



Secrets of Puglia 2026

Welcome to wonderful Puglia: the 'heel' of Italy's boot. Filled with gallant tales and striking vistas, every step of this 9-day journey will take you somewhere new and refreshing. Bask in the middle of sun-drenched piazzas, slumber inside caves and stop time with a sample or two of locally made dishes such as burrata, orecchiette and panzerotti. Whether you're intrigued by its history or its cuisine, know that this calm adventure will ignite your soul in a new and profound way.





About your tour notes

These tour notes contain everything you need to know before your tour departs – from where to meet your fellow guests and local guide to what essentials to pack for your journey. We recommend you print this document out and bring it with you on your tour. Give a copy to loved ones at home so they can follow your adventure, too.

Important: please refresh this document as close to your departure as possible to ensure you're equipped with the latest information available.

Hotel Royal Continental @ 18:00

Via Partenope, 38, Naples, 80121

Hotel Royal Continental @ 16:00

Via Partenope, 38, Napoli, 80121

Worth noting

Please note, on Days 6 and 7 you will stay in accommodation which has individual sets of steps that lead into each room.



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Tour highlights

- ✓ Immerse yourself in the bewitching history of the *Sassi di Matera* cave dwellings
- ✓ Compare rich flavours of Manduria's famous Primitivo wines at a local tasting
- ✓ Discover the awe-inspiring expanse of Castellana Caves

More inclusions

- ✓ 8 breakfasts, 2 lunches, 3 dinners
- ✓ 8 nights in thoughtfully selected accommodation
- ✓ Luxury minicoach

Currencies you'll use

- Italy - EUR



Included meals

Breakfast (B) is included daily.

Some of your lunches and dinners are also included, either in hotels or local restaurants. These are indicated by (L) and (D) in the itinerary.

Please note that drinks will not always be included.

We will do our best to accommodate any specific dietary requirements you may have. Please ensure to make these clear to us before your tour begins so we can communicate them to our hotels, restaurants and suppliers.

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Your itinerary

Day 1 | Naples (Italy)

Ahh Puglia! A recipe of sunshine, tangy olives, creamy burrata and a swirl of tales itching to be told. Our 9-day journey begins in Naples where every street is filled with a vibrancy that'll pour into your soul. Here, we'll meet a group of people who'll not only share this journey with us, but will each wander a unique path of their own. After settling in, we'll have the opportunity to get to know one another over a delicious welcome meal. Which Naples staple will be on the menu this evening?!

Included today



Accommodation

Hotel Royal Continental (or similar)



Meals

+ Dinner

Day 2 | Naples – Bari – Polignano a Mare Region

It's the first full day of our calm adventure. Tuck into a bite of *cornetto* (Italian croissant) with your cappuccino before we take to the road, driving eastwards to our first port of call: Bari. En route, we'll savour an artisan burrata and mozzarella tasting experience led by a local *casaro* (cheesemaker). *Delizioso!*

Then, breathe in the scent of fresh Adriatic water as it follows you on a brief stroll around Bari with a local guide. Seek sights such as ladies making pasta by hand along narrow streets and a white-washed cathedral that stands tall in the city's heart. Following our stroll, we'll continue onwards to a family-owned hotel in the Polignano a Mare region where another included dinner awaits. After, it's up to you whether you spend the evening relaxing beside the pool or on top of crisp, white sheets.

Included today



Accommodation

San Lorenzo Boutique Hotel & Spa (or similar)



Experiences

+ Burrata and mozzarella cheese tasting
+ Walking tour of Bari with local guide



Meals

+ Breakfast
+ Dinner

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Day 3 | Polignano a Mare Region

Buongiorno! It's another beautiful day on this expertly crafted tour of Puglia – and you'll be carving your own path with some free time to explore breathtaking Polignano a Mare. Hop on one of two provided shuttle services – one morning and one afternoon option – from our hotel to the town and spend a few hours delving into its labyrinth of narrow, picturesque streets.

After working up an appetite, you'll be spoilt for choice by vibrant local restaurants for either lunch or dinner. Tuck into some succulent local seafood – octopus or salmon – or try traditional mushroom ravioli. Then, return to the hotel and just... relax. This is a journey that's been designed to slow down the pace, after all.

