

## Italy: Puglia's Undiscovered Coast

### Bike Vacation + Air Package

Value and connection are what set this incomparable cycling tour of Puglia apart from the pack. With our deep roots in the region, VBT takes you beyond the main tourist attractions to discover authentic rhythms of daily life at the heel of Italy's boot. As you pedal along Puglia's turquoise coast with your local trip leaders, you may find yourself stopping beside an ancient limestone trulli, where you're greeted by a sweet *nonna* with a basket of almond cookies to share—or pausing in the town square for an *affogato* as you watch the village wake slowly from its afternoon siesta. Best of all, our local connections love to go the extra mile for VBT guests. Why? Because we're family. Shop around and you'll see—the local values of VBT's Puglia cycling vacation outshine the competition, hands down.

### Cultural Highlights

- Enjoy incomparable accommodations with six nights at luxurious *masserie*.
- Share a farm-fresh lunch and taste delicious olive oils with your *masseria* hosts.
- Bike from the ancient walled city of Acaya to the beautiful, rugged coast.
- Enjoy unhurried pedaling along rural pathways heading to the coastal town of Castro Marina.
- Refresh yourself with a swim in Otranto's crystalline waters.

### What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain on low-traffic country roads and is ideal for beginning cyclists. For more avid cyclists, several days offer longer mileage options. All cyclists will thoroughly enjoy the scenic routes along the coast. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance along the road.

**Tour Duration:** 10 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 4-41 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 1-5 hours

**Group size:** 22 max

### Climate Information

#### Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

March 55°/46°, April 60°/50°, May 68°/55°, June 75°/62°, July 80°/68°, August 80°/68°, September 75°/64°, October 68°/57°, November 58°/42°

**Average Rainfall (in.)**

March 3.0, April 1.7, May 1.0, June 0.9, July 0.3, August 0.3, September 2.5, October 3.8, November 2.7

**FLIGHT DAY: Depart for Your Vacation**

Your vacation is about to begin! Spend your first night aloft and arrive ready for an unforgettable trip.

**ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Bari / Pre-Tour Hotel Night: Alberobello**

A VBT representative will greet you at the Bari Airport to start your adventure off right. A complimentary car service will whisk you to your centrally located hotel in Alberobello. From here, you are perfectly positioned to explore this charming city at your leisure.

**DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Warm-Up Ride / Welcome Reception and Dinner**

After an included breakfast, you will meet our local expert guide at your *trullo* reception and stretch your legs on a guided walk through this unique city. Learn about *trulli* design and why this local style of architecture has helped this setting be recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Transportation is provided to take you to your first *masseria*, where you will stay for the next three days. Explore the peaceful surroundings on a self-guided walk, enjoy the amenities of this country resort, or maybe join in an optional cooking class organized by the *masseria*.

*Masseria* is the local name for large farms, which were fortified around the 16th century to ward off attacks by pirates and brigands. *Masserie* feature high boundary walls, angular towers, drawbridges, and watchtowers. Families worked and lived inside these walls with their own church, oil mill, and oven for baking bread. These farms also housed cisterns for water, storage rooms for tools and hay, stables, and everything else needed for day-to-day life. These days they are elegant country resorts, most of which grow produce and bottle their own olive oil.

This afternoon take a short warm-up ride along quiet country roads, past 800-year-old olive groves to the fishing village of Savelletri.

Later, enjoy a welcome cocktail reception on the elegant hotel patio. Dinner is at the hotel restaurant and

is prepared with local products and herbs produced on the farm.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-Up Ride Coccaro — 14 km (9 miles) | Optional Walk to Savelletri — 9 km (6 miles)

#### What to Expect:

The optional morning walk is a leisurely stroll through the countryside to the nearby seaside town of Savelletri, where you can enjoy lunch at a café or one of the many seafood restaurants along the promenade.

