



## TOURS IN PUGLIA AND BASILICATA

Culture, art, nature, food and wine, art and traditions.

*Beauty will save the world  
and our mission is to save Beauty*

theMonumentsPeople

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## *“Beauty will save the world and our mission is to save Beauty”*

To make your trip something to remember: discover this region and enjoy it in every aspect, led by our tour guides who will show our guests the art, nature, culture of Puglia and Basilicata, with competence and passion.

The Monuments People was created in 2018 with the idea of using our passion and experience, developed during years of studying and working in the field, in the promotion, enhancement and preservation of our Tourism, Cultural and Environmental heritage. We are archaeologists, art historians, archivists, experts in Art and Culture didactic, tour and naturalistic guides in Puglia.

Our team has been planning and realizing, in our region and in Basilicata, both tours for groups of tourists and educational tours and workshops for schools. We develop itineraries that will bring the visitors to discover cities, small towns, natural parks and to appreciate the most authentic aspects through direct experiences with local people, by visiting local businesses and artisan craft shops, by tasting typical food, by doing workshops together and much more.

Contact us for support and for an individual detailed quote that meets your needs.

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## SALENTO

Very busy during the summer for its beautiful beaches, Salento covers the entire province of Lecce and part of the two provinces of Brindisi and Taranto. It's a land full of surprises in every season of the year, for those who want to see with careful and curious eyes.

Our guides will lead you to discover our wonderful art cities like: Lecce, famous for its baroque; Gallipoli, "the beautiful city" completely surrounded by the sea; Otranto, known as "the city of martyrs" that, in its monuments, still preserve its Byzantine and Norman past; in the Basilica di Santa Caterina in Galatina, where you can be surrounded by the images of the Old and New Testament painted on its walls; in the northern part of the area there is Brindisi, with its two stunning castles and its Ancient Roman and Medieval history, told in the archaeological museum "F. Ribezzo" and in the monuments of its historical city centre.

Salento isn't only art cities but also small towns like Specchia, Ruffano, Castro, Tricase, Nardò, Presicce, where visitors can wander in lovely narrow streets and city centres.

For nature lovers, Salento offers several Natural Parks and walks among masserie (old farms) and dry walls in the countryside where the olive trees and grapevines reign supreme.

### Grecia Salentina

In the heart of Salento, we will make you discover small towns where, for a very long time, people have kept the customs, habits and traditions brought in the Middle Age by those monks coming from East. Their story can be seen in crypts and churches scattered in the countryside.

Walking among the small streets, it is also possible to hear some old people talking in Griko, an old Italian-Greek language still spoken in this area.

### Papier mâché

An old art-crafts, handed down from father to son since the 18th century and influenced by the Baroque aesthetic that today distinguishes Lecce. Walking among the streets, visitors can also look around the workshops of the papier mâché *maestri*. In these shops, people can admire creations that could be mistaken with others made with more precious material, pieces of art that are brought on shoulders during the religious processions or used to decorate churches and houses.







## VALLE D'ITRIA

Brindisi, Taranto and Bari, these are the three provinces that share the Valle d'Itria, a valley that has shadowy stretches of olive trees and white washed villages scattered here and there. Our guides will bring you among these towns that overlook the valley and the nearby areas: Alberobello, a Unesco site since 1996, for its 1500 trulli; Ceglie messapica, an old archaeological area which is also a Slow Food "stronghold"; Cisternino, one of the most beautiful towns in Italy, capital of the "fornelli"; Locorotondo and its peculiar circular plan; Martina Franca, splendid and elegant rococo town; Ostuni, the famous "white city" and "Queen of the olive trees". This valley enchants the visitors with its beauty, greets them and gives them its most authentic products.



### *The Capital of Trulli* *UNESCO site*

When people think of the word Puglia, it is immediately connected to the word "trullo", the typical dry stone conic roof houses. What makes this a special fairytale-like area is the presence of this kind of building in the valley. Once, they were used as temporary shelters for farmers. Now they have become permanent houses not only for local farmers but for all those who decide to settle here. Alberobello is a Unesco site for its uniqueness: there aren't other towns with its huge amount of trulli in the area. This makes it the most popular destination of the region.

### *Festival della Valle d'Itria*

Famous among the opera lovers, this Festival was created in the second half of the 70s and, since then, has been awarded 9 times with the prestigious award Premio Abbiati by the National Association of Italian Music Critics. It takes place every year in the Palazzo Ducale, in the baroque town of Martina Franca. Since its beginning, the Festival aim was to re-discover forgotten operas and rarely performed pieces of music. A particular emphasis is given to the full version performances and critical editions, that keep the adherence to the composers' intents.



