Gourmet cycling tour in Salento

An 9-day eno-gastronomic tour

Code tour: ITPUG02CG



Experience **Salento by bike**, in the heart of **Apulia**, Italy's southeastern gem. This tour offers the perfect blend of **leisure cycling, cultural exploration, and culinary delights**, allowing you to immerse yourself in the authentic flavors and traditions of this unique region. Salento lies in the so-called **"heel of Italy's boot"**, surrounded by the crystal-clear waters of the **Adriatic and Ionian Seas**. Rich in history, this region bears the marks of countless civilizations: the **Messapi**, **Greeks**, **Romans**, and **Normans**. Cycling through Salento is like riding through an **open-air museum**: prehistoric **dolmens**, hidden **Byzantine shrines**, **Baroque cathedrals**, and secluded coastal corners await your discovery. This tour is also a journey through the **gastronomy and wine of Salento**. Savor the best of local cuisine, from **seafood delicacies** to traditional land-based dishes. Highlights include **panzerotti stuffed with fresh ingredients**, **focaccia Barese**, **pettole**, **orecchiette with turnip greens**, and the hearty **Cecamariti soup**. Don't miss the **local cheeses**, such as **caciocavallo** and **canestrato pugliese**, and complement your meals with **Primitivo di Manduria**, one of the region's most renowned red wines. The tour starts in **Lecce**, the largest city in Apulia and a true Baroque masterpiece. Often called the **"Florence of the South"**, Lecce dazzles with its **ornate churches, grand piazzas, Roman amphitheatre, and the castle of Charles V**. Take your time to explore the **Cathedral of Lecce**, stroll through charming streets, and visit museums that showcase the city's rich cultural heritage. Whether you are a **history lover, foodie, or cycling enthusiast**, this **Salento bike tour** offers a complete experience of **culture, nature, and culinary excellence**, making it an unforgettable journey through one of Italy's most enchanting regions.



Period: Every Friday and Saturday from 01/01/2027 until 03/07/2027 (last departure) and from 27/08/2027 till 31/12/2027 (last departure).
It is possible to start on other days of the week with a supplement of € 150,00 p.p.
In July and August on request

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

Participants: minimum 2 people

Program in short
Day 1 Arrival 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 –Ugento (47 km /29 mi)
Day 6 Ugento – Galatone/Santa Maria al Bagno (45 km /28 mi)
Day 7 Surroundings Galatone/Santa Maria al Bagno - Optional cooking lesson - Excursion By Sailing Boat (30 km/18,5 mi or 45 km/28 mi)
Day 8 Galatone/Santa Maria al Bagno –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 by day

Day 1 Arrival in Lecce and overnight
Briefing and bicycle delivery with GPS navigator in your B&B in Lecce.

Overnight stay with breakfast in Lecce.

Day 2 From Lecce to Otranto
Today's **easy, flat cycling route** offers a perfect mix of **cultural landmarks and natural beauty**. After breakfast, pedal to **Acaya**, a small fortified town famous for its **Renaissance castle**, showcasing the architectural influence of the **Aragonese period**. Next, explore the **Le Cesine Nature Reserve**, a **WWF-protected area** that hosts numerous **migratory bird species**, perfect for nature enthusiasts. Continue along the coastline, stopping at **San Foca**, a charming seaside village, before reaching the **ancient Bronze Age city of Roca Vecchia**. The route passes the stunning **Alimini Lakes**, where **kilometres of beaches, forests, and freshwater lakes** create a harmonious natural landscape. The final stretch leads to **Otranto**, one of Apulia's most iconic towns. Visit the **San Pietro Church** with its **Byzantine frescoes**, and the **Otranto Cathedral**, renowned for its **medieval mosaic pavement**, a fascinating figurative encyclopaedia of the Middle Ages. End the day with an **unforgettable seafood dinner**, featuring the **freshest local fish**, and experience the flavors of authentic Salento cuisine.

