a natural balcony with commanding views before this grand emptiness subsides and literally the first forms of civilization reappear as we approach Matera. The ancient town of the 'sassi' (stone dwellings) originates from a prehistoric troglodyte settlement that is suspected to be one of the first human settlements in Italy. Roaming through its maze of narrow allies, up and down the stone stairs you will find yourself transported to a distant past. Many of the houses you encounter are really only caverns, and the streets in some parts of the 'sassi' are often located on the rooftops of other houses. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 30 kilometres (total ascent 330 metres and descent 450 metres).



Accommodation: Hotel Sassi (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Discover the sassi of Matera; afternoon ride to Alberobello

This morning is free to spend at your leisure exploring the magnificent sites of Matera. Your Explore Leader can arrange a guided tour with a licensed guide for those interested. Until the late 1980s this was considered an area of poverty, since these houses were, and in most areas still are, mostly uninhabitable. Current local administration has become more tourism-oriented and has promoted regeneration with the aid of the European Union, the government, UNESCO and Hollywood with several films made here including Mel Gibson's Last Temptation of Christ. Sit down on a terrace of one of the bars for a cappuccino and soak up this magical atmosphere. Around midday we bid farewell to Matera and drive (1 hour) to Putignano Agri where we visit a local 'caseificio' (cheese factory) for a cheese making lesson. Afterwards we enjoy a light lunch (not included in cost) and can eat the cheese we have produced. We will learn about cheese in its various shapes and sizes such as mozzarella, ricotta, provolone and scamorza. In the afternoon we cycle to our next destination - Alberobello. On tiny hidden back roads bordered by stone walls we cycle through the quiet countryside passing by 'masserie' (fortified farmsteads), grain fields, olive groves, and encounter many 'trulli' as we near Alberobello. These curious dry stone huts with their cone shaped roofs scattered throughout the countryside seem to belong to the world of elves. In Alberobello there are many fine examples of these picturesque dwellings. Our hotel with pool at the edge of town is the perfect place to unwind and explore the town's sites. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 33 kilometres (total ascent 225 metres and descent 385 metres).



Accommodation: Hotel Cour di Puglia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Loop ride to Locorotondo and Cisternino

This morning we head out by bike once more along quiet back roads that wind through rolling hills dotted by endless olive groves. In the town of Cisternino we take a break to visit the historic centre, before riding in the support vehicle or cycling an optional further 5 km (10 km return) to visit a traditional olive mill to taste some of their 'green gold'. Back on our bikes and nearing the town of Locorotondo, vineyards start to dominate the countryside as this is an area where sublime white wines (both still and sparkling) are produced. The name Locorotondo means 'round place' and this is exactly what the shape of the old town is like. It is listed as one of the most beautiful hamlets in Italy and its heritage includes several beautiful churches and a labyrinth of whitewashed alleys. It is a delight to explore on foot. Finally we continue by bike into the countryside again, following quiet stone wall-lined roads past dozens of 'trulli' buildings scattered in the fields. Finally we make one last stop enjoy a wine tasting at a local masserie (farmhouse), before returning the last 10 km to Alberobello. Today's ride is accompanied by a support vehicle so it is possible to opt out of any of the sections of the ride. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 44 kilometres (total ascent 610 metres and descent 610 metres) with a further optional 10 km available.



Accommodation: Hotel Cour di Puglia (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Cycle Alberobello to Monopoli

There is free time this morning to explore Alberobello, before we set off on our ride to the Adriatic coast. Our route leads us once more through beautiful scenery of ochre-coloured fields dotted with gnarly olive trees and trulli of all kinds and sizes. We cycle along a panoramic coastal road that is a natural balcony overlooking the beautiful blue waters of the Adriatic. We descend on winding roads, feeling the sea air to arrive at the town of Conversano. The coastal planes are cultivated with a variety of crops and dotted with elegant 'masserie' farmsteads. We cycle on to reach Monopoli - a bustling fishing town, with splendid white-washed houses, narrow alleyways and our charming accommodation positioned in the heart of the old town. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 35 kilometres (total ascent 290 metres and descent 705 metres).



Accommodation: Hotel Albergo Diffuso (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 7 - Loop ride to Savelletri

From Monopoli we ride south along the rugged Adriatic coastline and are rewarded with magnificent views of the intensely green vegetation lining the rocky beaches and the deep blue sea waters. It's an easy and pleasant ride to Savelletri and before the quaint little hamlet there is the option to visit the archaeological site of Egnazia, and its museum where finds from the Bronze Age are on display. You can choose to spend some time at the beach or continue this easy ride through the opulent farmland until the lighthouse at Torre Canne. Back at the hotel we enjoy the rest of the afternoon at leisure before we celebrate the final night of our trip. Our total cycling distance today is approximately 45 kilometres (Total ascent 50 metres and descent 50 metres).