Included today



Accommodation

San Lorenzo Boutique Hotel
& Spa (or similar)



Meals

+ Breakfast



Day 4 | Polignano a Mare Region – Castellana Caves and Alberobello – Lecce

Say *ciao* to Polignano a Mare as the next part of our journey calls to our spirit. The first stop of the day certainly doesn't disappoint! *Grotte di Castellana* is an expansive underground cave system. At every twist and turn, you'll see a cluster of sparkling stalactites or glimmering stalagmites, each one as unique as its neighbour. Explore at your own pace and witness legendary shapes such as *The She Wolf of Rome*, *The Ballerina's Leg* and *The Owl* – named by past explorers whose now-invisible footsteps trace every crevice.

Puglia's enchanting embrace doesn't stop there for the day. Onwards to Alberobello – a UNESCO World Heritage site that will stay in your mind's eye far longer than the afternoon we'll spend here. The *trulli* looks like the homes of gnomes in a tale that begins *once-upon-a-time* rather than homes of peasants from long ago. With a local guide, you'll saunter along the cobblestone roads seeking the town's slumbering secrets and visit its church, homes and shops along the way.

Ready to step back in time to a 16th-century palace? You're in luck with tonight's hotel at Lecce! Nestled in a narrow street you could easily get lost in, our family-owned accommodation is filled with a regalia that'll straighten your spine and tilt your chin – as though an invisible crown has been placed upon your brow. Be swept off your feet on a large bed, get lost among the uniquely decorated rooms, or escape beyond the palace walls with a wander through the old town close by.

Included today



Accommodation

Palazzo Rollo (or similar)



Experiences

- + Entrance to Castellano Caves
- + Walking tour of Alberobello with local guide



Meals

- + Breakfast

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Day 5 | Lecce

Fully rested like a royal, it's time to enjoy a full day in Lecce! Grab an espresso to wake all your senses in preparation for our walking tour this morning. We'll wander past Lecce Cathedral, dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Whether you're religious or not, you'll feel its staggering presence. Another unmissable monument is *Basilica di Santa Croce*. Trace your eyes across gargoyles with gruesome faces and stone statues which stand proud as you learn of its sacred symbolism.

The rest of the day is at your leisure! Where to begin? Perhaps a bite to eat to satisfy your hunger – it's been a couple of hours since breakfast, after all! Local delicacies are dotted around Lecce, so there won't be far to wander until you find delicious cuisine. How about *rustico leccese*? This small pastry bite, accompanied by a glass of *negrocamaro* Puglian wine is sure to go down a treat!

After an afternoon of schmoozing the streets as the sun warms your skin, revel in more Italian food – in our book, you can never have enough! A unique (and surprising) plate if you want to dabble in extreme tastes: *carne di cavallo* aka horse meat. It's a typical dish in this part of the world and deserves a try! When in Rome – or Lecce, in our case.

Included today



Accommodation

Palazzo Rollo (or similar)



Experiences

+ Walking tour of Lecce
with Tour Leader



Meals

+ Breakfast



Day 6 | Lecce – Manduria – Itria Valley

The beautiful thing (well – one of them!) about experiencing this part of Italy is that you'll discover ancient Greek heritage, too. Our first taste is in the town of Manduria where the King of Sparta died during battle in 338 BC. Its cream-coloured architecture against the backdrop of bright blue skies are enough to take your breath away, but as we stroll through its heart, we can almost hear echoes of striking swords, warrior grunts and the yell of victories past.

What better way to experience this realm than a tasting of the area's famous Primitivo wine? A blend of intense flavours and indigenous grapes will awaken your senses in a tale of tradition, technique and taste. First, we'll wander through a special museum where feasts and music come alive with every step. Then, the fun part! Sip an array of flavours whilst picking at a board of local treats: cheese, salame, *cranu stumpatu* (a local farmer dish of grain, extra virgin olive oil and onions) and more.

Minds full and horizons widened, we'll move on to Itria Valley. Stop for lunch, or gelato, and savour every moment this path takes you. Later, we'll head to our history-laden hotel in the heart of Old Town where each stone room glistens with a touch of modern style.

Included today



Accommodation

Hotel Petrantiche Albergo
Diffuso (or similar)



Experiences

+ Wine tasting in Manduria
with light lunch



Meals

+ Breakfast
+ Lunch



Day 7 | Itria Valley – Ostuni – Itria Valley

Who wants to test their cooking skills? You're in luck! Today we'll be making homemade pasta – from scratch! There's no better place on earth to learn the intricacies of this dish. Our backdrop is Ostuni, also known as *La Città Bianca* aka the 'White Town' with its stronghold of white-washed buildings standing proud atop a hill – like the ancient gods of Mount Olympus. And our cooking location? A traditional farmhouse... Hundreds of voices have echoed through these rooms, but today it's our local cook we'll listen to as they guide us through creating our own lunch!