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

Day 3 Otranto's surroundings
This **short ring tour** is a perfect way to explore the **surroundings of Otranto** while also spending more time in this charming town. The route follows the **Idro River** ("water"), which originally gave Otranto its name. The first stop is **Casamassella**, a peaceful oasis where **traditional looms** are still used in the **Le Costantine Foundation**, an agricultural and handmade craft center (guided tour included). The tour continues to **Giurdignano**, a **Bronze Age megalithic park** featuring massive **dolmens** and **menhirs**, before heading to **La Cutura**, a remarkable **botanical garden** famous across Europe for its extensive **cacti collection** and diverse plant species. Later in the morning, enjoy a **tasting of local products** at a traditional bakery. Back in **Otranto**, explore the **historic town center**, including the **Romanesque Cathedral** with its famous **12th-century mosaic** by the monk **Pantaleone**. The mosaic depicts **religious scenes**, such as **Noah's Ark**, alongside **historical, mythical, and even pagan figures**, including **Alexander the Great** and **King Arthur**. For those seeking extra adventure, there is also the opportunity for a **horseback ride**, available in the **morning or afternoon**.

Overnight stay with breakfast and local products tasting in Otranto
Distance: 29 km / 18 mi

Day 4 Otranto - Leuca coast
Today's ride takes you along one of the **wildest coastlines of Salento**, offering breathtaking views and dramatic landscapes. Cycle to the **Palacìa Lighthouse**, located at Italy's **easternmost tip**, and discover the **small red lake** formed in a disused **bauxite quarry**. Continue along the coastal road, perched on high cliffs, offering **stunning panoramas over the Otranto Strait**. On a clear day, you may even glimpse the **mountains of Albania and Greece** across the sea. A must-see stop is the **Zinzulusa Cave**, one of Italy's most famous **anchialine caves**, where you can descend nearly **200 feet into the earth** to explore its fascinating formations. The surrounding landscape features **terraced fields and dry-stone walls**, ingenious techniques created by local peasants to cultivate otherwise barren land. After crossing the **Ciolo Bridge**, a small canyon renowned for its **rare flora**, the route reaches the **pilgrimage sanctuary of Santa Maria di Leuca**, situated on the **Capo di Leuca promontory** alongside its historic lighthouse, where the **Adriatic Sea meets the Ionian Sea**. The day ends with a **delicious fish dinner** in town, perfect to enjoy the **fresh flavors of Salento**.

Overnight stay in Leuca with breakfast and dinner
Distance: 54 km / 33 miles

Day 5 From Leuca to Ugento
Today you explore **Capo di Leuca**, the southernmost tip of **Apulia**, rich in history, culture, and stunning landscapes. Cycle past an **astonishing defensive tower** in the heart of a small village, and continue to visit an **ancient mill carved into the rock**. A unique highlight is the enigmatic **funerary monument "Centopietre"** ("hundred stones"), built with massive stones whose origin and purpose still intrigue historians. The tour also includes **Leuca Piccola** ("Little Leuca"), an important **pilgrimage site** that still preserves an extensive **underground area**. The route passes through **Giuliano**, with its **castle and church dating back to the 10th century**, before cycling among **olive groves with traditional dry-stone walls** to reach another **olive oil mill**, where you can enjoy a **tasting of local olive oil**. A short ride brings you to **Ugento**, where a visit to the **archaeological museum** is highly recommended to explore artifacts from the rich Salento past.

Overnight stay in with breakfast and olive oil tasting in Ugento
Distance: 47 km /29 miles

Day 6 Ugento - Galatone– Gallipoli / Santa Maria al Bagno
Today you cycle along the **Ionian coast**, reaching **St. Andrew's Island** and the **Punta Pizzo Natural Park**, a protected area known for its pristine landscapes and wildlife.
In **Gallipoli**, famously called the **Pearl of the Ionian**, enjoy an **aperitif on a terrace overlooking the sea**. The town is divided into a **modern district** and a **historic old town**, located on an island. Originally a small fishing village, Gallipoli captivates visitors with its **bright Mediterranean light**, **narrow alleys**, and **lively fish market**. Continuing along the route, visit the **Byzantine Church of San Mauro**, a hidden treasure perched on a rocky spur, featuring **13th-century frescoes**.
The day ends in **Santa Maria al Bagno**, a **quiet village on the edge of the Porto Selvaggio Natural Reserve**, perfect for relaxing and enjoying the coastal scenery after a day of cycling.

