

Italy: Puglia's Undiscovered Coast

Bike Vacation + Air Package

Experience la dolce vita at its most authentic during an invigorating ride through Puglia, draped with fertile farms, stone-sculpted seaside villages, traditional trulli huts, and dramatic shores. Join VBT in this seldom visited corner of Italy, where olive groves yield a golden elixir and Adriatic breezes send the spirit soaring. Charming old harbors, limestone cities, and Italian warmth greet you at every bend. And your discoveries continue into each evening at historic masserie, fortified farms where the bounty of the earth reveals the heart of this special and unique place.

Cultural Highlights

Enjoy incomparable accommodations with 6 nights at luxurious masserie and countryside hotels

Discover the stone trulli dwellings of Alberobello on a guided walking tour

Ride along quiet country roads to coastal Egnatia, past olive groves 800 years old

Cycle to Monopoli, where you'll visit the lovely cathedral and admire the old harbor

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 a ride along quiet country roads by the small and lovely Alimini Lakes

Pedal through timeless quaint villages on your way to the sea at Otranto

From your bicycle perch, savor rural pathways to the coastal town of Castro Marina

Take a refreshing swim, if you like, in the crystalline water in Otranto

Gather with your fellow travelers for a special masseria dinner featuring Puglia wines

Picnic with a local family at their organic farm near the sea

What to Expect

This tour offers easy terrain throughout the trip and is ideal for beginning cyclists.

Tour Duration: 10 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 15 - 35

Average Cycling Time: 01:00 - 3:00

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

Mar 55°/46°, Apr 60°/50°, May 68°/55°, Jun 75°/62°, Jul 80°/68°, Aug 80°/68°, Sep 75°/64°, Oct 68°/57°, Nov 58°/42°

Average Rainfall (in.)

Mar 3.0, Apr 1.7, May 1.0, Jun 0.9, Jul 0.3, Aug 0.3, Sep 2.5, Oct 3.8, Nov 2.7

DAY 1: Depart from home / Fly overnight to Bari

Depart from home and travel to Italy. The particulars of your arrival overseas are detailed with your flight itinerary.

DAY 2: Arrive/ Transfer to Alberobello

Upon arrival at the airport in Bari, Italy, a VBT representative meets you and helps you transfer (approximately 1 hour) to your first night's lodging.

If you are going to be delayed meeting the transfer for more than 15 minutes due to delayed or lost luggage, please let our driver know by calling or sending a text message to +39-330-96-49-27. The driver will be generally able to wait for up to 45 minutes from the time your flight lands, after which you would be responsible for your own transfer. You may also contact One Call travel assistance to advise of your delay, and they will contact the transfer company.

Upon arrival in Alberobello, meet your hosts and settle in the small resort and *trullo* dwelling (a traditional Puglian stone hut) that VBT has selected for your stay. You will be accommodated in original 500-year-old dwellings or small homes, completely remodeled and very comfortable. A *trullo* is a whitewashed, round house topped by a large cone of local stones—all assembled without mortar. It is believed that *trulli* originated as storage sheds built for agricultural implements. Much later, they became dwellings, with adjoining buildings added as families grew. Like your room, most *trulli* have been refurbished and are used as cozy homes today. Some of the roofs show mysterious chalk marks, possibly either to protect the inhabitants from evil or to bless the dwelling.

Please note: You have the option of attending a cooking class the following morning before check-in to your masseria. You must tell your Alberobello host this evening if you would like to attend.

Dinner is on your own tonight in Alberobello.