The warm-up ride is a loop through the countryside on completely flat, paved terrain, passing through the fishing village of Savelletri.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 km (9 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 2: Olive Oil Tasting / Lunch at Il Frantoio Farm

This morning, you will ride along the sea for a few miles before looping inland to Masseria Il Frantoio, an award-winning country hotel renowned for its exceptional cuisine. The estate spans 150 acres (61 hectares) and features a “secret garden” filled with orange and lemon trees, as well as a well-preserved underground olive oil mill.

Your hosts, Armando and Rosalba, have curated a fascinating collection of artifacts over the years, including ancient dresses, hats, rare books, and even a gramophone—each with its own unique story.

Your lunch at Il Frantoio is a true sensory experience, crafted from farm-grown produce. You'll also have the chance to sample five different extra-virgin olive oils, which Rosalba uses to flavor her focaccia, pickles, preserves, and signature *laganari* pasta.

Later, you can choose to relax or continue cycling back to the hotel along the historic Traian Road. For those seeking an additional challenge, a moderate ride option takes you up to the stunning whitewashed city of Ostuni.

End your day with a shuttle to the seaside town of Savellettri, where you are free to explore the charming pedestrian area and choose a restaurant for dinner.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Il Frantoio — 33 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Il Frantoio to Hotel — 21 km (13 miles) OR Il Frantoio to Hotel PLUS (moderate) — 34 km (21 miles)

### What to Expect:

Ride partly along the coast before continuing through a picturesque rural landscape, passing through charming small villages. An optional moderate ride takes you up to the hilltop town of Ostuni, then descends toward the ocean before rejoining the Traian Road back to the hotel. The regular afternoon ride avoids the hill, instead guiding you through the countryside along the quiet, historic Traian Road to the hotel.

For experienced cyclists, an additional independent ride may be available today. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 21 – 67 km (13 – 41 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 3: Cycle to Egnatia and Monopoli

After breakfast, you'll cycle along the coast on quiet roads, surrounded by ancient olive trees. Puglia ranks first in Italy for the production of olive oil, wine, and hay, and second for almonds.

Along the way, you'll stop to explore the archaeological site of Egnatia, an ancient Messapian (and later Roman) coastal town of great economic and military importance in the 10th century. The on-site museum houses remarkable artifacts, including sculptures, jewelry, funerary objects, and *gnathia*—a distinctive local pottery style characterized by figurative painting on the upper half and ornamental designs on the lower portion.

Later, continue to Monopoli, where you'll have the opportunity to visit the beautiful cathedral and historic harbor. You'll also have free time to stroll through the charming pedestrian streets of the old town and enjoy lunch on your own.

In the afternoon, you can either shuttle or ride back along the coast to your *masseria*, where you can relax and enjoy the amenities. Dinner is included at the *masseria* restaurant.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Monopoli – 25 km (15 miles) | Monopoli Walk – 2 km (1 mile)

Afternoon: Monopoli to Hotel – 14 km (9 miles) OR Monopoli to Hotel PLUS (moderate) – 29 km (18 miles)

#### What to Expect:

The morning's cycling route along the coast is flat and scenic. To explore Monopoli, you can follow a self-guided walk created by your trip leaders, which will lead you through the city center and highlight various lunch options. In the afternoon, a longer ride option offers an easy to moderate route that heads inland from Monopoli. This beautiful stretch features a gradual uphill climb, followed by rolling hills and a scenic downhill ride leading back to our *masseria*. For avid cyclists, an optional challenging ride is available in the afternoon for an extra dose of adventure. Ask your trip leaders for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 54 km (9 – 33 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 4: Acaya / Cycle Along the Salento Coast

Leave Savelletri and take a morning shuttle farther south to continue your stunning Puglia cycling journey toward Salento.

You'll begin at the walled city of Acaya, passing through its ancient archway onto traffic-free country roads marked as bike paths. Your morning ride concludes at the rugged coastline, where you'll take in the spectacular view of Torre dell'Orso, a village perched above the sea and a picturesque sandy bay. Torre dell'Orso is a great spot to grab lunch before deciding whether to continue cycling or take a shuttle to the

hotel.

