The Great Apulian Cycle Tour: Matera to Lecce

An 8, 12 or 14 day self-guided bike tour

ITPUG06C



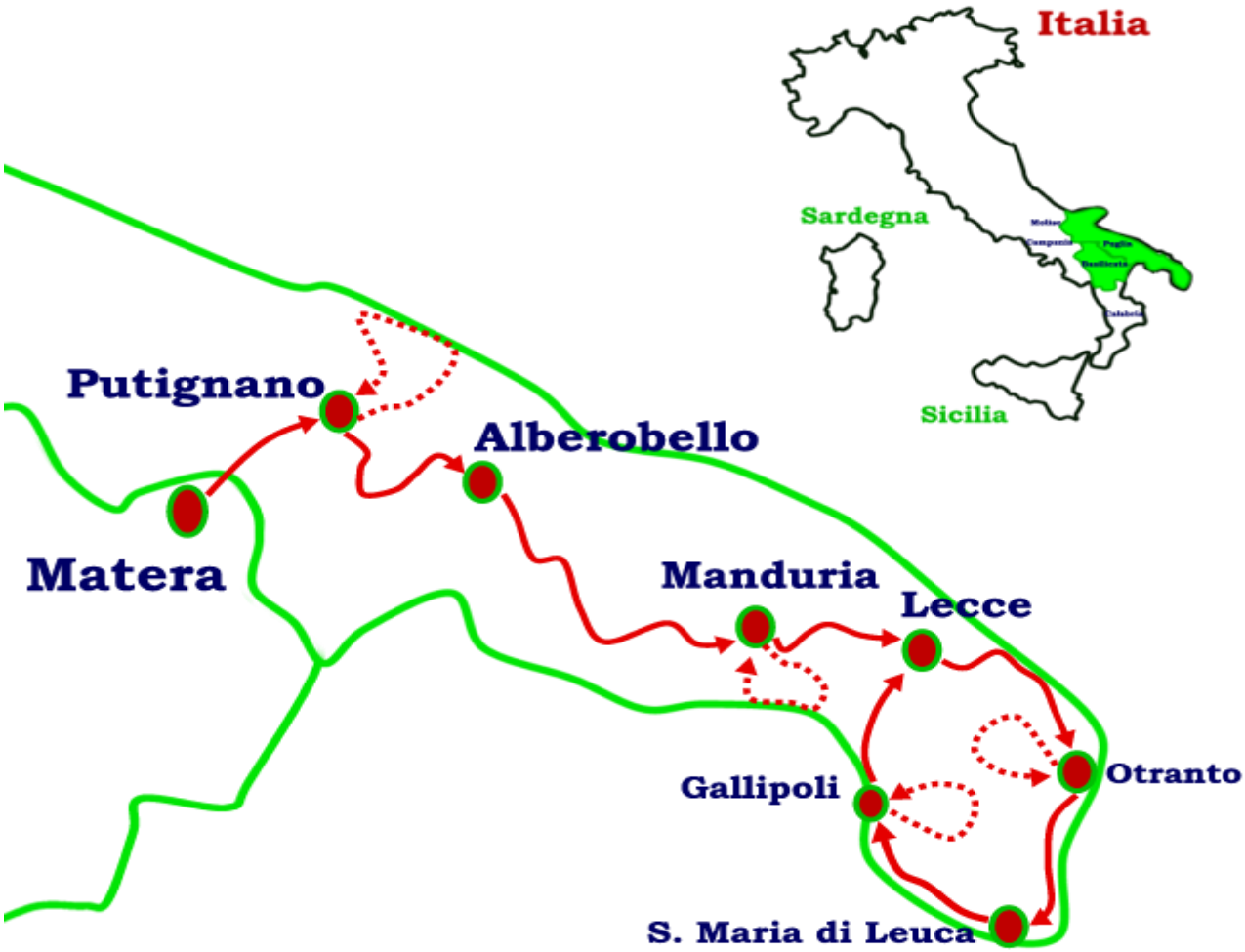
From the Ancient Stones of Matera to the Sun-Kissed Shores of Salento

An Unforgettable Journey Through the Soul of Southern Italy

Embark on an extraordinary cycling adventure connecting two of Southern Italy's most iconic regions: **Basilicata and Apulia.** Beginning in the otherworldly cave landscape of Matera—**a UNESCO World Heritage site** and one of the oldest continuously inhabited cities in the world—your route winds gracefully toward the sparkling turquoise waters and baroque elegance of **Salento.**