Overnight stay in Santa Maria o Gallipoli with breakfast and dinner
Distance: 45 km /28 miles

Day 7 Gallipoli / Galatone / Santa Maria al Bagno or as option a cookery lesson or sailing excursion
Today's route is dedicated to exploring the **surroundings of Santa Caterina**, rich in **Baroque architecture and local traditions**. The first stop is **Galatone**, a **picturesque Baroque town**, followed by a visit to the **Castle of Fulcignano**, built in the **12th and 13th centuries by the**

Normans. Next, head to **Galatina**, famous for the **Church of Santa Caterina**, entirely adorned with **Giottesque frescoes**. The charming **town center** is perfect for a stroll and for enjoying a **tasting of local products**, including traditional sweets and other Salento specialties. For those who prefer a hands-on experience, it is also possible to **book a cooking class with Mamma Anna**, learning to prepare authentic **Salento recipes** or to book an **excursion by sailing boat.**

Overnight stay with breakfast in Santa Caterina o Gallipoli
Distance: 30 km / 18,5 miles or 45 km / 28 miles

Cooking Class

As an alternative to the cycling day, enjoy a **short ride through the Gallipoli countryside** combined with an **authentic cooking experience** at a local family estate. Cycle along **country roads lined with olive trees and dry-stone walls** to **Tenuta DonnAnna**, where the cooking class takes place. Ingredients are harvested from the **family garden** and used to prepare local specialties: **pitta di patate** (potato gateau with tomatoes, olives, capers, onions, and tuna), **pittule** (fried dough balls, sweet or savory), **handmade orecchiette**, **pasticciotto** (shortcrust pastry with chantilly cream), or **tiramisu**. The experience ends with a **family lunch** tasting the dishes, accompanied by **local wine**. If the season allows, guests can **swim and relax by the pool**.

Excursion By Sailing Boat

As an alternative to the cycling day, enjoy a **sailing excursion along the Apulian coast**. Depart from **Gallipoli** on a **13-metre boat** with 4 cabins, 3 bathrooms, and space for up to 12 guests, with the **crew on board**. During the trip, guests can **learn basic sailing techniques** or simply **relax and enjoy the scenery**. Depending on the wind, the excursion visits one of Puglia's top natural parks: **Sant'Andrea Island** or **Porto Selvaggio**. Several stops are planned for **swimming and snorkelling**. The experience includes a **lunch** with starter, main course, fruit or dessert, and **local wine**.

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 breakfast and dinner in one of the best restaurants of town
Distance: 42 km / 26 miles

Day 9 Departure after breakfast!

Hotels: Agriturismo (farmhouse B&B), ***, ****, ***** hotels and B&B

Prices standard hotels per person 2027

In double room

- From 01/01/2027 to 06/05/2027 € 1.250
- From 07/05 to 10/06 € 1.385
- From 11/06 to 03/07 (last departure) € 1.480
- From 27/08 to 09/09 € 1.480
- From 10/09 to 30/09 € 1.385
- From 01/10/2027 to 31/12/2027 € 1.250

Single supplement: € 260

Prices ****/***** hotels per person 2027

In double room

- From 01/01/2027 to 06/05/2027 € 1.765
- From 07/05 to 10/06 € 1.900
- From 11/06 to 03/07 (last departure) € 1.995
- From 27/08 to 09/09 € 1.995
- From 10/09 to 30/09 € 1.900
- From 01/10/2027 to 31/12/2027 € 1.765

Single supplement: € 300

Bike rental for both category

Rental bike (trekking bike 21 gears): € 145
Rental e-bike: € 250
Gravel bike (14 gears): € 250

Included in the tour

- 8 overnights stays with breakfast.
- 4 dinners (drinks excluded)
- 4 tastings with wine, cheese and/or local products
- Briefing about the itinerary and bike fitting
- Luggage transportation
- GPS with tracks included, phone holder (1 for each booking)
- Road book with cultural information and tips about the route.
- Local assistance in English h24.
- CO2 emissions flat-rate compensation to the value of 20€
- Phone holder (1 per room)

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

Bikes: Hybrid, E-Bikes and Gravel Bikes.
The bikes are delivered with helmet, toolkit, lock, pannier, handlebar pouch

Start / End: Lecce

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