Hotel: Trulli & Puglia

DAY 3: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Warm-up ride to Savelletri

VBT-Bicycle-Vacation-only guests: Meet your VBT Trip Leaders at 2:00 p.m. in the lobby of the first masseria in Fasano. To get to the *masseria*, you can take a taxi from the Bari railway station (the cost is approx. 130 Euros) or the Bari airport (approx. 140 Euros). Or you can contact our transfer company in advance (TAXI SERVICE, Anthony, info@taxi-services.it, phone +39 330 964927) and book directly with them. TAXI SERVICE will provide a transfer from the Bari airport for up to two persons at a special rate of 120 Euros. A transfer for three to six persons will cost 160 Euros, split among participants. You can also travel to the masseria by train from Bari (the closest airport) or Rome. The closest railway station to the masseria is FASANO. If you take a train from Rome to Fasano, you may need to connect in Bari. Once in Fasano, call the *masseria* to arrange for a taxi or shuttle pickup (approximately a 10-minute drive). If your arrival at the *masseria* is scheduled later than 2:00 p.m. or if you are delayed, please contact the hotel, and the staff will pass your message along to your VBT Trip Leaders. Leaders will not start the safety talk until 3:00 p.m., so in case of delay, make sure you come dressed and ready for biking at 3:00 p.m. in the main lobby.

VBT highly recommends flying to Italy at least one day before the tour begins; this allows you to rest and recover from jet lag before you begin sightseeing and cycling.

For guests staying at Masseria Torre Coccaro or Masseria Torre Maizza you have the option of partaking in VBT Cooking School, organized for you by VBT and a big highlight for many Puglia travelers! In this cooking class you will learn how to prepare typical Apulian dishes before dining on the fruits of your labor. You will have to reserve by 7:00 p.m. the day before by contacting the *masseria* directly, for the session starting at 10:30 a.m. the next day. The price is €40 per person and includes lunch and drinks during the class.

For guests staying at Masseria Torre del Diamante, a cooking class of approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes with the *masseria's* chef can be reserved by 7:00 p.m. the day before, by contacting the *masseria* directly. You will have fun while learning how to prepare typical Apulian dishes like taralli and focaccia. The workshop will extend through lunch and include your meal – again a typical informal Apulian lunch that will feature the fruits of your labor as well as refreshments. The price is €40 per person.

VBT Air Package and Pre-Extension guests: Enjoy your breakfast this morning. At 8:30 a.m., 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 and the setting have been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

A transfer at 10:00 a.m. takes you to your first *masseria*, where you will stay for the next three days. Explore the peaceful surroundings on a self-guided walk (our representative will give you the VBT route directions), enjoy the amenities of this country resort, or maybe join in an optional cooking class organized by the *masseria*. Check-in time is 2:00 p.m., but you can store luggage with the reception desk and use the hotel amenities this morning.

For guests staying at Masseria Torre Coccaro or Masseria Torre Maizza you will have to reserve the optional cooking class by 7:00 p.m. the day before with your Alberobello guide, while you are in Alberobello, for the session starting at 10:30 a.m. the next day. You will learn how to prepare typical Apulian dishes. The price is €40 per person and includes lunch and drinks during the lunch.

For guests staying at Masseria Torre del Diamante, a cooking class of approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes with the *masseria's* chef is included in your package. You will learn how to prepare typical Apulian dishes like taralli and focaccia. The workshop will extend through lunch and include your meal – again a typical informal Apulian lunch that will include the fruits of your labor as well as refreshments. No reservations required.

ALL guests: Please be in the main lobby no later than 3:00 p.m., dressed and ready for biking. VBT Trip Leaders, who will be wearing VBT staff garments, will be in the main lobby starting from 2:00 p.m. to answer any questions or provide assistance. *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. Inside the walls, families worked and lived alongside their own church, oil mill, and oven to bake bread. These farms would also house 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 whom produce their own olive oil and produce from their grounds.

After meeting your VBT Trip Leaders early this afternoon, join them for a safety and bike-fitting session. Then take a short warm-up ride along quiet country roads, past 800-year-old olive groves, to the fishermen 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.

