



Italy With Friends Tours

"PUGLIA TO MATERA"

Highlights of The Heel of the Boot

October 15 – 24, 2027

Remember, you will arrive in Europe the day after you depart the USA.

Day 1 – Arrival Day – Benvenuto! – Welcome to Italy – Friday, October 15, 2027

Welcome to Puglia, the sunny and windy "heel of the Italian boot". The region of Puglia (or Apulia) has been tempting travelers since the ancient Greeks first glimpsed its rugged coastal beauty centuries ago. This region has a diverse cultural heritage like no other in Italy that has left its mark on everything from architecture, languages and even the food. Olive oil production has been an important part of this region for centuries and the huge 1000-year old trees can attest to that.

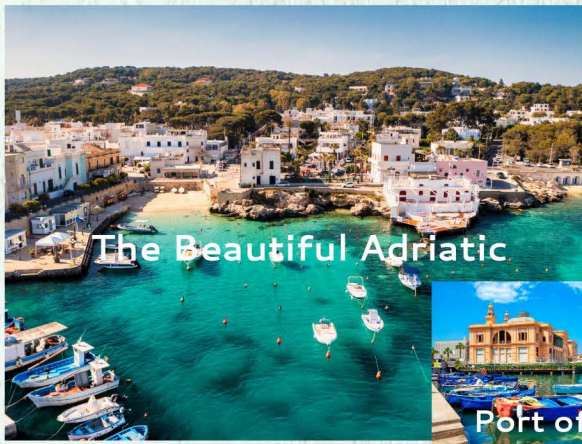
Bari, the capital of Puglia, is an ancient seaport with narrow lanes and a colorful harbor. We will visit this historic port and its "old town". The 11th century Basilica di San Nicola, which houses the relics of Bari's patron, Saint Nicholas, is a major site and one of Bari's most beautiful. Afterwards, we will enjoy a welcome dinner with an amazing view of the harbor. (D)

Day 2 – Lecce, the Crown Jewel of the Mezzogiorno – Saturday, October 16, 2027

This morning we head to the town of Lecce, known as "The Florence of the South". We will spend the next two nights here while exploring the Salento Peninsula. Lecce has an amazing history and traditions. From its Roman heritage, you find the Amphitheatre set in the center of town. Lecce also has an abundance of baroque architecture in its churches and palaces that is unlike any found elsewhere in Italy. You will have a guided tour and learn all about its secrets. Lecce has a sprawling town center, and you will have plenty of free time to check it out before we meet in the evening to enjoy our meal together and to taste the famous local cuisine. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 3 – Treasures of the Salento Peninsula, Otranto, Castro and the Stunning Adriatic – Sunday, October 17, 2027

We begin the day in the seaside town of Otranto, one of Puglia's most vibrant towns, overlooking a stunning harbor recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage site. Otranto was also named as one of the "Borghi piu'belli d'Italia". Here we will explore the charming historical center and visit the beautiful cathedral boasting breathtaking mosaics and the skulls and bones of 800 martyrs. It is here that St Peter is fabled to have celebrated the first western mass and from where crusaders and the knight templars left for the Holy Land. On a clear day you can see Albania across the Adriatic from the easternmost part of Italy. It is only about 50 miles away.



The Beautiful Adriatic



Port of Bari



Roman Ruins in Lecce.



The Bottom of the Heel.

Then we drive a bit further south along the picturesque coast that is lined with ancient Roman watch towers to the seaside town of Castro, a beautiful fishing village where the town, complete with a Medieval Castle, appears to cling to the cliffs. Here we will enjoy lunch together. Today's journey continues towards the end of the heel of Italy "Santa Maria de Leuca" where you can admire the line where the two seas meet. (the Adriatic & the Ionian)

We will return to Lecce where you will have the evening free. (B) (L) Moderate

Day 4 – The Famous Vino de Puglia and "The White Cities" – Monday, October 18, 2027

Today we will focus on one of the most wonderful treasures of Italy, Vino! The Puglian wine tradition dates back from pre-roman times. Wines are made with indigenous grapes such as Negroamaro, Primitivo and Nero di Troia, just to name a few.

Today, we will journey deep into the countryside and discover the secrets of the winemakers of the famous Negroamaro wine made from a red grape of the same name grown almost exclusively in Puglia, particularly in Salento. We will visit the vineyards and the canteen for a tasting of wines in combination with local products and delicacies.

