

Italy: Puglia's Undiscovered Coast

Bike Vacation + Air Package

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 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

DEPARTURE DAY: Depart from the United States or Canada

All you have to do is get to the airport. On our Air Packages, we'll take care of the rest, handling all the logistics, so you can travel with peace of mind. Spend your first night aloft and arrive refreshed for an

unforgettable trip.

ARRIVAL DAY: Arrive in Bari / Travel to 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: VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Warm-up ride to Savelletri / Welcome reception and dinner VBT Bicycle Vacation begins / Warm-up ride to Savelletri / Welcome reception and dinner

After an included breakfast, you will meet our local expert guide at your *trullo* reception at 8:30 a.m., 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 at 10:00 a.m. 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 (ask the *masseria* reception for the VBT route directions or find them in RWGPS), enjoy the amenities of this country resort, or maybe join in an optional cooking class organized by the *masseria*.

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For guests staying at Masseria Torre Coccaro you have the option of partaking in VBT Cooking School, which is a big highlight for many Puglia travelers. This class will teach you how to prepare typical Apulian dishes before dining on the fruits of your labor. You will have to reserve the cooking class by 7:00 p.m. the day before with your Alberobello guide, while you are in Alberobello. The price is €50 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 this morning in your package. You will learn how to prepare typical Apulian dishes like taralli and focaccia. The workshop will extend through lunch and cover your meal – a typical informal Apulian lunch featuring the fruits of your labor as well as refreshments. No reservations required.

Please be in the main lobby at 3:00 p.m., dressed and ready for biking, introductions, and a safety meeting. Readily identifiable VBT trip leaders will be in the main lobby beginning at 2:00 p.m. to answer any questions, provide assistance, and collect pedals you may have brought from home.

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 Savelletri Warm-up — 9

What to Expect:

A loop in the countryside on totally flat and paved terrain through the fishing village of Savelletri.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14.5 km (9 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 2: Olive oil tasting / Lunch at Il Frantoio farm

This morning, you will ride inland to Masseria Il Frantoio, another award-winning country hotel famous for the quality of their 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 olive oil mill. Your hosts, Armando and 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.

Your lunch at Il Frantoio is prepared using produce grown on the farm and is truly an experience for all of your 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.

Later, you can opt to relax or continue cycling to the hotel along the ancient Traian road. An additional moderate ride option takes you up to the whitewashed city of Ostuni. End your day with a shuttle to the nearby small city of Savelletri on the sea. You are free to traverse the cozy pedestrian area to choose a restaurant for your dinner.

Today’s Ride Choices

Morning Hotel to Il Frantoio – 28 km (17 miles)

Afternoon Il Frantoio to Hotel – 24 km (14 miles) | Il Frantoio to Hotel Plus (moderate) – 19 km (12 miles)

What to Expect:

An inland bike ride in a rural setting passing through charming, small villages. An optional moderate ride will take you up to the hill of Ostuni and down toward the ocean before joining the Traian road back to the hotel. The regular afternoon ride avoids the hill and takes you through the countryside on the quiet, historical Traian road to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 61 km (14 - 38 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3: Cycle to Egnatia and Monopoli

After breakfast, you’ll cycle along the coast 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’ll stop

on the way 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 on the grounds includes precious finds such as sculptures, jewels, funeral equipment, and *gnathia* which is the distinctive local pottery which usually features figurative painting on the upper half and ornamental designs on the lower portion. Later, continue to Monopoli, where you'll have the chance to visit the beautiful cathedral and old harbor. You'll have free time to stroll and eat lunch on your own. Walk the maze of pedestrian streets in Monopoli's old city center and see how they make the city so intimate.