Accommodation: Hotel Albergo Diffuso (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

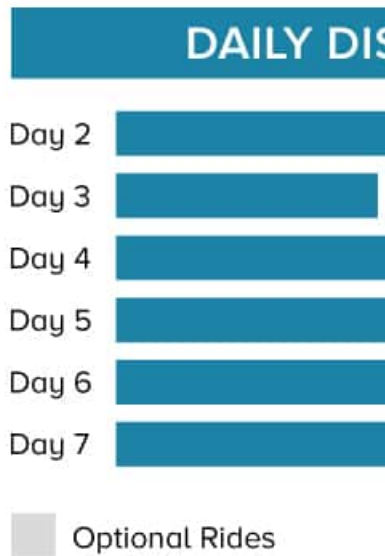
DAY 8 - Trip ends at Bari Airport

Today we drive (1 hour) to Bari Airport where the trip ends.



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Cycling information



General cycling information

On this trip we cycle 240 km over six days (an average of 40 km per day). Two of the cycling days are circular routes and therefore optional. We travel mainly on quiet country roads, on flat or gently undulating terrain. The Explore Leader accompanies on bike throughout and there is a support vehicle on days 2 and 5. Maps and route notes are provided so you can choose to cycle individually or in groups. We have graded the route as easy.

Bike included

21 gear Lombardo Taranto 400 hybrid bikes Electric bikes (e-bikes) are available for an additional cost for the duration of the holiday (£85). You will be required to pay a refundable deposit upon collection of the e-bike in country. Please contact us for more details or to request your e-bike.

Bike information

Your included bike is a 21 gear Lombardo Taranto 400 hybrid and will be the correct frame size for your height. Female and male frames are allocated accordingly when booking unless you specifically request otherwise. A 20 litre rear pannier and water bottle holder are included as well as the facility to fit your own pedals or saddle if you wish to bring them. A support vehicle accompanies the rides on days 2 and 5. We provide spare parts and take care of the day to day maintenance. All you need to bring is your own helmet.

Cycling grade

Easy



Why book this trip

Unlike many other operators, we include the hire of your bike in the overall cost of the holiday: you don't need to bring your own or pay extra to hire one locally. We also provide a support vehicle, spare parts and take care of day to day bike maintenance. All you need bring is your own helmet.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7



Transport

Bus
Bicycle



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Driver
Driver(s)



Accommodation

7 nights standard 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

Castel del Monte: 10 Euros per person (a guided visit of 45mins can be arranged by the Explore Leader, costing 60 Euros total shared between those interested) Matera: Guided tour with local guide 15 Euros per person (minimum 6 participants) that includes entrance to Rockhouse Museum and one of the stone churches Egnazia Bronze Age site and museum - 6 Euros

Clothing

When cycling: quick drying cycle tops, padded cycle shorts, lightweight wind and water proof jacket and warmer breathable layers where local conditions require. General: Pack essentially for mild or hot weather depending on the time of the year.

Footwear

If you are not bringing cycle shoes then try to bring stiff-soled shoes as these are better for cycling - transmitting your energy into the pedals more efficiently. This becomes more relevant and recommended the more demanding the grade and distances to cover. SPD cycle shoes are not well suited to trip that combine sightseeing with cycling. Comfortable shoes, trainers, sandals or flip flops are useful when not on the bike.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

We recommend you bring a daypack and one main piece of luggage (total allowance: 44lb/20kg) which will be transported between hotels while you cycle. Check the bike details section to see if a pannier or handlebar bag is provided on the bike.

Equipment

On all Explore cycle holidays we strongly recommend you bring along and wear your cycle helmet. In case of an accident resulting in personal injury, certain insurance policies are invalidated in cases where a helmet was not being worn. Cycle glasses to protect against dust, pollen and the sun, padded cycle gloves and a water bottle or water delivery system (e.g. camelback or platypus) are also useful. You may choose to bring your own gel seat cover for added comfort. If a handle bar bag or pannier is not provided (check bike details) then you may like to bring a small rucksack to wear while cycling. Other items to consider bringing are a sunhat and sun cream, torch, earplugs and insect repellent. Please carry some or all of your cycling equipment e.g. helmet as part of your hand luggage.

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 recognized 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. In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Country Information

Italy Holidays & Tours

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, Bicycle

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.

Standard - Our 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.

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 and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

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.

Italy Holidays & Tours

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.