In the afternoon, enjoy more scenic cycling on quiet country roads, passing the small Alimini Lakes as you make your way to your next *masseria*.

After settling into your cozy accommodations, take advantage of the hotel amenities or simply unwind with a good book. Dinner is at a nearby *masseria* tonight.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Acaya to Torre dell'Orso — 20 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Torre dell'Orso to Hotel — 26 km (16 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Take a scenic bike ride into the countryside, primarily along marked bike routes, to Torre dell'Orso, where you'll stop for lunch by the sea. In the afternoon, you can choose to shuttle to the hotel or continue cycling along picturesque country roads. The route features gentle rolling hills near the Alimini Lakes, followed by a final flat stretch leading to our *masseria*.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 46 km (12 – 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 5: Cycle to Otranto / Picnic at an Organic Farm / Discover Otranto**

Bike from your hotel along quiet country roads, passing through sleepy villages where a stop at a colorful local bar for an Italian coffee can be a delightful diversion.

Your route is shaded by towering oaks and ancient olive trees as you make your way toward the coast. By lunchtime, you'll arrive at an organic farm near the sea, where the welcoming owners, Antonio and Marina, will open their private garden to host a picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders.

After lunch, explore Otranto, a picturesque coastal town founded by the Greeks and surrounded by imposing ramparts and walls. Starting in late spring, the town's streets come alive with local craft studios

selling clay whistles, baskets, hand-dyed fabrics, and ceramics. The highlight of Otranto Cathedral is its enormous 8,611-square-foot (800-square-meter) floor mosaic, depicting the Tree of Life, created by a monk in 1163. While in Otranto, you'll also have the opportunity to switch gears and take a refreshing dip in the sea.

Today's ride concludes on flat country roads, where you'll catch glimpses of menhirs and dolmens—ancient monoliths and burial sites—before returning to your hotel.

This evening, you can dine on your own at the hotel or take a shuttle to Otranto to enjoy dinner at one of the town's many outdoor cafés or restaurants.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Picnic Spot — 34 km (21 miles)

Afternoon: Picnic Spot to Otranto — 7 km (4 miles) | Otranto Walk — 2 km (1 mile) | Otranto to Hotel — 9 km (6 miles)

### What to Expect:

Today, most of your riding is scheduled for the morning, giving you plenty of time in the afternoon to explore Otranto—the historical capital of Salento—and even enjoy a swim if you wish. Your morning ride takes you inland from your *masseria* along paved country roads free of car traffic. In the afternoon, you'll ride a short, flat route through olive groves to your next *masseria*. For those seeking extra adventure, an optional easy-to-moderate loop with undulating terrain is available from Otranto; please ask your trip leader for details. Additionally, two self-guided walks—designed by your trip leaders—are available on your phone to help you explore Otranto's highlights and discover local meal options both during the day and in the evening.

Cumulative Distance Range: 7 – 50 km (4 – 31 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## DAY 6: Discover the Eastern Tip of Italy

After breakfast, set out on one of the most breathtaking rides in all of Italy. Beginning in the heart of

Salento, you'll follow gentle rural pathways through charming villages, making your way to the coastal town of Castro Marina. From there, continue to Santa Cesarea, a tranquil town perched on the Adriatic Sea, where you can enjoy lunch on your own at one of its many cozy cafés.

Refueled, you'll follow the dramatic coastal cliffs to Porto Badisco, a picturesque spot known for its brilliant azure waters and the prehistoric Cervi Grottoes. Your journey continues to Cape Otranto, the easternmost point of Italy, before cycling back to your hotel.

