



VITA ITALIAN TOURS

SPECTACULAR SOUTH - PUGLIA, ABRUZZO & MATERA

Departure:
8 September - 20 September 2024
(13 days/12 nights)

The tour highlights Italy's rich cultural and culinary heritage visiting the southern regions of Abruzzo, Puglia & Matera. The journey through these regions will focus on visiting unique medieval villages and castles and experiencing specialty regional cuisine with local wines. The tour culminates in an unforgettable stay in the remarkable city of Matera in Basilicata.

The central Apennine mountain range acts as a great natural border separating Italy from East and West. For this reason, the Adriatic regions of Italy are so diverse from their more famous western and northern counterparts. The authenticity of cuisine and culture as well as the diversity of the landscape make these regions so new and exciting to visit. On tour, the group will share meals 'Italian Style'; It is all about sharing food and moments together. It is a way of life and an expression of something simple, beautiful and pure.

This tour will be personally guided by the directors of Vita Italian Tours and tour leaders Mario and Gianni. We feel very excited to introduce our travellers to this area of Italy. It is where our ancestors come from and where many of our relatives still live today. Mario and Gianni, your expert tour leaders, will escort you throughout your stay and will ensure you have a wonderful experience.

Detailed Itinerary

Day 1 Rome/Santo Stefano in Sessanio/Calascio/Pescara (L) Today your tour leaders will meet you in Rome, at 9:00am at a designated pick-up point for the start of the tour. Introductions and a small talk on the tour will take place before the group make their way out of Rome, travelling in air-conditioned mini vans towards Pescara, in Abruzzo. On the way we travel to one of the most celebrated areas of the Abruzzo Region, Grand Sasso National Park, the highest area of the central Apennines. There will be a stop at the tiny medieval village of Santo Stefano in Sessanio, famous for once being part of the powerful Medici family dynasty for over 200 years. Its characteristic original charm of small, cobbled stone streets and houses make it a fascinating trip back in time.

We then travel on to the neighbouring town of Calascio to admire the imposing 13th century fortress with spectacular panoramic views of the Apennines and Campo Imperatore. Lunch is in Calascio in a traditional mountain *rifugio*. We should reach Pescara by late afternoon where the group will check-into the hotel centrally located in the heart of the historical centre of the city. Free evening in Pescara.

Day 2 Pescara/Termoli (BL) It will be a leisurely morning start today before we say goodbye to Pescara and travel south along the Adriatic coast to the historical seaside fishing town of Termoli. On the way we will make a stop for lunch a special location. The old town of Termoli is a fortified citadel, positioned on a natural rocky promontory overlooking the Adriatic Sea. The view is breathtaking across all seasons. Over the years, the buildings of the centro storico, including the homes, have been re-furbished and painted in a range of bright pastel colours, making this town a quaint and very pretty destination to stay. Free evening in Termoli.

Day 3 Termoli/Vasto (BD) Today we travel to the ancient Roman town of Vasto, on a beautiful stretch of coastline along the Adriatic. Our local guide will lead the group through the historical centre and enjoy a walk along the promenade overlooking the fascinating crescent-shaped coastline. The walking tour will also include the town's medieval Castle, its many charming lanes and the Cathedral in Piazza Rossetti. We should return to Termoli by late afternoon where there will be free time to explore the boulevards and laneways of the historical centre of the city or perhaps a walk along *lungomare* (beach promenade). Dinner in a traditional restaurant in Termoli.

Day 4 Termoli/Trani (BD) This morning we say goodbye to Abruzzo and make our way south along the Adriatic Coast to the beautiful seaside town of Trani in Puglia. After check-in at the hotel there is some free time to explore the centre of Trani before an afternoon walking tour with an expert local guide visiting the stunning Romanesque Cathedral and other iconic buildings in this beautiful town. Dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 5 Trani/Castel Del Monte (BL) For our first morning in Puglia, it will be a short drive through the Pugliese countryside full of olive groves and traditional farmhouses to reach the famous 13th century castle built by Frederick II of Swabia. The castle is an octagonal shape and built on a hill offering 360-degree views of the surrounding countryside. This important landmark and UNESCO recognised castle, will give an insight into the history and the legacy left by Frederick II and his descendants in this part of Italy, but also show their influence throughout medieval Europe. We return to Trani for lunch in the historical port area. Free evening in Trani.

Day 6 Trani/Polignano A Mare (BD) Today we make our way to another spectacular town situated along the Adriatic, Polignano al Mare. Your hotel has beautiful rooms with spectacular views of the coastline and the old town perched on a cliff face. On the way the group will have a special tasting in a historic *Frantoio* specialising in local production of extra virgin olive oil. Before dinner, there will be a leisurely walk through the historical centre of Polignano. Dinner will be held in a restaurant which serves local delicacies.

Day 7 Polignano A Mare/Alberobello (BL) Our second day in this part of Puglia will give the group an insight into the remarkable diversity this region has to offer when compared to the rest of Italy. We will visit beautiful Alberobello, one of the most sought-after destinations in all of Puglia, famous for the iconic 'Trulli'; traditional round-shaped and whitewashed stone houses with conical stone roofs. We will have lunch in Alberobello in a restaurant set in a traditional Trullo and enjoy the distinct local cuisine and wine. Then it is back to Polignano for a free afternoon and evening.