## TERRA DI BARI

The plain of the Terra di Bari covers part of the Murgia and reaches the Adriatic coast. Our guides will lead you to several attractions that characterize the area, from castles to churches, medieval basilicas and cathedrals. The city of Bari, the capital of the region, has a basilica that dates back to the 11th century, San Nicola's, as its most prestigious religious building. Along the coast, there are some "gems" of the Apulian Adriatic coastal line: Polignano a Mare, a small town built on a rocky cliff above the sea; Monopoli, an early medieval town, rich with religious and public buildings imbued with history; Trani, with its precious medieval cathedral; Barletta, famous for the 16th Challenge among the Italians and the French.

### Castel del Monte UNESCO site



Unesco site since 1996, this castle is placed on a small hill near the town of Andria. Because of its mysteries, it daily brings together a lot of experts, onlookers and tourists. Commissioned by the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, it is famous for its octagonal shape. This peculiarity has raised several hypotheses on its purpose and the meaning behind it. This 13th century castle is considered, by many, The Symbol of Puglia.

### Il Guercio di Puglia

Giangirolamo d'Acquaviva d'Aragona, known as Il Guercio di Puglia (The Cross-Eyed from Puglia), is probably the most famous Apulian historical figure. Count of Conversano, he had also other lands in the whole region. His actions have made his reputation of being a cruel man growing bigger and bigger, fuelling the spreading of stories, some real some not. In the town of Conversano and the area near it, there are still buildings linked to this politician, soldier and patron of the Empire. Among these buildings: the trapezoidal castle in town and the castle of Marchione, summer palace of the counts Acquaviva.





## GARGANO AND DAUNIA

It is called “the spur of Italy” and it is an area characterized by beautiful sea and mountain landscapes. Nature is massively present in this part of the region, with its park Parco Nazionale del Gargano e Foresta Umbra, at 800 meters high. Thanks to its ancient beech forest, since 2017 it is a World Heritage Site and, in 2022, it was in the list of the 10 most beautiful forests in the World (the only Italian one). But Gargano isn't only Nature: stunning towns on the coast, like Peschici and Vieste, or in the Daunia area, like Bovino or Troia; the sanctuaries of San Michele Arcangelo and San Giovanni Rotondo, destinations of religious pilgrimage.

### San Michele Arcangelo UNESCO site



Puglia is rich of Unesco sites and there's one in Gargano too: the sanctuary of San Michele Arcangelo, known also as the Celeste Basilica (“the Celestial Basilica, according to the local belief it was consecrated by the Archangel Michael). During the Middle Ages, it was one of the four most visited destinations for pilgrimage, but its oldest part dates back to the year 493. This sanctuary has within its walls history and faith and it's one of the most visited places in Puglia.

### Vieste

Puglia has several charming towns on the coast, one of the most beautiful ones is Vieste. Here the visitors can wander in its white small streets, see the Cathedral and the castle both commissioned by the Emperor Frederick II and admire the 25 meters limestone monolith, Pizzomunno, which has become the symbol of this town. There's one of the most know Apulian legends link to this place, the one of the love story between the fisherman Pizzomunno and his loved Crisalda.



IN L'ALTRA GALLERIA  
L'ARTE E L'ARCHITETTURA  
DELLA CIVILTÀ ETRUSCA  
E ROMANA



## MAGNA GRECIA

The Ionian area between Puglia and Basilicata is imbued with the story of the Greek colonists that from their native country, crossing the Mediterranean sea, arrived on these coasts in Southern Italy and founded several cities that were considered Greek. Taranto had been the biggest and most important of them all, and its ancient history remains are collected in the M.Ar.Ta, the National Archaeological Museum. Towards the eastern part of the area, visitors can see the Tavole Palatine, a Greek temple dedicated to Hera and they can imagine how the view must have been for those traveling by sea to reach the colony of Metaponto – where it is possible to visit the Park and the Archaeological Museum. As last stop of this “Greek” part of Southern Italy, in Basilicata it is possible to visit the National Archaeological Museum of Siritide in Policoro (near Matera), the ancient Heraklea. In the museum, visitors can see the story of the Greek colonists that reach these lands and the relationships with the local populations.

### *Taranto*

Aside from the M.Ar.Ta, Taranto amaze the travellers with its peculiar historical city centre, that developed in a long and stretched peninsula between Mar Grande and Mar Piccolo. Something a visitor must do is to admire it with a boat tour. The charm of this city is also in its splendid Cathedral, the Castle and the several undergrounds passages that form a complicated “net” that lead to the sea as well.