After our fun in the vineyards, we will drive through the lovely countryside dotted with some of the largest olive trees in the world. We will take a short photo stop in the picturesque medieval village of Locorotondo, whose name means "round place". Here gleaming white buildings swirl down the contours of a hilltop setting. This village was also voted as one of the "Borghi piu belli d'Italia".

One of the best ways to experience the culture of this region is with a stay in a "Masseria", a historic farm center, originally with all the estate's workers living among the fortified buildings. Agriturismo Masseria Torricella is typical of this type of accommodation found all over the region. Set among 40 hectares (about 100 acres) of private greenery, Masseria Torricella is in the heart of the Itria Valley, about 3 miles from Alberobello. You will see many of the famous "Trulli" stone houses located in the area. You can enjoy walks through the vineyard or along countryside paths. You can also enjoy the Wellness Spa located in the 14th century Franciscan Monastery, the oldest part of the Masseria.

After time to check in, we will gather to toast our adventures with a glass of that Puglian wine that we now know all about. Salute! We will then enjoy our dinner together of Apulian cuisine made with local organic products, many "farm to table" from the Masseria itself. (B) (D) Moderate



The White City of Ostuni



Masseria Torricella

Day 5 – Into the Fairytale, Alberobello – Tuesday, October 19, 2027

You will have some time to enjoy Masseria Torricella this morning. You might want to check out the services for body and mind wellness like the massage room or swimming pool with hydromassage. Perhaps you might like to spend some time trekking in the woods. We will enjoy a light lunch together at the Masseria.

Later, we will drive to nearby Alberobello, another UNESCO World Heritage site. You will think that you have entered a Fairytale! This unique town has streets lined with 'Trulli'. These small limestone houses are famous for their distinctive conical-shaped roofs stacked of stone tiles without mortar. Most were built 300–400 years ago. There will be plenty of time to explore this magical place and to learn about why and how these dwellings were built, and about the cryptic symbols painted on many of the roof-cones. We will enjoy dinner together before returning to the Masseria. (B) (L) (D) Light



Day 6 – The Magical Itria Valley – Wednesday, October 20, 2027

Today will be a wonderful day of discovery during our visit to three of the amazing villages in the Itria Valley. First stop will be Cisternino, where you will stroll through the narrow streets of a picturesque medieval village.

Next, we will visit the “white town” of Ostuni. Here you find a cluster of whitewashed buildings perched on a hilltop overlooking the coast, and an expanse of enormous olive trees. There will be time to learn a bit about the region’s olive oil production while in Ostuni.

After lunch we will head to the nearby coast dotted with some lovely villages that cling to the limestone cliffs molded by the Adriatic Sea. We will make a stop in Polignano a Mare, renowned for its breathtaking balconies with views of the crashing waves of the sea below. This town was the end of one of the famous “Roman Roads”, and you can still see some of the remains of this route. It is also the birthplace of the Italian singer, Domenico Modugno famous for 'Volare.' After such a wonderful day of exploration, we will return to the hotel for a quiet evening and dinner together. (B) (D) Moderate

Day 7 – The Symbol of Puglia – Thursday, October 21, 2027

We will begin the morning with a visit to nearby Castel del Monte, a UNESCO World Heritage site and the symbol of the region of Puglia. It was built in the 13th century by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II. It is built in an octagonal pattern, with octagonal towers on each corner. It was precisely planned, but its purpose remains a mystery to this day. Our guided tour will be followed by lunch in a nearby “Slow Food” restaurant.

Then we will leave Puglia for a bit to visit the nearby region of Basilicata and the town of Matera, another UNESCO World Heritage site. We will settle in our hotel with a view of the famous Sassi dwellings of Matera. You will need to rest up, because tomorrow you will have a full day of sightseeing in this amazing city. (B) (L) Moderate

Day 8 – Matera, a Step Back in Time – Friday, October 22, 2027

Today, you will truly step back in time as you explore one of the oldest continually inhabited settlements in the world. The oldest cave dwellings go back to the Bronze Age. The town consists of houses called "Sassi". These prehistoric caverns, and more than 100 rock-hewn churches, are carved into the soft rock straddling both sides of a steep ravine. The honeycombed dwellings were continuously inhabited until 1952 when the government relocated the population. We will learn all about Matera, both its history and its current popularity. Matera has been used in several films like Mel Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ", as well as "Wonder Woman". It was even used in a James Bond movie. It is easy to see how this city can be the perfect film location when you imagine it completely removed from the modern age for centuries.

