

The best of Salento

An 8-day self-guided or guided cycling tour

Code tour: ITPUG01C



Salento is in the southeastern most region of Italy lying in the so-called "heel of the boot". Situated in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, this region is filled with memories of the different civilizations that inhabited it, from the Messapi, to the Greeks, followed by the Romans and then the Normans. Crossing Salento with a bicycle is like cycling through an open-air museum. Prehistoric Dolmen, Byzantine shrines hidden in the caves, Baroque cathedrals, secluded corners of the coast... are all but a few of the things you can see when visiting this area. Salento is also internationally renowned for its characteristic cuisine, which combines flavors from the sea and the earth and the fantastic rhythm of its folk music: most notably the Pizzica. It is a territory for the bon vivant of traditional local recipes and for fish lovers. This cycle tour starts in Lecce, the largest town of Apulia. It is a town with stunning architecture and therefore known as the 'Florence of the South' and the 'Capital of the Baroque'. Take your time to visit the Duomo, Roman theatre and amphitheater, castle of Carlo VI and many museums and churches. From Lecce you cycle to Otranto, an amazing town positioned in an area full of Caribbean beaches. It is a place rich in history, art, culture. Entering the old town centre, surrounded by the ancient town walls, through the Porta Alfonsina town gate, you emerge yourself in a labyrinth of alleys, passageways and small cosy squares. Leaving Otranto you cycle through the coastal natural park 'Costa Otranto' to Santa Maria in Leuca, famous for its lighthouse of 47m height. Punta Meliso is the point where the Adriatic Sea meets the Ionian Sea. Gallipoli was because of its harbor and importance as trade centre always subject to attacks from conquering peoples, like Byzantines, Greek, Spanish and Normans. It is a town where history flourishes at every corner, which can be seen in the mixture of architectural styles.



Level 2: Salento is a region that is almost completely flat, making the ride a pleasant journey for any level of rider. The daily route are about 3-5 hours of leisurely cycling, mainly crossing secondary roads, with sea-breaks and places to visit. On day 3 there are some more differences in level. This easy tour is meant to fully enjoy the surrounding landscape and culture with all its different aspects. GPS maps will guide you through the most suggestive and less busy roads.

Daily distances between 30 km / 18,6 mi and 61 km / 37,9 mi
 Total km: min. 272 km / 169 mi or max. 302 km / 187,7 mi

Period: self-guided every Friday and Saturday from 18/03 until 09/07 (last departure) and from 26/08 until 04/11 (last departure). Other dates on request with 75,00 € supplement p.p.

Group tour dates 2022: 16/04, 21/05, 18/06, 10/09, 15/10

Participants: Self-guided from 2 people
 Group tour with min. 6 people. If less than 6 it is semi-guided.

A tour guide will be accompany you on day 2,3 and 6. The other days self-guided with gps. You will get a refund of € 140,00 or you can cancel the tour and have a refund.



Guided & self-guided program in short

Day 1: arrive in Lecce and overnight

Day 2: From Lecce to Otranto (58 km / 36 mi)

Day 3: Otranto's surroundings (29 km / 18 mi)

Day 4: Otranto-Leuca coast (52 km / 32 mi)

Day 5: Ionic coast and Gallipoli (61 km / 38 mi)

Day 6: Gallipoli's surroundings (30 km / 18,5 miles or 60 km / 37 miles)

Day 7: way back Lecce (52 km / 32 mi)

Day 8: Departure

Program A self-guided tour:

Day 1: Individual arrival in Lecce

Briefing and bicycle delivery with GPS navigator in your B&B in Lecce.

Day 2: from Lecce to Otranto

Today an easy flat route, with many interesting cultural and naturalistic sights. After breakfast you pedal to Acaya, a small fortified town with a huge, renaissance castle from in which you can see the influence Arragon period. Then you plunge down into the natural state reserve "Le Cesine", a WWF protected area for many species of migratory birds. For the fish enthusiast among you, we can advise to visit San Foca on the sea. You continue cycling following the coastline, passing the remains of the ancient Bronze Age city, Roca Vecchia. You pass the 'Alimini' Lakes, where kilometers of beaches, forest and lakes are joined harmonious together. The last stretch of today brings you to Otranto, Apulia par excellence. Visit the San Peter church with its Byzantine frescoes and the cathedral with a very interesting mosaic pavement, a sort of figurative Middle Age encyclopedia.