### *Grottaglie and its ceramics*

Not very distant from Taranto, there's a small town that worths a visit: Grottaglie. Its lovely historical city centre is on a small hill and its famous for its “Quartiere delle Ceramiche” (“Ceramic District”), that still maintains the old appearance and the old workshops carved in the rocks.



## MURGIA AND MATERA



Between Puglia and Basilicata, there's the Murge, with part of the Alta Murgia National Park and the Regional Natural Park of Terra delle Gravine and the Natural and Archaeological Park of Murgia Materana. The word "murgia" means sharp stone and it perfectly describes this land and its spectacular scenery: a karst landscape with dolines, sinkholes, and caves like the famous ones in Castellana. There are also ravines that characterize the most southern part of this area: small canyons with more than 200 meters depth.

Visitors are enchanted by the view of this land, where it is noticeable the effort of people trying to adapt, since ancient times, to difficult environmental conditions: they dug into the rock to create shelters, churches or frescoed crypts, all scattered around this area. Rocky landscapes, picturesque old towns, huge masserie (farmhouses) make this a unique area.

In Lucania, the most important place to visit is Matera. It was the European Capital of Culture in 2019. Thanks to this title, this city was reborn with new restorations, cultural events, everything aimed to value and promote the cultural and naturalistic heritage of this Unesco site.

### *Gravina and the Aqueduct Bridge*

The spectacular Aqueduct Bridge near the town of Gravina di Puglia, was once used to cross the ravine Botromagno and reach the small church of Madonna della Stella. This is just one of the beautiful things that Gravina offers: typical cave settlements, a beautiful Cathedral, an impressive Castle built under the Emperor Frederick II and the archaeological sites of Padre Eterno and Botromagno.

### *Pane di Altamura and the King Oyster Mushroom*

There are several culinary excellences in this area, like the Pane di Altamura (Altamura bread) and the King Oyster Mushroom.

Famous in every part of Italy, this type of bread is made by using remilled durum wheat semola from the Murgia region. In 2003 it received the PDO, the protected designation of origin. In its original shape (u scuanéte, an "overlapped bread"), it was first kneaded at home and then the women brought it to the public bakery, where it was marked with the letters of the owner's name. The latin poet Horace called this bread "the best in the whole world". Another typical product of the area is the King Oyster Mushroom that grows in the Murgia area. Once, there were the "fungaioli", those who cultivated or searched for this type of mushroom, which has also risked to disappear because of the slow destruction of its habitat. Today, it is considered an excellence made in Puglia and it is in the national list of Traditional Agricultural Products.





## TRADITIONS

Puglia and Basilicata are two regions with several ancient traditions, religious and not, linked to the different populations that have lived in these areas. They have left something belonging to their beliefs or customs behind, something that can be seen in local traditions.

In the last couple of decades, in Puglia and Basilicata they are trying to “bring back to life” the ancient traditions, that often have become touristic attractions.

It is usually best to add, to the visit of cities and monuments, something about local traditions and rituals. To immerse yourself in the “authenticity of the area”, visitors have different choices throughout the year.

Few examples: the feast of Saint Nicholas in Bari, from the 6th to the 9th of May, recalls the transfer of the relics of this Saint from Myra to Bari; the Focara (bonfire) in Novoli, near Lecce, from the 16th to the 18th of January, a “feast of fire” that today is dedicated to Saint Anthony the Abbott but it has its roots in previous non religious feasts linked to the farm life and the timing of the harvest.

Patron saint feasts, old traditions: they can be part of a tour in Puglia and Basilicata to make the journey a discovery to know better the local reality.

### *Carnevale in Putignano*

Parade floats go around the city during what is considered the oldest Carnival celebration in Europe. From the 17th of January, every Thursday, this parade is dedicated to a specific category: priests, nuns, widows, mad people, wives and cuckolds. The last one has the traditional ritual of the “cutting of the horns”, an event organized by the Accademia delle Corna. During this event, the “Cuckold of the year” is elected.