Day 8 Polignano A Mare (B) Today is a free day to explore the beautiful historical centre of Polignano with its stunning cobblestone streets full of restaurants, boutique shops and bars overlooking the sea. You may also choose to visit the nearby towns of Monopoli, Conversano or Ostuni, all easily accessible via public transport or local taxi.

Day 9 Polignano A Mare/Lecce (BD) After breakfast, we say goodbye to Polignano A Mare for a day dedicated to discovering the splendid city of Lecce, famous for its Baroque buildings built in soft local honey coloured stone. A local guide will take the group on a stroll through the elegant city centre with the Piazza del Duomo. After a break for lunch, we will continue south from Lecce for a special stay in a traditional Masseria which has been converted into a boutique hotel and wellness centre. Dinner in the Masseria.

Day 10 Lecce/Otranto (BL) It is an early morning start as we journey to the seaside city of Otranto, known as the “Gateway to the Orient” due to its position on the most easterly tip of the Italian peninsula. After a walking tour of the historical centre followed by a traditional lunch there will be some free time to explore the small streets or perhaps enjoy a drink at one of the many bars overlooking the Adriatic Sea. The afternoon is dedicated to rest and relaxation for the group to enjoy the facilities of the Masseria. You may wish to book in a treatment or massage, simply enjoy sitting by the pool or take a leisurely stroll through the property.

Day 11 Lecce/Matera (BD) We say goodbye to Lecce and Puglia as we travel across the border into the region of Basilicata to what will surely be a highlight of the tour, the amazing town of Matera. Matera is famous for its underground dwellings dug into the rock where the local people lived until the 1950's. Now many of these caves have become tourist attractions, hotels, restaurants and wellness centres. Once we have checked-into our hotel located in the heart of Matera we will have an afternoon walk to explore the characteristic ‘Sassi’ area of this UNESCO heritage listed city, an unforgettable experience. Dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 12 Matera (BD) It is a wonderful time to be visiting the city as Matera as recently in 2019 it was awarded the title of European Capital City of Culture. Here the group will be guided by a local expert who will narrate the history and development of this unique city and visit the famous ‘Sassi’ situated among the labyrinth of the many narrow alleyways of the famous caves. The afternoon will be free for travellers to further explore the city which will be alive with exhibitions and performances as the cultural centre of Europe. Dinner in a local restaurant.

Day 13 Matera/Bari (B) After breakfast the group will travel to Bari where the tour will end at Bari International Airport. Onward travel can be organised by Pronto Travel/Vita Italian Tours for those travelling onto other destinations.

Items included in the Tour

- All land travel in air-conditioned mini-vans.
- Accommodation for 12 nights in 4 & 5-Star hotels in Pescara/Termoli/Trani/Polignano a Mare/Masseria in Lecce and luxurious cave dwellings in Matera.
- 12 breakfasts.
- 6 dinners.
- 5 lunches (Meals include special lunches and dinners in traditional local restaurants, *osterie* and private dining experiences as detailed in the itinerary).
- Regional wines and mineral water served with meals.
- Admission to all wineries and historical sites included in the itinerary.
- Personal guided tours to all towns mentioned in the itinerary.
- Services of the tour leaders throughout the tour.

Items not included

- Airfares.
- Travel insurance (it is compulsory for every traveller to have taken out a travel insurance policy in order to partake on a Vita Italian Tours). If you require, we can assist in organising a policy for you.
- Admission fees to places other than those specifically itemised in the itinerary.
- Meals on tour except when specifically mentioned in the itinerary.
- Drinks outside normal mealtimes or additional wine and other drinks in restaurants such as Tea & Coffee.
- Personal transport costs, phone calls and other personal needs.
- Accommodation Tax in all cities Pescara, Trani, Polignano A Mare, Lecce & Matera.

Cost

The cost of the tour, land content only, is **AUD \$7,991** per person in twin share accommodation. **A deposit of AUD \$500** is required to reserve a place on the tour which is non-refundable unless the tour is cancelled with the full balance due 90 days prior to departure. **Single supplements** are available at an additional cost of **AUD \$1,521**. **The tour** is costed on a minimum of 6 and maximum of 14 people travelling on tour.

We recommend that you carefully read the terms & conditions applying to a Vita Italian Tour. Please refer to the Booking Page of our website vitaitaliantours.com.au/bookings/

Additional information

The weather: it is the end of summer. It can get warm during the day however the evenings may be cool. For September in southern Italy we recommend light, comfortable clothing, a light jacket with your favourite walking shoes. We do not place age limitations on the tour and welcome anyone with a moderate level of physical fitness. It is important to note that the countryside is undulating and hilly. Many hill-towns have their historical centres closed to traffic and therefore lots of walking is required. Be expected to spend a few hours a day at a time on your feet with breaks for sightseeing, coffee and a taste of the local produce.

The program appears to be full; however, it is mixed with long restful lunches and leisure time for your enjoyment and comfort. We will always do our best to accommodate everyone including offering alternative arrangements were possible.

If you need to, you can always take time off from the organised program.

For further information

Visit the web site vitaitaliantours.com.au

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