After our meal, we'll have some free time to wander through the city. The breeze may whip off our sunhats, but that won't stop us from discovering something new at every turn. Overhear animated conversations in the middle of Piazza della Libertà. Take a calming breath in the presence of Ostuni Cathedral. Or escape to the beach a short 15-minute drive away. Our day will end back in Itria Valley – *buona notte!*

Included today



Accommodation

Hotel Petrantiche Albergo
Diffuso (or similar)



Experiences

+ Pasta-making cooking
class in Ostuni with lunch



Meals

+ Breakfast
+ Lunch

Day 8 | Itria Valley – Matera

It's our last full day together, so let's cheers our cappuccinos in gratitude that we're living in the moment. Next on our agenda, the jewel of the Basilicata region today, Matera. Tumbled together in a maze of mismatched buildings, ancient stones and crumbling homes, this city built of cave dwellings swirls with tales of life since Neolithic and Paleolithic times. We'll meet a local guide who'll usher us along narrow paths to sites such as Piazza Vittorio Veneto and Casa Grotta, revealing secrets every step of the way.

Later, we'll bunk down in a cave – our unique accommodation for the night. Each room in tonight's family-owned hotel is different. Before you settle in to dream of a time from the past, we'll gather for our final group dinner at a nearby restaurant – perhaps *rienero ventresca* (wild boar sausage) or *strazzata* (local focaccia) will be on the menu!

Included today



Accommodation

Matera Hotel Sassi (or
similar)



Experiences

+ Walking tour of Matera
with local guide (including
Chiesa Rupestre and
Casa Grotto)



Meals

+ Breakfast
+ Dinner

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Day 9 | Matera – Altamura – Naples

Savour every morsel of breakfast this morning – it may be your last in Italy for a short while! Then, we'll delve underground at the Palombaro Grande Matera: a 16th-century cistern that once collected millions of litres of rain and natural spring water. After marvelling this feat of medieval engineering, we'll venture onwards in the minicoach to Altamura where a mouth-watering local treat awaits...

Altamura's famed durum wheat bread, *pane di altamura*, was first baked in 1423 – and we'll get to taste a platter of focaccia, bread and bruschetta, lovingly created by local bakers. Prepare your senses for another Italian treat!

For the road back to Naples, we suggest picking up a box of *mostaccioli* or *marzapani* to share between you all. What a pleasure – and a journey – this has been!

Included today

Experiences

- + Visit Palombaro Grande Matera
- + Bread tasting in Altamura with bakery visit

Meals

- + Breakfast



Travel advice

Finances

Changing money

Cash: Foreign money can be changed at banks, airports, some railway and tube stations, and at major hotels (though at a less favourable rate).

Credit cards: Visa and MasterCard are widely accepted. American Express is only accepted in some larger establishments.

Cash machines: ATMS are widely available.

Tipping

Tipping is entirely at your discretion. If you feel you have received exceptional service, it is recommended that you tip £1-2/€ per day for Drivers and £4- 5/€ per day for Tour Leaders.

Insurance

Before travelling with Back-Roads Touring, it is compulsory for all guests to take out comprehensive travel insurance. Please ensure your insurance covers medical expenses (including repatriation), cancellation cover, loss or damage to baggage and personal effects, money and personal liability.

We recommend you carry your insurance details with you at all times. You may be asked to provide details of your medical insurance or a payment guarantee in some countries before medical assistance can be provided.

For more information, please see our [FAQ page](#).

If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to contact our friendly Customer Service team [here](#).

Passports and visas

Please ensure your passport is valid for at least six months after the last day of your tour. Some countries will refuse entry if you do not have at least six months validity remaining on your passport after your departure date. Depending on your nationality, you may require a visa to enter certain



countries.

It is your responsibility to obtain visas prior to your tour's departure. To determine which visas you'll need, you can consult either your own government's website or the government websites of the countries in which you will be travelling.

Please note: Some visas can take up to six weeks to acquire, so don't leave it until the last minute. Also, bear in mind that the validity of a visa often runs from its date of issue rather than the date of entry into the country. Please check with the appropriate embassy/embassies prior to departure as requirements do change periodically.