Overnight stay with breakfast in Otranto

Distance: 58 km / 36 mi

Day 3: The surroundings of Otranto's

This short ring tour, gives you the opportunity to discover the surroundings of Otranto and in the same time you can dedicate yourself some more to this lovely town. The route follows the river "Idro" ("water"), which gave originally the name to Otranto. You come to Casamassella, a peaceful oasis where old looms are still being used in the agricultural handmade center "le Costantine foundation" (guided tour). The route continues to Giurdignano, a Bronze age megalithic park containing huge "dolmen" and "menhir" and then goes further to "La Cutura", a botanic garden, where you can see an incredible plants collection. It is unique in Europe for its extensive cacti collection. Later in the morning you have a tasting of local product in a bakery. Returned to Otranto, you can visit the historical center. Interesting to visit is the twelfth-century mosaic in the Romanesque cathedral. This mosaic is made by a monk called Pantaleone and shows religious scenes like Noah's ark, but there are also depictions of historical, mythical and even pagan figures, such as Alexander the Great and King Arthur.

Overnight stay with breakfast in Otranto

Distance: 29 km / 18 mi

Day 4: Otranto - Leuca coast

Today you cycle along a part of the wildest coastline of Salento. A beautiful landscape of cliffs will bring you to the 'Palacia' lighthouse (extreme eastern tip of Italy) and a little red lake surfaced in a disused bauxite quarry. Then you carry on riding along the coast. The road on high cliffs offer stunning panoramas over the Otranto Strait. With clear weather, you even will be able to see the mountains of Albania and Greece. It is worthwhile to visit 'Zinzulusa' cave, going down nearly 200 feet into the earth bowels. This cave is one of the most famous anchialine caves of Italy. The landscape exist of terraces and dry stone walls, ingenious devices of peasants to get arable land in barren and impervious areas. After crossing the bridge over the "ciolo" (a small canyon with a rare flora), you reach the pilgrimage sanctuary Santa Maria di Leuca, built on the promontory Capo di Leuca and the lighthouse, where the Adriatic Sea meets the Ionic Sea.

Overnight stay with breakfast in Leuca

Distance: 52 km / 32 miles

Day 5: From Leuca to Gallipoli

Today you discover Leuca Cape, the southern part of Apulia. You pass an astonishing defence tower situated in the centre of a small village and continue for a visit of an ancient mill, which is dugged into the rock. Another particularity is the enigmatic funerary monument made by big stones (its name "centopietre", means "hundred stones"). As a highlight you visit Leuca piccola ('little Leuca'), an important pilgrimage station which still maintains a vast underground area. Cycling amongst olive groves with dry stonewalls you come to Ugento, where it is worth to visit the archaeological museum. In the afternoon you will reach again the ionic coast and continue till St. Andrew's island and the Punta Pizzo" natural park. In Gallipoli, called the Pearl of the Ionian, you can enjoy an aperitif on one of the many terraces overlooking the sea. The town is divided in a modern

and old city, which is located on an island. This originally small fishing-village is striking by its bright sea light, its small alleys and its fish market.

Overnight stay with breakfast in Gallipoli

Distance: 61 km / 38 mi



Day 6: Gallipoli's surroundings

Day dedicated to the surroundings of Gallipoli. First stop is in Sannicola where you can visit an underground olive oil mill. You continue to Tuglie with its amazing "rural culture museum". In Galatone a beautiful Baroque town and the Norman castle of Fulcignano is awaiting you. In the afternoon, you reach Galatina with the church of Santa Caterina, which is totally painted with frescoes in Giottesco style. This town has also a nice historical centre. You can choose to go back by bike or by train.