Pedaling along peaceful country backroads and gentle coastal routes, you will cross an ever-changing landscape of ancient olive groves, sprawling vineyards, and iconic conical **trulli.** Every stage feels like cycling through an open-air museum, where the rich legacies of **Messapians, Greeks, Romans, and Normans** blend seamlessly with warm **Southern Italian hospitality.**

Beyond the sweeping views**, this tour is a feast for all senses**. Savor world-class local wines, indulge in time-honored **culinary traditions** that celebrate both land and sea, and discover charming historic towns at your own rhythm. From ancient stone alleys to vibrant coastal ports, **this itinerary offers the perfect balance** of history, nature, culture, and pure riding joy.



Level 2,5:
This itinerary covers varied terrain, combining the gentle rolling hills of the Murge and Itria Valley with the flatter coastal routes of Salento. Daily stages range between 30 km and 70 km (with optional shorter routes on select days), requiring a moderate level of fitness and around 3 to 5 hours of pedaling per day. The ride follows quiet, scenic backroads with occasional undulating climbs. It is perfect for active travelers and regular cyclists looking for a rewarding mix of effort, culture, and coastal relaxation (E-bikes are also available for a more relaxed experience).

8 days tour daily distances: between 35 km/21,7 mi and 70 km/43,5 mi
8 days tour total km: min. 311 km/193,2 mi or max. 351 km/218 mi

12 Days tour daily distances: between 29 km/18 mi and 70 km/43,5 mi
12 days tour total km: min. 520 km/323 mi or max. 560 km /348 mi

14 Days tour daily distances: between 29 km/18 mi and 80 km/49,7 mi
14 days tour total km: min. 629 km/391 mi or max. 679 km /422 mi

Period:
Self-guided every Sunday from 03/01/27 until 06/06/2027 (last departure) and from 29/08 until 26/12/2027 (last departure).
Other departure dates for the 12 day tour on request with **225,00 €** supplement p.p.
Other departure dates for the 8 day tour on request with **150,00 €** supplement p.p.
Other departure dates for the 14 day tour on request

Participants: Self-guided from 2 people. Solo traveller on request.

The Program in Short

8 days program

Day 1: Arrive in Matera and overnight
Day 2: From Matera to Putignano /Castellana
Day 3: Around Putignano: Monopoli, Polignano a Mare and Castellana
Day 4: From Putignano to Alberobello/ Locorotondo /Martina Franca
Day 5: From Alberobello/ Locorotondo/Martina Franca to Manduria
Day 6: Around Manduria
Day 7: From Manduria to Lecce
Day 8: Departure from Lecce

12 days program

Day 1: Arrive in Matera and overnight
Day 2: From Matera to Putignano/Castellana
Day 3: Around Putignano: Monopoli, Polignano a Mare and Castellana
Day 4: From Putignano to Alberobello/ Locorotondo/Martina Franca
Day 5: From Alberobello/ Locorotondo/Martina Franca to Manduria
Day 6: From Manduria to Lecce
Day 7: From Lecce to Otranto
Day 8: Around Otranto
Day 9: From Otranto to Leuca
Day 10: From Leuca to Gallipoli
Day 11: From Gallipoli to Lecce
Day 12: Departure from Lecce

14 days program

Day 1: Arrive in Matera and overnight
Day 2: From Matera to Putignano / Castellana
Day 3: Around Putignano: Monopoli, Polignano a Mare and Castellana
Day 4: From Putignano to Alberobello/ Locorotondo/Martina Franca
Day 5: From Alberobello / Locorotondo/Martina Franca to Manduria
Day 6: Around Manduria
Day 7: From Manduria to Lecce
Day 8: From Lecce to Otranto
Day 9: Around Otranto
Day 10: From Otranto to Leuca
Day 11: From Leuca to Gallipoli
Day 12: Around Gallipoli– Optional Cooking class or Sailing excursion
Day 13: From Gallipoli to Lecce
Day 14: Departure from Lecce

The 12 day tour daily program

Day 1 - Arrival in Matera
Arrive in Matera and check into your hotel. In the afternoon, we will meet for your official tour briefing, equipment orientation, and bike and GPS setup. Spend the rest of your day wandering through the ancient stone alleys of this historic UNESCO site.