Hotel: Masseria Torre Coccaro

Alternate Hotels: Masseria Torre Maizza or Masseria Torre del Diamante

Meals: Breakfast (included for Air Package guests only), Dinner

Daily Options: 7 miles (11 km)

DAY 4: Olive oil tasting / Lunch at Il Frantoio farm

This morning, you ride along the coast and inland to Masseria Il Frantoio, another award-winning country hotel famous for the quality of the food. The estate extends over 150 acres and includes a “secret garden” planted with orange and lemon trees, as well as a well-preserved underground oil mill. Your hosts Armando and his wife Rosalba have collected many interesting odds and ends over the years, from ancient dresses and hats to precious books and a gramophone. Each piece has its own story, as you will see. Your lunch at Il Frantoio is prepared using produce grown on the farm and is truly an experience of the five senses. You’ll also have the opportunity to try a sampling of five different extra-virgin oils that Rosalba uses to flavor her *focaccia*, pickles, preserves, and delicious *laganari* pasta.

Afterward, opt to relax or continue cycling to the hotel. Later tonight, you shuttle to the near small city of Savellettri on the sea. Pick a restaurant for your dinner on your own tonight in the cozy pedestrian area.

Hotel: Masseria Torre Coccaro

Alternate Hotels: Masseria Torre Maizza or Masseria Torre del Diamante

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: 17, 30 or 37 miles (28, 48 or 60 km)

DAY 5: Cycle to Egnatia and Monopoli

After breakfast, you cycle along the coast and on quiet roads, completely surrounded by ancient olive trees. Puglia ranks first in Italy in the production of olive oil, wine, and hay, and second for almonds. You stop to explore the archeological site of Egnatia, an ancient Messapican (and later Roman) coastal town of great economic and military importance in the 10th century. The museum reveals precious finds such as sculptures, jewels, funeral equipment, and the particular pottery produced here, called *gnathia*.

Later continue to Monopoli, where you’ll have the chance to visit the beautiful cathedral and the old harbor. Spend free time here strolling and eating lunch on your own. Walk the maze of pedestrian streets in Monopoli’s old city center and see how they make the city so uniquely intimate.

Shuttle or ride back to your *masseria* and enjoy the amenities. Dinner is included at the Masseria restaurant.

Hotel: Masseria Torre Coccaro

Alternate Hotels: Masseria Torre Maizza or Masseria Torre del Diamante

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Daily Options: 17, 27, or 37 miles (26.6, 44.5, or 59.5 km)

DAY 6: Acaya / Cycle along the coast of Salento

Leave Savelletri and take a morning shuttle further south to discover another area of Puglia: Salento. Begin biking from the walled city of Acaya. Ride through the ancient city archway on country roads free from traffic and marked as bike paths. You reach the rugged coast and enjoy the spectacular view of Torre dell'Orso village, rising steeply from the sea and sandy bay. The village is a good spot to buy some lunch before hitting the road again, or enjoy a shuttle to the hotel. The afternoon offers more fun cycling on quiet country roads and along the small Alimini Lakes till your next hotel.

After settling in your romantic *masseria*, you may want to enjoy the hotel amenities or relax with a good book. Dinner is at a nearby cozy *masseria* tonight.

Hotel: Masseria Montelauro

Alternate Hotel: Masseria Muntibianchi

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Daily Options: 11 or 27 miles (18 or 44 km)

DAY 7: Cycle to Otranto / Picnic by an organic farm / Discover Otranto

Bike from your hotel on country roads and cycle through sleeping villages, where a stop in a colorful local bar for an Italian coffee can be a great discovery. Your route is shaded by big olive trees and old oaks as you head toward the sea. By lunch time you get to an organic farm near the sea, where the friendly owners Antonio and Marina open their secret garden to host a picnic lunch prepared by your Trip Leaders.

