The best of Salento
An 8-day self-guided or guided cycling tour

Code tour: ITPUG01C



Salento is located in the southeasternmost part of Italy, in the famous "heel of the boot." Positioned at the heart of the Mediterranean Sea, this region is rich with traces of the many civilizations that have inhabited it, from the Messapians to the Greeks, followed by the Romans and Normans. Cycling through Salento feels like exploring an open-air museum. You'll discover prehistoric dolmen, Byzantine shrines hidden in caves, Baroque cathedrals, and secluded coastal spots — just a few of the many wonders this area offers.
Internationally known for its unique cuisine, Salento blends flavors from both sea and land, accompanied by the lively rhythm of its traditional folk music, especially the Pizzica. It's a paradise for lovers of authentic local dishes and fresh seafood. Your cycling tour begins in Lecce, the largest city in Apulia, famed for its stunning architecture. Often called the "Florence of the South" and the "Capital of Baroque," Lecce invites you to explore its Duomo, Roman theatre, amphitheater, Carlo VI castle, and numerous museums and churches. From Lecce, you'll pedal to Otranto, a charming town renowned for its Caribbean-like beaches, rich history, art, and culture. Enter the historic center through Porta Alfonsina, surrounded by ancient walls, and wander its maze of alleys and cozy squares. Leaving Otranto, the route continues along the coastal nature park "Costa Otranto" to Santa Maria di Leuca, famous for its 47-meter-high lighthouse. Punta Meliso marks the meeting point of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas.
Gallipoli, with its strategic harbor and role as a trade hub, faced frequent attacks by conquerors like the Byzantines, Greeks, Spanish, and Normans. This vibrant town showcases a rich blend of architectural styles and history at every turn.



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 01/01 until 03/07/2027 (last departure) and from 27/08 until 31/12/2027 (last departure).
Other dates on request with 100,00 € supplement p.p.

Participants: Self-guided from 2 people

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 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 offers an easy, flat cycling route with many fascinating cultural and natural sights. After breakfast, you'll pedal to **Acaya**, a small fortified town featuring a massive **Renaissance castle** that showcases the influence of the Aragonese period. Next, you'll explore the natural state reserve "**Le Cesine**," a WWF-protected area home to numerous migratory bird species. For seafood lovers, a visit to the seaside town of **San Foca** is highly recommended. The ride continues along the stunning coastline, passing the archaeological remains of the ancient Bronze Age city of **Roca Vecchia**. You'll cycle past the **Alimini Lakes**, where kilometers of beaches, forests, and lakes blend harmoniously. The final stretch of the day leads you to **Otranto**, the jewel of Apulia. Here, visit **San Pietro** Church with its remarkable Byzantine frescoes and the cathedral, famous for its intricate mosaic floor—a fascinating medieval visual encyclopedia.

Overnight stay with breakfast in Otranto
Distance: 58 km / 36 mi

Day 3: The surroundings of Otranto's:

This short circular tour lets you explore the beautiful surroundings of **Otranto** while giving you extra time to enjoy this charming town. The route follows the **river "Idro"** ("water"), which originally gave Otranto its name. You'll arrive at **Casamassella**, a peaceful oasis where traditional looms are still used at the agricultural artisan center, the **"Le Costantine Foundation"** (guided tours available). Next, the route continues to **Giurdignano**, a Bronze Age megalithic park featuring massive **"dolmen" and "menhir".** Later in the morning, enjoy a **tasting of local products** at a traditional bakery. Back in Otranto, explore the **historic center**. A highlight is the 12th-century mosaic in the **Romanesque cathedral**, created by the monk Pantaleone. This extraordinary artwork depicts religious scenes like Noah's Ark, along with historical, mythical, and even pagan figures such as **Alexander the Great and King Arthur**.

Optional horse riding in the morning or in the afternoon.
Overnight stay with breakfast in Otranto
Distance: 29 km / 18 mi

Day 4: Otranto – Leuca coast:

Today you'll cycle along one of the **wildest coastlines in Salento**. A **stunning landscape of cliffs** leads you to the **Palacìa lighthouse**, the easternmost point of Italy, and a small **red lake** formed in an abandoned **bauxite** quarry. Then you continue cycling along the coast. The road atop **high cliffs** offers **breathtaking views over the Otranto Strait**. On clear days, you can even spot the **mountains of Albania and Greece**. Don't miss the chance to visit the famous **Zinzulusa cave**, descending nearly 60 meters into the earth's depths. It's one of Italy's best-known **anchialine caves**. The surrounding landscape features terraces and *dry stone walls*—ingenious methods used by local farmers to create arable land in harsh, rocky terrain. After crossing the **"Ciolo" bridge**, a small canyon rich in rare flora, you'll arrive at the pilgrimage **sanctuary of Santa Maria di Leuca**,

perched on the **Capo di Leuca** promontory, near the lighthouse where the **Adriatic and Ionian Seas meet.**

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:

Today's trip explores the beautiful **surroundings of Gallipoli**. The first stop is in Sannicola, where you can visit a fascinating underground olive oil mill. Then you cycle to **Tuglie**, home to the impressive "**Rural Culture Museum**." Next, you'll arrive in **Galatone**, a charming **Baroque** town featuring the **Norman Castle of Fulcignano**. In the late morning, **Mari and Antonio** will welcome the cyclists to their **farm** for a **tasting of typical local cheeses**, reserved for the group. In the afternoon, you'll reach **Galatina**, known for the **Church of Santa Caterina**, completely adorned with **Giottesque frescoes**, and its lovely **historic center**. You can choose to return by bike or by train. Alternatively, on request, you can book a hands-on cooking class to learn how to make traditional homemade pasta or make an excrusion by sailing boat.

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

COOKING CLASS:

Alternatively, you can take an excursion through the Gallipoli countryside combined with a unique cooking experience at a local family's home. Cycling along quiet country roads lined with olive trees and dry-stone walls, you'll reach "Tenuta DonnAnna," where the cooking class takes place. Fresh ingredients are picked directly from the family garden and then used to prepare traditional dishes: pitta di patate (a potato gateau filled with tomatoes, olives, capers, onions, and tuna), pittule (fried dough balls, either stuffed with tomatoes and capers or plain to enjoy with honey), handmade orecchiette pasta, pasticciotto (a shortcrust pastry filled with chantilly cream), and tiramisù. The cooking session is followed by a family-style lunch where you savor the dishes with local wine. If the weather is favorable, you can also enjoy a swim and relax by the pool.

EXCURSION BY SAILING BOAT:

As an alternative to days spent cycling on land, enjoy Apulia from a different perspective: the sea. We offer a sailing excursion departing from Gallipoli aboard a 13-metre sailboat with 4 cabins—perfect for guests to take a restful "siesta"—and 3 bathrooms. The boat accommodates up to 12 people, with a professional crew on board.
During the trip, guests can choose to learn basic sailing skills or simply relax and soak in the scenery. Depending on the wind, we visit one of Puglia's two main natural parks: Sant'Andrea Island or Porto Selvaggio. There will be several stops for swimming and snorkeling. A delicious lunch is included, featuring a starter, main course, fruit or dessert, and local wine.

Hotel:

*** o **** or ***** star hotel, B&B or farmhouse
If some of the Hotels on the list is not available we'll offer you same category hotel.

Prices standard hotels per person 2027:

In double room

- From April to October: € 785
- From November to March: € 650

In single room:

- From April to October: € 1.025
- From November to March: € 890

Supplements

High season:
From 07/05 to 10/06 (incl) & 10/09 to 30/09 (incl) € 155
From 11/06 to 03/07 (incl) & 27/08 to 09/09 (incl) € 230

Bike rental:
Trekking bike 21 gears: € 130
Rental e-bike: € 215
Gravel bike 14 gears: € 215

Extra night in Lecce hotels:
In double room € 60
In single room € 90

Prices per person hotels ** 2027**:
In double room

- From April to October: € 1.025
- From November to March: € 890

In single room:

- From April to October: € 1.270
- From November to March: € 1.135

Supplements
High season:
From 07/05 to 10/06 (incl) & 10/09 to 30/09 (incl) € 155
From 11/06 to 03/07 (incl) & 27/08 to 09/09 (incl) € 230

Bike rental:
Trekking bike 21 gears: € 130
Rental e-bike: € 215
Gravel bike 14 gears: € 215

Extra night in Lecce hotels:
In double room € 85
In single room € 115

Prices per person **/***** hotels 2027**:
In double room

- From April to October: € 1.565
- From November to March: € 1.430

In single room:

- From April to October: € 1.815
- From November to March: € 1.680

Supplements
High season:
From 07/05 to 10/06 (incl) & 10/09 to 30/09 (incl) € 155
From 11/06 to 03/07 (incl) & 27/08 to 09/09 (incl) € 230

Bike rental:
Trekking bike 21 gears: € 130
Rental e-bike: € 215
Gravel bike 14 gears: € 215

Extra night in Lecce hotels:
In double room € 140
In single room € 205

Extra Services
Supplement Cooking class on day 6: € 75 (to be paid locally)
Sailing boat tour half day with lunch included: € 100

Guided Tour around Otranto: € 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
- Briefing about the itinerary and bike fitting
- Luggage transportation
- GPS with tracks included, Phone Older and navigation App
- Road book with cultural information and tips about the route.
- Local assistance in English h24.
- CO2 emission flat-rate compensation to the value of 20€

Not included in the tour:

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

Cancellation policy:

- Up to 60 days before the starting date: € 100,00 administration costs
- 59-30 days before starting date: 30% of the total tour costs
- 29-14 days before starting date: 50% of the total tour costs
- 13-6 days before starting date: 75% of the total tour costs
- 5 days-start of tour: 100% of the total tour costs

How to reach:
Start / End: Lecce/Lecce

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