After your guided tour, there will be time for your own exploration of Matera. Later, we will dine together in a very "stylish cave" at Ristorante Dedalo. (B) (D) Strenuous



Day 9 – Trani, the "Pearl of Puglia" – Saturday, October 23, 2027

This morning we say farewell to Matera and return to the region of Puglia for a visit to the "Pearl of Puglia", the port town of Trani. During the middle ages this small, lively whitewashed port of Jewish origin bustled with mercantile activity. Today it is renowned for sweet Moscato di Trani wine and some of Puglia's finest architecture including the majestic Duomo built in the 12th century.

Finally, we will make our way to our overnight destination near Bari Airport for our last evening together. I am sure our farewell dinner will be filled with fun and many new stories to share about our time in the "heel of the boot". (B) (D) Light

Day 10 – Arrivederci Italia! – Sunday, October 24, 2027

It is time to say "arrivederci". You will make your way to Bari Airport to catch your flight home. Parting will be such sweet sorrow, but I know you will take along wonderful memories of time spent enjoying all the wonders of Puglia with dear friends. (B)

(Included meals are designated each day with (B) for breakfast, (L) for lunch, and (D) for dinner.)



Arrivederci!

THE FOLLOWING IS INCLUDED IN YOUR ITALY WITH FRIENDS TOUR:

- 9 nights' accommodation in 3-4 star, centrally located hotels with private bath or shower.
- Extensive meal plan: 9 breakfasts (B), 3 lunches (L), 7 dinners (D) We eat a lot together on this tour!
- All ground transportation in Italy during tour. (Does not include airfare.)
- Does not include transfer to or from Bari Airport on arrival or departure day.
- Guided sightseeing and entrance fees to select sights, wineries and museums as described in itinerary.
- Local VAT taxes and government fees, gas, highway tolls and parking fees.
- Pre-tour visit with helpful travel information.
- Plenty of memories to last a lifetime.
- Surprises along the way.

NOT INCLUDED IN TOUR:

- Does not include airfare.
- Does not include remaining meals, alcoholic or non-alcoholic drinks at included meals.
- Does not include personal expenses such as internet use, laundry, mini-bar, or extra transportation in tour towns.
- Does not include travel insurance.
- Does not include city tax required in each hotel. Can range from 1 – 8 Euro per person per night.

ITALY WITH FRIENDS 2027 - LAND ONLY TOUR PRICES:

Tour begins and ends in Bari. Tour is for 10days/9nights.

The total cost per person is \$4199.00 with double occupancy.
(Includes Euro exchange rate adjustment. Does not include local city hotel tax)

Traveling solo? Sadly, most hotels only have a few single rooms, so often they provide what they term "double for single use". They do, however, charge a premium for the luxury of staying alone. I am faced with this all the time. If you cannot find a partner, I will be glad to match up single travelers if possible. Otherwise, the single supplement for this tour is \$600.00 extra per person.

Former IWF's tour members will be entitled to the \$100 BFF Discount.

A \$500 non-refundable deposit will hold your place on the tour. Tours are limited in size. Payment is accepted by a personal check or credit card through PayPal or other Cash apps like Zelle or Venmo. (You must pay any fees associated with payment apps.) Your deposit is credited against the total tour cost. Final payment is required no later than 90 days prior to departure. See www.ItalyWithFriends.com for Terms & Conditions and Registration Forms.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

Prepare for a physically demanding tour. This tour is more moderate than most and will only have a few days that are considered strenuous. Age is not a concern so long as you are physically fit, a good walker, and able to stand for extended periods of time and climb lots of hills and stairs. All the above could be done in all sorts of weather and temperatures. You are required to load and unload your bags into the van, and to carry your bag to your room. This sometimes could be a short distance from the hotel. Sightseeing can cover anywhere from 1-5 miles of walking, sometimes over uneven surfaces. Plan to get in shape before you head to Italy.

ACTIVITY & WALKING KEY:

LIGHT = 2-4 miles of mostly level walking (some cobblestones) throughout the day.

MODERATE = 2-6 miles walking throughout the day with some hills and stairs.

STRENUOUS = 2-8 miles walking throughout the day with a lot of hills, stairs, or uneven terrain.

VERY STRENUOUS = Everything above and beyond! Mamma mia!