### *The Tarantism phenomenon*

The concert during “La Notte della Taranta”, taking place at the end of August in Melpignano, has become a global event that attracts thousands of people in Salento. This is the last event of a touring festival that, during August, has concerts in towns of the central part of Salento, the Grecia Salentina. These are the concerts that, most of all, represent the traditional music Salentina. The roots of this phenomenon, which is considered today a touristic one, can be found in Galatina, between the 28th and 30th of June, during the patron saint feast of Saints Peter and Paul. In this town, inside the Palazzo Tondi-Vignola, a noble residence, people can still visit the small Saint Paul Chapel and the well that contains the water believed to cure the “tarantata”. This phenomenon was linked to pagan traditions that have been incorporated into Christian ones. It could be considered a sort of collective hysteria: it hit women who worked on the fields, while they were harvesting. Music and dancing were their therapy: the ill person went into a sort of trance and started dancing wildly at the sound of a fast-paced rhythm music with tambourines, violins and accordions.





## NATURE

For those who are interested in sport and nature, it is possible to find several naturalistic landscapes, from the Capo di Leuca going towards the north part of the region, near Gargano. It is possible to find several naturalistic landscapes. They all differ: the seacoast, sometimes with rocks, lakes, karstic areas with natural reserved areas, parks. Our qualified nature guides will bring the visitors in tour by foot, on bikes or horse to discover an unspoiled nature, preserved and still relatively unknown.

### *The pink flamingoes in the Saline of Torre Colimena*

Between Porto Cesareo and the coast near Taranto, along the Ionian coast, surrounded by the Mediterranean vegetation, visitors can admire something special. In the natural reserve of Torre Colimena, in Salina dei Monaci, at the end of winter and the beginning of spring, it is possible to enjoy the dance of the pink flamingoes, an endangered species, that choose to make their nests in this peaceful area.

### *Naturalistic and archaeological oasis "La Salata"*

This naturalistic and archaeological oasis is at 8 km from Vieste where, among the scents of the Mediterranean maquis, tortoise, eels, frogs and mullets swim peacefully. Walking among the scenic paths, visitors can also see a cemetery area carved into the rocks, made by 300 paleochristian tombs, dating back to the III-IV century. This small piece of paradise was saved by WWF in 1997.

### *Regional Natural Park of Porto Selvaggio and Palude del Capitano*

Facing the Ionian sea, along the coast near Nardò, there's the Regional Natural Park of Porto Selvaggio and Palude del Capitano, with its high cliffs, springs, coves and bays. This rich naturalistic landscape also make visitors see how people in the past interacted with this territory thanks to prehistoric caves, "specchie", walls of ancient villages, towers along the coast and fish fossils.



## COUSINE

The Apulian cuisine is rich, based on ingredients available in different seasons, with recipes famous in all Italy (with slight differences between the Apulian provinces). From Foggia and its caciocavallo podolico and the prosciutto from Faeto; through the area near Bari with the pallone cheese from Gravina and the mozzarella from Gioia del Colle; then Taranto with the famous mussels and the capocollo from Martina Franca; reaching the province of Brindisi and the special artichoke or the fiaschetto tomato from Torre Guaceto; arriving in the province of Lecce and the “scapece” from Gallipoli and the rustico leccese. In Puglia, from the Northern to the Southern part of the region, we have a long list of products and recipes that satisfy the palate.

### *Bombette and fornelli accesi*

Typical of the Itria Valley, bombette are rolls made with pork meat and cooked on the grill. These delicacies whet the appetite of tourists and locals. In Cisternino, at lunch or dinner time, the bombette are cooked in the so called “fornelli accesi”: a mixture between a butcher and a restaurant, where people can choose directly from the counter the meat desired, take a seat and wait until cooked to perfection.

### *Focaccia barese*

Have you ever heard of a food so good to defy the giant of fast-foods? This happened in Altamura, in the province of Bari, a town known for its famous focaccia. Cooked in a wood-burning oven, this focaccia is a popular product, with a recipe that slightly changes according to the Apulian provinces. Made with fine ground semolina and sometimes boiled potatoes, the dough is very elastic and, once cooked, the inside remains soft and the outer part is satisfyingly crispy. There are several versions: the classic, with tomatoes and fresh olives; with sliced potatoes; white, with salt and rosemary.

### *Olio and Wine*

Oil and wine in this territory are top-quality and it couldn't be otherwise: they have been produced in this region since ancient times, as confirmed by the several archaeological finds. Puglia is rich of olive groves, with century years old olive trees, and vineyards, with a majority of red grape variety. There are 4 DOP (controlled and guaranteed designation of origin) wines and 28 DOC (designation of origin) wines: the highest number in Italy after Tuscany. From the North to the South area of the region, several wineries offer wine tasting.