Later continue to Otranto and discover this picturesque town on the Italian coast. Founded by the Greeks, Otranto is surrounded by great ramparts and walls. From late spring onward, its atmosphere is extremely lively with local craft studios selling clay whistles, baskets, hand-dyed fabric, and ceramics. The city's highlight is certainly the huge, 8,611-square-foot floor mosaic representing the Tree of Life, created in 1163 by a monk in the Otranto Cathedral. In Otranto, you can also take time for a dip in the sea.

After your visit, cycle flat country roads, catching sight of *menhirs* and *dolmens*—ancient monoliths and tombs—before getting back to your hotel. This evening, you shuttle to Otranto for dinner on your own at one of the many outdoor cafés or restaurants. Or, if you prefer, enjoy dinner at the hotel.

Hotel: Masseria Montelauro

Alternate Hotel: Masseria Muntibianchi

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Daily Options: 20, 24 or 30 miles (32, 39 or 48 km)

DAY 8: Discover the eastern tip of Italy

After breakfast, you set out on one of the best bike rides in all of Italy. Starting in the interior of Salento, you follow gentle rural pathways through little villages to the coastal town of Castro Marina.

Continue to Santa Cesarea, a quiet town set on the edge of the Adriatic Sea, where you can enjoy lunch on your own in one of the many cozy cafes on the sea. From here, you follow the cliffs to the town of Porto Badisco, famous for its azure waters and prehistoric Cervi Grottoes, before continuing to Cape Otranto, the easternmost tip of Italy. You cycle back to the hotel in time to freshen up before a special farewell dinner at your *masseria* restaurant to feast with Puglia wines and specialties.

Hotel: Masseria Montelauro

Alternate Hotel: Masseria Muntibianchi

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Daily Options: 15 or 24 miles (25 or 39 km)

DAY 9: Transfer to Lecce / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

VBT-Bicycle-Vacation-only guests: After breakfast, transfer to the Brindisi airport, arriving at approximately 11:30 a.m.

Please note: For guests with early-morning departures, breakfast at the hotel may not be available. Please check with the front desk to verify the times that breakfast is served.

Important: Flight departures from Brindisi prior to 1:30 p.m. are not recommended; those departing earlier must make transfer arrangements at their own expense from the last hotel in Otranto to Brindisi

(approximately 1 hour). The cost of a taxi to the Brindisi airport is approximately 80 euros (\$87 USD).

The motorcoach will first stop in Lecce to drop VBT Air Package guests off and then continue to the Brindisi airport. You are welcome to get off in Lecce if you prefer.

VBT Air Package and Post-Trip Extension guests: Transfer to the Hotel Patria Palace in Lecce, an elegant and centrally located 5-star hotel, arriving at about 10:30 a.m. Lecce is a beautiful Baroque city, called “the Florence of the South” thanks to the skill with which local builders and stonemasons worked the soft, pink-tinged local stone called *pietra dorata*.

Explore Piazza Sant’Oronzo, the city’s main square and the heart of local activities for centuries. The square’s centerpiece is the Roman amphitheater. From here, narrow streets fan out into the city’s charming quarters.

The gem of Lecce is Piazza Duomo, enclosed on three sides by the cathedral and two palaces belonging to the church. Though this is one of the largest squares in Europe, it has an intimate feel that invites people-watching from a local café or bakery. Your VBT City Information provides useful recommendations for exploring on your own for the rest of the day. Dinner is on your own tonight.

Hotel: Patria Palace Hotel

Meals: Breakfast

DAY 10: Depart for home

After breakfast, transfer to the Brindisi airport for your flight to Rome or your flight back home. VBT recommends that you check the transfer time in your “Transfer Reminder” the night before your flight. The transfer is prearranged with the reception desk and is prepaid by VBT.

Please note: VBT transfer times and departure points are finalized in advance and cannot be modified for individual guests. If you extend your stay beyond the scheduled program dates, return transportation to the airport will be at your own expense.

Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Masseria Torre Coccaro Hotel (Days: 3,4,5)

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.

Patria Palace Hotel (Day: 9)

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.

Trulli e Puglia (Day: 2)

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.