On request, instead of the cycling, you can book for a cooking class 'home-made pasta'

Overnight stay with breakfast in Gallipoli

Distance 30 km / 18,5 miles or 60 km / 37 miles

Day 7: way back to Lecce

The last day of your trip, you pass many 19th century fortified farmhouse and villas. There are also nice towns to visit: Nardò has a baroque style historical centre and Copertino an impressive Norman castle. Some km before Lecce a last stop at the Martina brothers, which skilful keepers of the producing of traditional pottery. Late afternoon arrival in Lecce and bikes drop off.

Overnight stay with breakfast in Lecce

Distance: 52 km / 32 miles

Day 8: Departure after breakfast



B Guided tour

Program in short:

Day 1: arrive in Lecce and overnight

Meeting and welcome dinner

Day 2: From Lecce to Otranto (58 km / 36 mi)

See program day 2 self-guided tour.

Seafood lunch in San Foca

Day 3: Otranto's surroundings (29 km / 18 mi)

See program day 3 self-guided tour.

Included 2 guided tours (Constantine foundation) and botanic garden

Tasting lunch in bakery with stone-oven

Day 4: Otranto-Leuca coast (52 km / 32 mi)

See program day 4 self-guided tour

Day 5: Ionic coast and Gallipoli (61 km / 37,9 mi)

See program day 5 self-guided tour

Visit olive-oil mill

Day 6: Gallipoli's surroundings (35 km / 21,7 mi)

See program day 6 self-guided tour

Cooking class where you make Pitta di Patate (short of potato gateaunwith a stuffing of tomatoes , olives and capers or empty to taste with honey) Pittule (fried dough balls) filled with tomatoes and capers and hand-made orecchiette (typical local pasta) and pasticciotto cake (shortcrust pastry filled with Chantilly cream). After the family lunch you cycle back to Gallipoli

Day 7: Returning to Lecce (52 km / 32,2 mi)

See program day 7 self-guided tour

Dinner in one of the best restaurants of Lecce

Day 8: Guided tour in Lecce and end of tour

After breakfast a guided walk through town and say goodbye to the other group members !



Prices per person 2022:

A.self-guided tour

In double room: € 630

In single room: € 780

High season supplement 19/06-12/09/2022: € 140

4**** hotels supplement: € 150

Rental bike (trekking bike 21 gears): € 75

Rental e-bike: € 200

Extra night in Lecce in double room: € 55

Extra night in Lecce in single room: € 78

Extra night in Lecce in **** star hotel double room: € 75

Extra night in Lecce in **** star hotel single room: € 100

Supplement Cooking class on day 6: € 75 (to be paid locally)

Transfer from Brindisi airport to Lecce hotel (minimum 2 pax): € 30

Transfer from Bari airport to Lecce hotel (minimum 2 pax): € 75

Included in the self-guided tour:

- 7 overnights stays in farmhouse, 3*** hotels or B&B.
- 7 breakfast
- 2 tastings with wine, cheese and/or local products
- Luggage transportation
- GPS with tracks included
- Road book with cultural information and tips about the route.
- Local assistance in English h24.

Not included in the tour:

- Local tourist taxes
- Everything not mentioned under 'Included in the self-guided tour'

B. group tour

In double room: € 1.390 (semi-guided in case of less than 6 people € 1250)

In single room: € 1.650 (semi-guided in case of less than 6 people € 1510)

Supplement for e-bike rental: € 120

Extra night in Lecce in double room: € 68

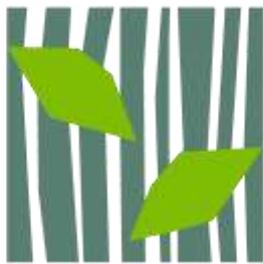
Extra night in Lecce in single room: € 95

Transfer from Brindisi airport to Lecce hotel (minimum 2 pax): € 30

Transfer from Bari airport to Lecce hotel (minimum 2 pax): € 75

Included in the guided tour:

- 7 overnights stays in villas, resort or farmhouses.
- 7 x breakfast
- 7 x dinners (drinks excluded) OR lunch
- 3 tastings with wine, cheese and/or local products
- Home-made pasta cookery class
- Bike rental (Hybrid 21 gears)
- Bike assistance / mechanic during the tour
- English speaking guide
- Luggage transportation
- Local tourist taxes



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