## ARTS AND CRAFTS

Walking in out cities or small towns, the visitor's eye can be caught by the several workshops and shops that sell items made by local artisans, very appreciated as souvenirs. Most of these have their origin in ancient times, when these arts and crafts were passed from father to sons, generation after generation.

We have items linked to traditions, like the papier mâché statues or figurines; or the traditional terracotta pots and bowls, like the ones that used by our grandmothers; or like the baskets made with intertwined olive branches, once used by the farmers. Next to the traditional ones, we have new ones with new materials or with old materials used in a modern way, to make original design items that decorate the houses.

### Whistles

There is a long-standing tradition, in all the region: the terracotta whistle. This multicolor musical object is linked to the use of the local "red ground" and can be dated back in old times: it could, indeed, originate from the Ancient Roman tintinnabula, as still today, animal shapes are used for the whistles. Rutigliano, a town in the province of Bari, is considered the capital of the whistles: here, the National Terracotta Whistles Competition takes place every year, and there's also a museum dedicated to this object and its history.

### Pumi

Another symbol of the Apulian craftsmanship is the ceramic pumo. Used as a decorative object on the balconies, still today it's often used as a wedding gift (from the married couple to the guests). It's elegant shape is that of a rosebud ready to open, symbol of regeneration, fertility and prosperity. Grottaglie, Cutrufiano and Laterza are the towns that are part of the "Cities of Ceramics" network, where this beautiful artisanal items are made.



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL TOURS

Most of our team is comprised of qualified archaeologists from universities in Puglia.

We have been collaborating for years with public and private institutions to promote and let people know about our local archaeological heritage, with projects for the access and appreciation of particular sites such as the Roman Theatre and Roman Amphitheatre in Lecce or the Castle Charles V in Lecce, and realizing **tours with our expert guides in the whole area of Puglia and Basilicata.**

In Puglia, almost every city and town holds pleasant surprises from an archaeological point of view: even if many ancient buildings are often not visible anymore, many big or small museums tell the stories of the ancient civilizations that lived in this territory.

There are well-known sites and itineraries, such as Taranto and its excellent archaeological museum, the M.Ar.Ta, or Egnazia, with its Archaeological Park and Museum, but there are also a lot of less known "treasures", like the several museums in the big and small cities in this region. To give a few examples: the Archaeological Park in Siponto and its extraordinary reconstruction, in iron, of the Paleochristian Basilica; the archaeological site Canne della Battaglia, known for the famous battle that took place in 216 BCE, during the Second Punic War.

In addition, we create themed tours based on our client's specific requests, often combining archaeology with hiking in nature. For instance, itineraries include visiting Byzantine crypts, archaeological sites showing pre-Roman civilizations in Puglia, pre- and protohistoric megalithic monuments, etc.

The Monuments People work with an important network of experts and public and private institutions established throughout the Apulian and Lucanian area to create our touristic and educational tours. This is the strength of our team!







## THE MARITIME-ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE AND THE MUSEO DEL MARE ANTICO IN NARDÒ'

The sea in our region is rich in archaeological finds, relics, underwater buildings, and several settlements, from small villages to big cities along the coast. Recent archaeological researches are bringing back a little more of this precious heritage daily, making it part of the maritime archaeological findings "net" that runs along the Mediterranean shores.

Since 2019, The Monuments People has worked with the University of Salento, running the Museo del Mare Antico in Nardò. The structure was initially thought to host the Roman relics found in Santa Caterina, but today, it hosts a series of archaeological findings from different Roman periods found along the coast near Nardò. The museum is now part of a much bigger project, which is still running: ***Il paesaggio come museo. Archeologia della costa di Nardò*** (The Shores like a museum – archaeology on the Nardò's coast), that consists of a programme of archaeological researches on maritime landscapes, with excavations and geophysical surveys between land and sea. It aims to reconstruct the dynamics along the coast throughout the century from an evolution and population point of view so as to trace back its commercial routes and itineraries.

The development of the Museo del Mare Antico is strictly linked to the territory in which it is situated: this includes not only the museum itself but also archaeological sites such as the Frascione village in the beautiful Regional Natural Park Porto Selvaggio and Palude del Capitano, where hiking tracks allow people to discover the surrounding nature and the archaeological side of the area.

The link with other museums and archaeological sites in this area, such as the Archaeological Museum "Sigismondo Castromediano" in Lecce, the Archaeological Museum "F. Ribezzo" in Brindisi, the National Archaeological Museum in Taranto, the Nazionale Museum "G. Andreassi" and the Archaeological Park in Egnazia, is essential to discovering the close relationship that this territory has always had with its sea.



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