Arrive in time to freshen up before an extraordinary farewell dinner, featuring Puglian wines and regional specialties at your *masseria* restaurant.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Santa Cesarea Terme — 25 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Santa Cesarea Terme to Hotel — 14 km (9 miles) OR Santa Cesarea Terme to Hotel PLUS (moderate) — 18 km (11 miles)

### What to Expect:

This mostly coastal ride is likely the most scenic of the week. After lunch, there is one major uphill section, which can be skipped by taking a short support vehicle shuttle. For those opting for the longer afternoon ride, expect more coastal riding along a road with slightly heavier traffic. This route is rated as moderate.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 43 km (9 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 7: Your VBT Vacation Ends / Post-Tour Hotel Night: Lecce

After an included breakfast, enjoy complimentary transportation by private motorcoach to Hotel Patria Palace, an elegant and centrally located five-star hotel in Lecce, arriving at approximately 9:30 a.m.

Lecce, a stunning Baroque city, is often called the “Florence of the South” due to the remarkable craftsmanship of local builders and stonemasons, who skillfully worked with *pietra dorata*—a soft, pink-



tinged local stone.

Begin your independent exploration at Piazza Sant'Oronzo, the city's main square, which has been the center of local activity for centuries. The Roman amphitheater, a striking reminder of Lecce's ancient past, serves as the square's focal point. From here, narrow streets branch out into the city's charming quarters, inviting you to wander and discover hidden gems.

Another highlight is Piazza Duomo, a grand yet intimate square enclosed on three sides by the cathedral and two historic palaces belonging to the church. Despite being one of the largest squares in Europe, it maintains a welcoming ambiance, perfect for people-watching from a cozy café or bakery.

VBT provides city information with useful recommendations for self-guided exploration throughout the day, including independent dining options.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DEPARTURE DAY: Departure**

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation to Brindisi Airport will be provided. The drive takes approximately 35 to 45 minutes, depending on traffic, for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

May vary depending on departure date.

### **Trulli e Puglia (Arrival Day)**

Trulli & Puglia Resort is an exquisite accommodation built into a series of beautifully restored 500-year-old trulli structures. This is truly a unique and charming blend of classic regional design with all of the modern amenities, including air conditioning. The trulli are different from one another and spread out in the city center of Alberobello, some clustered in blocks of two or three together. The walking distance from the breakfast room and reception can be up to four minutes. American breakfast is a special treat here, prepared exclusively for VBT guests with fresh local specialties, and served in a separate central

building. Our host Mimmo, a star of Alberobello, is the trulli resort owner and has been one of our local guides since 2003.

### **Masseria Torre Coccaro Hotel (Days 1-3)**

The fortified Masseria Torre Coccaro was built in the 16th century and is known today for its watchtower and the centuries-old olive groves and carob trees that surround it. It has retained the simple and characteristic whitewashed look of old *masserie*, but this 5-star resort is a relaxing oasis of tranquility, where food is still artfully prepared from local produce grown on the property and the rooms have air conditioning. The onsite Aveda Health Club has a unique setting in a series of evocative caves. Its Jacuzzi pools are kept at different temperatures, and its *hammam* (Turkish bath) offers beauty treatments and relaxing massages. The private sandy beach with umbrellas and sunchairs is at your disposal, as is the beautifully designed swimming pool nestled among the olive trees and palms—perfect for a refreshing dip.

### **Masseria Montelauro (Days 4-6)**

The Masseria Montelauro Farmhouse, built in 1878, was restored with full respect for its original design and architecture. Its gardens offer all the vivid colors that have traditionally adorned the countryside. You'll enjoy its modern amenities, too, including a swimming pool, which is set in the inner court surrounded by an inviting orchard, and air conditioning.

### **Patria Palace Hotel (Day 7)**

The Patria Palace Hotel is enhanced by the Baroque scenery of the historic center of Lecce, called “the Florence of the South” for its beautiful buildings, churches, and squares. The hotel brings to life an 18th-century marquis palace. Each room is unique, personalized with original frescoes, and equipped with modern comforts like air conditioning.