Overnight with breakfast in Matera.

Day 2 - From Matera to Putignano / Castellana
Your cycling journey begins as you ride out from the dramatic stone contours of Matera, transitioning smoothly into the rolling, peaceful rural landscapes that connect Basilicata to Apulia. Your first main stop is **Gioia del Colle**, a town celebrated not only for its rich history but also as the gastronomic heartland of Apulian dairy production. It is the ideal place to take a rewarding break and indulge in freshly made *mozzarella fior di latte* and creamy *burrata*.
Continuing for another 23 kilometers along quiet backroads, you'll reach **Putignano**, globally famous for hosting one of the oldest and most colorful carnivals in Europe. Once you arrive, spend time exploring its beautiful historic center. Walk through the maze of narrow alleyways and admire the ancient perimeter that was historically protected by three grand city gates: **Porta Barsento, Porta Nuova, and Porta Grande.**

Overnight with breakfast in Putignano / Castellana area.
Distance: 60km or 70km / 37,2 mi or 45,5 mi

Day 3 - Around Putignano: Monopoli, Polignano a Mare & Castellana Grotte
Today's loop ride explores the area southeast of Bari, combining beautiful coastal views with extraordinary underground wonders. Your route leads first to **Polignano a Mare**, famously perched on limestone cliffs overlooking the Adriatic Sea. Here, take time to wander its stunning balconies, enjoy a refreshing swim in its iconic turquoise bay, and sample the town's famous local delicacy: a gourmet octopus sandwich.
Continuing along the coast, you will reach **Monopoli**, a vibrant maritime town with a picturesque old fishing harbor and a maze of whitewashed alleys. Finally, head inland toward **Castellana Grotte** to discover one of Italy's most extraordinary natural treasures—a breathtaking underground karst cave system featuring towering stalactites, shimmering crystals, and dramatic subterranean chambers.

Overnight with breakfast in Putignano / Castellana area.
Distance: 61 km / 38 mi

Day 4 - From Putignano to Alberobello / Locorotondo / Martina Franca
Today you pedal into the enchanting **Valle d'Itria**, a fairy-tale landscape of dry-stone walls, ancient olive trees, and rolling green hills. Your first stop is **Noci**, one of the valley's quietest and most authentic hidden gems. It's the perfect spot to pause for an espresso and soak in the peaceful atmosphere of its historic center, far from the main tourist paths.
As you continue along gentle, winding country lanes, you'll arrive in **Alberobello**, a world-famous UNESCO World Heritage site since 1996. Here, over 1,500 historic ***trulli***—iconic whitewashed stone dwellings with conical roofs—form a stunning cityscape unlike anywhere else in the world.
Spend time wandering through its unique neighbourhoods before continuing toward your destination in the heart of the valley.

Overnight in Alberobello / Locorotondo / Martina Franca area
Distance: 35 km or 41 km or 45 km / 21, 7 mi or 25,5 mi or 28 mi

Day 5 - From Alberobello / Locorotondo to Manduria
Today's stage is the longest of the trip, marking a fascinating transition as you leave the gentle rolling hills of the Itria Valley and cross into the sun-drenched plains of Salento. Leaving **Martina Franca**, you'll cycle along a scenic stretch of the **Apulian Aqueduct Cycleway** (*Ciclovia dell'Acquedotto*), a historic trail following the waterway that has brought life to Apulia for over a century.
Your route leads next to **Ceglie Messapica**, a town celebrated for its rich gastronomic tradition. Be sure to stop at one of the ancient bakeries in its historic core to sample its famous artisanal bread and pastries. Continuing south, you'll reach **Francavilla Fontana**, where you can admire the magnificent Baroque *Basilica Minore del Santissimo Rosario* and Imperiali Palace, followed by **Oria**, an enchanting hilltop town steeped in mystery and legend, often called the "City of Witches." After passing through **Erchie**, you'll conclude your day in the peaceful countryside surrounding Manduria.