We advise you to either carry a photocopy of your passport (and visa, if applicable) with you while abroad, or to ensure that you leave a copy with relatives back at home. This will enable the local embassy or high commission to arrange a replacement if the original should be lost or stolen. If you do take copies with you on your tour, please ensure that you keep these separate from your original documents.

Medication and mobility

Whilst on your tour, we want you to have the smoothest journey possible which requires x mobility conditions:

- You must be fit enough to get on and off the vehicle on a regular basis, and to walk around towns and villages or to attractions.
- You must be able to walk up and down stairs and use a shower over the bath.

Please note that, unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate mobility scooter or wheelchair users as we frequently stay in traditional-style hotels and the majority do not have lifts or ground-floor rooms.

If you take medicine for certain conditions, such as diabetes or heart problems, please carry it with you at all times.

Please declare any medical conditions you may have in advance of your tour. If you are in any doubt as to whether our tours are suitable for you, please contact our friendly Customer Service team [here](#).



Mental health and wellbeing

Culture shock, homesickness and periods of feeling down happen regardless of age. Be rest assured that if you're feeling low, your Tour Leader and Driver will do their utmost to make you smile.

Measures you can take to look after your mental health and wellbeing while on the road with us are:

- Call loved ones. Hearing a familiar voice whilst in an unfamiliar destination can help ground you and remind you you're not alone.
- Eat well. Nobody feels their best when they're hungry. There are plenty of nutritious culinary delights to be savoured along the road!
- Integrate with your fellow guests. The more you socialise with the group, the less likely you'll feel homesick.

Transport

We travel in premium mini-coaches equipped with comfortable seats, air conditioning and large windows for enjoying the view.

With far more flexibility than a standard-size coach, we're able to take the scenic route – winding through beautiful countryside to the heart of tiny villages and coastal towns.

Will I have regular access to Wi-Fi?

Most accommodation we stay in will offer free Wi-Fi as well as many restaurants and cafes you may visit. If you would like more regular internet access without large roaming fees, you can purchase a Back-Roads Touring eSIM [here](#).



What to Pack

Based on our experience, the following items are essential.

Please note, this is a general packing list for Back-Roads Touring tours. What you pack will depend on the countries you're visiting as well as the time of year you plan to travel.

Clothing

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ✓ Sun hat | ✓ Long-sleeved tops | ✓ Light jacket |
| ✓ Sunglasses | ✓ Short-sleeved tops | ✓ Waterproof jacket |
| ✓ Sleepwear | ✓ Shorts/skirts | ✓ Trousers |
| ✓ Warm jacket | ✓ Socks | ✓ Swimwear |
| ✓ Underwear | ✓ Smart casual evening wear | ✓ Walking/comfortable shoes |

Other essentials

- | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--------------------|
| ✓ Multi-use adapter plug | ✓ Toiletries | ✓ Camera |
| ✓ Batteries | ✓ Sunscreen | ✓ Towel |
| ✓ Umbrella | ✓ Reusable water bottle | ✓ Insect repellent |
| ✓ Any personal medication | ✓ Basic medical kit (paracetamol, aspirin, plasters etc) | |

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How much luggage can I bring

As we travel in mini-coaches, luggage space is limited. Here's what you can take with you on tour:



1 x suitcase



1 x small carry-on bag
(backpack or handbag)

If you have more luggage, please make arrangements to store it prior to joining the tour. **We are unable to carry extra luggage on the mini-coach.**

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FAQs

What's the weather like?

The weather in southern Italy varies depending on the time of year. Generally, summers are hot and dry, and from mid-June to the end of August temperatures can reach 40°C (104°F), so sun hats and sunscreen are essential!

Which type of hotels do we stay in?

Our thoughtfully selected accommodation is full of charm and historic details – expect elegant country inns, grand town centre hotels and even the odd castle! For this reason, rooms vary in size, and most hotels don't have lifts – meaning you'll likely need to access your room via stairs. Porterage will be included wherever possible.

Although air conditioning is mostly unavailable in historic buildings, fans will be provided during hot spells. Most hotels have bathtubs with overhead showers (rather than walk-in showers), so you'll be able to enjoy a soak at the end of the day.

How long are the travel days? Which is the longest?

Our longest travel day includes approximately four hours of driving – however this may alter due to circumstances on the road. On average, driving time amounts to two hours.

That's everything!

We can't wait to welcome you on tour.

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