

Gourmet cycling tour in Salento

An 9-day eno-gastronomic tour

Code tour: ITPUG02CG



This cycle tour through Salento in Apulia, the most southeastern region of Italy, is a perfect combination of leisure cycling and exploring the flavours of local food & wine. Salento is lying in the so-called "heel of the boot", in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea. This region is full of monuments reminding us of the many 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. This tour is dedicated to the Food & wine of Salento, where we find both delicious seafood and land dishes. We only mention the panzerotto filled with different stuffing's, focaccia Barese, Pettole, la pasta orecchiette con le cime di rape, the soup Cecamariti and many other recipes. The local cheeses are worth to taste, like the caciocavallo and canestrato pugliese. As most famous wine we can name the Primitivo di Manduria.



Level 1,5: 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 3-4 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 29 km / 18 mi and 58 km / 36 mi

Total km: min. 305 km / 189 mi or max. 320 km / 199 mi

Period: every Friday and Saturday from 19/03 until 10/07 (last departure) and from 27/08 till 06/11 (last departure)

Participants: minimum 2 people



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 (54 km / 33 mi)

Day 5: Leuca - Alliste /Ugento (47 km /29 mi)

Day 6: Alliste /Ugento - Santa Caterina (45 km /28 mi)

Day 7: Surroundings Santa Caterina -optie cooking lesson (30 km / 18,5 mi or 45 km / 28 mi)

Day 8: Santa Caterina -Lecce (42 km / 26 mi)

Day 9: Departure

The cookery in Puglia

Puglia cuisine is based on the products that occur naturally and are grown there, such as different types of grains, olives (olive oil), grapes (wine), seafood, fruit and many types of vegetables.

The cuisine is seasonal and depending on which season you eat a fennel, bell pepper, red pepper, eggplant, artichoke, broad beans or lentils in Puglia. A vegetable variety that you often see is cime di rapa, Italian turnip greens.

Il mare, the sea, has a major influence on the regional cuisine. With their special catch devices, trabucchi, the fishermen get their loot from the Adriatic Sea. These trabucchi make it possible to fish close to shore. Many mussel and oyster farms are located in the Mar Piccolo, the "little sea", in the Gulf of Taranto. The cozze, mussels, are grown almost all year round.



Program:

Day 1: arrive in Lecce and overnight

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. You 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. In the evening, you have an unforgettable seafood dinner with fresh fish.

Overnight stay with breakfast and dinner in Otranto

Distance: 58 km / 36 mi

Day 3: Otranto's surroundings

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 'Palacià' 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 stonewalls, 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. Fish dinner in town.

Overnight stay in Leuca

Distance: 54 km / 33 miles

Day 5: From Leuca to Ugento

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. You pass Giuliano with its castle and church dating back to the X century. Cycling amongst olive groves with dry stonewalls you reach another olive oil mill where you have an olive oil tasting. A short ride takes you finally to Ugento, where it is worth to visit the archaeological museum.

Overnight stay in with dinner in Ugento

Distance: 47 km / 29 miles

Day 6: Ugento - Gallipoli - Santa Caterina

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. Continuing you reach the byzantine church of San Mauro, a hidden treasure built on a rocky spur. Inside the church are frescoes dating back to the 13th-century. The route of today ends in Santa Caterina, a quiet village on the border of the Porto Selvaggio Natural reserve. In the afternoon you could go kayaking along the coastline of the natural park.

Dinner in Villa or in nearby restaurant

Overnight stay in with dinner in Santa Caterina

Distance: 45 km / 28 miles

Day 7: Santa Caterina and surroundings with as option a cookery lesson

A day dedicated to the surroundings of Santa Caterina. The first place to visit is Galatone, a picturesque Baroque town and then you go the castle of Fulcignano built in the 12th- and 13th century by the Normans. The next stop is Galatina with the church of Santa Caterina, which is totally painted with frescoes a Giottesque style. This town centre is very nice and here you have a tasting of local products. In alternative of the cycle route you can book also for a cooking class with mamma Anna.

Overnight stay with breakfast in Santa Caterina

Distance 30 km / 18,5 miles or 45 km / 28 miles

Day 8: Returning 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 in Lecce with dinner in one of the best restaurants of town

Distance: 42 km / 26 miles

Day 9: departure after breakfast !

Hotels: farmhouse, 4 **** hotels or B&B

Prices per person 2021:

In double room: € 1.100,00

In single room: € 1.340,00

Rental bike (trekking bike 21 gears): € 85

Rental e-bike: € 200

Extra night in Lecce: € 52

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

Transfer from Brindisi airport to Lecce hotel (minimum 2 pax): € 35 (to be paid locally)

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

Included in the tour:

- 8 overnights stays with breakfast.
- 5 dinners (drinks excluded)
- 5 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'

How to reach:

Start / End: Lecce/Lecce

By plane:

International airport of Brindisi (40 km) with several flights from European countries. There are also several daily connections from Rome, Milan and other Italian airports.

Take shuttle to Brindisi train station and take train to Lecce

Or take the bus from the airport Puglia airbus

International airport of Bari (150km) by train (tram) or shuttle to main station and take train to Lecce (travel time about 2 hrs)

Time table treni Italia

Useful Information:

[Italy wikipedia](#)

[Italy Travel Board](#)

[Safe travelling to Italy](#)

[Apulia wikipedia](#)

Apulia

Educational centre Le Constantine

Botanic Garden La Cutura

Zinzulusa Cave

Lecce

Otranto

Salento

Weather Salento



ECOLOGICOTOURS

ECOLOGICO TOURS

Lumbreida B19

6565 San Bernardino

Svizzera/Schweiz/Suisse

info@ecologicotours.com

tel. (0039) 3463254167 - (0041)(0) 79 2457505

www.ecologicotours.com

www.meravigliosaumbria.com