Overnight with breakfast in the Manduria / Avetrana area.
Distance: 70 km or 60 km or 50 km / 43,5 mi or 37,2 mi or 31 mi

Day 6 - From Manduria to Lecce
Today your journey leads toward the heart of Salento and its magnificent capital, **Lecce**, often celebrated as the "Florence of the South." Your route winds through the prestigious wine region of **Salice Salentino**, where endless rows of vineyards produce world-famous red wines.
Pedaling through quiet, timeless villages, you'll capture authentic glimpses of rural Apulian life—where local elders gather in sunlit piazzas to share stories and debate the day's news. Arriving in Lecce in the afternoon, you will be welcomed by its **Baroque architecture,** warm golden-limestone buildings, and vibrant atmosphere. A short briefing will follow to introduce the exciting second half of your tour.

Overnight with breakfast in Lecce.
Distance: 60 km / 37,2 mi

Day 7 - From Lecce to Otranto
Today's flat, sea-breeze-filled route offers a captivating mix of medieval history and pristine coastal nature. Your first stop is **Acaya**, a perfectly preserved Renaissance fortified town anchored by a massive 16th-century castle. From there, pedal down toward **Le Cesine**, a serene WWF nature reserve and vital wetland sanctuary for numerous species of migratory birds.
The journey continues along the Adriatic coast, taking you past the dramatic archaeological ruins of **Roca Vecchia** and the tranquil twin **Alimini Lakes**.
By late afternoon, you'll reach **Otranto**, Italy's easternmost city. Lose yourself in its maze of whitewashed alleys, admire the delicate Byzantine frescoes of Saint Peter's Church, stroll along ancient sea walls, and visit the extraordinary Cathedral to marvel at its famous 12th-century floor mosaic—a monumental medieval masterpiece.

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

Day 8 - Otranto's Surroundings
Today is dedicated to exploring the rich cultural heritage and timeless traditions hidden in Otranto's countryside. Following the course of the Idro River—the ancient stream that gave

Otranto its name—you will ride to **Casamassela**. Here, visit the renowned *Le Costantine* Foundation, where local artisans still preserve centuries-old textile traditions using traditional wooden looms.
Continuing to **Giurdignano**, pedal through an extraordinary megalithic park filled with ancient Bronze Age dolmens and menhirs. In the late morning, indulge in an authentic local food tasting at a charming family-owned bakery, sampling traditional baked specialties and regional flavours. The rest of the afternoon is yours to relax in Otranto or enjoy an optional horseback riding excursion along the coast.

Overnight with breakfast in Otranto.
Distance: 29 km / 18 mi

Day 9 - From Otranto to Santa Maria di Leuca
Prepare for one of the most breathtaking rides of the journey as you cycle along the dramatic, cliffside coastal road of southern Salento. Your first stop is the **Punta Palascìa Lighthouse**, marking the easternmost point of Italy, followed by a brief visit to a striking emerald-red lake inside a disused bauxite quarry.
As you pedal south, the road acts as a grand natural balcony overlooking the Strait of Otranto—on clear days, you can spot the distant peaks of Albania and Greece across the sea. Along the way, admire the remarkable dry-stone terraces built by local farmers into the rugged terrain. You can also descend into the underground depths of the famous **Zinzulusa Cave**. Finally, cross the dramatic bridge over the **Pordo del Ciolo** canyon before arriving in **Santa Maria di Leuca**, where you will follow in the footsteps of historic pilgrims up to the iconic Basilica Sanctuary at the tip of the peninsula.

Overnight with breakfast in Santa Maria di Leuca.
Distance: 54 km / 33,5 mi

Day 10 - From Santa Maria di Leuca to Gallipoli (61 km)
Leave the southern tip of Apulia behind as you explore the historical heartland of **Capo di Leuca.** Your route leads past ancient defensive towers and historic olive presses carved directly into the rock. Stop to discover the enigmatic **Centopietre** in Patù—an ancient megalithic funerary monument constructed from massive stone blocks—and visit **Leuca Piccola**, a historic pilgrimage sanctuary featuring a fascinating subterranean network.
Continuing through silver olive groves and traditional dry-stone walls, pedal toward **Ugento** to explore its rich Messapian archaeological heritage. In the afternoon, return to the crystal-clear Ionian coastline, riding past the pinewoods and dunes of the **Punta Pizzo Natural Park**.
Conclude your day in **Gallipoli**, an island-bound fortress town renowned for its vibrant fish market, whitewashed alleys, and stunning sea-facing terraces perfect for a sunset aperitif.