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

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Hotel to Monopoli — 27 km (17 miles)

Afternoon Monopoli to Hotel — 16 km (10 miles) | Monopoli to Hotel Plus (moderate) — 23 km (14 miles)

What to Expect:

The coastal terrain is flat and there is an optional stop at the end of the ride at our *masseria's* private beach, with a short shuttle back to hotel. An additional ride option provides a moderate trek inland from Monopoli on a beautiful, long and gradual uphill, followed by a rolling, hilly road and a very scenic downhill to our *masseria*.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16 – 58 km (10 – 36 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4: Acaya / Cycle along the coast of Salento

Leave Savelletri and take a morning shuttle further south to embark on another day of your stunning Puglia bike ride towards Salento. You'll begin at the walled city of Acaya and ride through the ancient city's archway on country roads which are free from traffic and marked as bike paths. You'll finish your morning ride at the rugged coast where you will 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 either hitting the road again or taking a shuttle to the hotel. The afternoon offers more fun cycling on quiet country roads and along the small Alimini Lakes as you head to your next *masseria*.

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

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Acaya to Torre dell'Orso — 20 km (12.5 miles)

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

What to Expect:

A beautiful bike ride in the countryside mostly on marked bike roads to Torre dell'Orso on the sea where we'll break for lunch. In the afternoon you'll have a choice of a shuttle to the hotel or cycling more lovely country roads with some easy rolling hills by the Alimini Lakes, followed by a final flat stretch to our *masseria*.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 46 km (12.5 – 28.5 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 5: Cycle to Otranto / Picnic by an organic farm / Discover Otranto

Bike from your hotel on country roads through sleepy villages, where a stop in a colorful local bar for an Italian coffee can be a wonderful diversion. Your route is shaded by big olive trees and towering oaks as you head toward the coast. By lunch, you'll reach an organic farm near the sea, where the friendly owners, Antonio and Marina, will open their private garden to host a picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders.

After lunch, discover Otranto, a picturesque town on the Italian coast. Founded by the Greeks, Otranto is surrounded by great ramparts and walls. Starting in late spring, its atmosphere is enlivened by local craft studios selling clay whistles, baskets, hand-dyed fabric, and ceramics. The city's highlight is Otranto Cathedral's enormous, 8,611-square-foot floor mosaic representing the Tree of Life which was created by a monk in 1163. A visit to Otranto is also your opportunity to switch sports and take a dip in the sea.

Today's ride ends on flat country roads, where you'll catch sight of *menhirs* and *dolmens*—ancient monoliths and tombs—before returning to your hotel. This evening, you can dine on your own at the hotel or shuttle to Otranto for dinner at one of the many outdoor cafés or restaurants.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Hotel to picnic spot — 33 km (20.5 miles)

Afternoon Picnic spot to Otranto — 7 km (4 miles) | Otranto to Hotel — 9 km (6 miles)

What to Expect:

Most of today's riding is the morning to give you time in the afternoon to explore the historical capital of Salento, the city of Otranto and possibly go for a swim. The ride takes us inland from our *masseria* on paved country roads free from car traffic. The afternoon ride is a short and flat route through olive groves to our next *masseria*. An optional additional ride is an easy to moderate loop with undulating terrain starting from Otranto.

Cumulative Distance Range: 7 – 49 km (4 – 30.5 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6: Discover the eastern tip of Italy

After breakfast, you'll set out on one of the best rides in all of Italy. Starting in the interior of Salento, you'll follow gentle, rural pathways through little villages to the coastal town of Castro Marina. From there, you'll 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. Fortified, you'll 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'll cycle back to the hotel in time to freshen up before an extraordinary farewell dinner with Puglia wines and 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) | Santa Cesarea Terme to Hotel Plus (moderate) — 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

This mostly coastal ride is probably the most panoramic bike ride of the week. There is one major uphill after lunch, which can be skipped with a short support vehicle shuttle. The longer afternoon ride has more coastal riding along a road with a bit more traffic and is rated as moderate.

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

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7: Travel to Lecce / Free time / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends

After an included breakfast, complimentary transportation is provided by private motorcoach to the Hotel Patria Palace 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 focal point 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 practically 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 including options for independent dining.

Included Meals: Breakfast

DEPARTURE DAY: Departure

After an included breakfast this morning, complimentary transportation to the Brindisi airport will be provided (an approximately 35 to 45 minute drive, depending on traffic) for your departing flight.

Included Meals: Breakfast