Overnight with breakfast in Gallipoli.
Distance: 61 km / 38 mi

Day 11 - Way Back to Lecce
Your final cycling day takes you through the quiet countryside of interior Salento, dotted with 19th-century fortified farmhouses (*masserie*) and grand noble villas. Your first major stop is **Nardò**, where you can explore its splendid historic center, celebrated for its ornate Baroque architecture and elegant piazzas.
Continuing north, reach **Copertino** to admire its massive medieval castle and learn about the legendary Saint Joseph of Copertino, known as the "**Flying Saint**". Just a few kilometers before returning to Lecce, enjoy a special visit to a traditional ceramics workshop run by the Martina

brothers, master craftsmen keeping centuries-old pottery traditions alive. Arrive back in **Lecce** in the late afternoon to drop off your bikes and celebrate the completion of your journey.

Overnight with breakfast in Lecce.
Distance: 52 km / 32,3 mi

Day 12 - Departure
After breakfast, check out of your hotel and depart Lecce, end of our services.
Safe travels on your journey home or onward to your next destination!

8-Day Tour Program (Matera to Lecce)

Follows Days 1 through 5 of the main itinerary (12 day tour daily program), but includes an extra dedicated **Manduria Loop Tour (45 km)** to deeply explore the *Primitivo* wine region. The tour concludes upon arrival in Lecce on Day 8, skipping the southern coastal loops (Otranto, Leuca, and Gallipoli).

Day 6 - Manduria Surroundings: Coastal Dunes, Salina dei Monaci & Wine Heritage
Today's loop ride guides you from the countryside down toward the sparkling Ionian coast. Your route leads first to **Torre Colimena**, where coastal dunes border the pristine marine wetland of **Salina dei Monaci**—a serene nature reserve where you can spot migratory birds, including pink flamingos.
Continuing north along the coastline, you will reach **San Pietro in Bevagna**, famous for its crystal-clear emerald waters and wide sandy beaches that offer a peaceful, uncrowded spot for a swim during spring and autumn. Turning inland back toward **Manduria**, immerse yourself in centuries of history at the ancient Messapian Archaeological Park before visiting the renowned *Museum of Primitivo Wine* to discover the heritage behind this famous high-proof red wine.

Overnight stay with breakfast in Manduria / Avetrana area.
Distance: 45 km / 28 mi

Optional 14-Day Extension

As mentioned above is it possible to extend the 12-day trip by two days by adding a loop tour in Manduria (45 km), a loop tour in Gallipoli (60 km) (with an optional cooking class or sailing excursion), and a wine tasting.

Day 6 - Manduria Surroundings: Coastal Dunes, Salina dei Monaci & Wine Heritage (45 km)
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Overnight stay with breakfast in Manduria / Avetrana area.
Distance: 45 km / 28 mi

Day 12 - Gallipoli Inland Loop or cooking class or excursion by sailing boat
Today's loop ride invites you to explore the rich inland countryside surrounding Gallipoli. Your journey begins in **Galatone**, where you can admire exquisite examples of ornate *Leccese* Baroque architecture along its quiet historic streets.
Continuing across the plain, you'll reach **Galatina**, home to the magnificent **Basilica of Santa Caterina d'Alessandria**—a spectacular masterpiece blending Romanesque and Gothic architecture, famous for its sweeping, vividly painted interior frescoes. On your return route, pause at the welcoming cheese farm of our friends Mariangela and Antonio to learn about local dairy traditions. Finally, ride through **Alezio** to visit the Messapian Civilization Museum and discover the ancient pre-Roman history of Salento before returning to the coast.
Alternatively, on request, you can book a **hands-on cooking class** to learn how to make traditional homemade pasta or **enjoy an excursion by sailing boat.**

Overnight stay with breakfast in Gallipoli.
Distance: 60 km / 37,2 mi

Hotels: *** 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 OR B&B HOTELS

Prices standard hotels per person 2027: 8 DAYS TOUR

In double room

- From April to October: € 850
- From November to March: € 700

In single room

- From April to October: € 1.090
- From November to March: € 940

Supplements
High season (day of departure):
From 09/05 to 26/09: € 175

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

Prices standard hotels per person 2027: 12 DAYS TOUR

In double room

- From April to October: € 1.380
- From November to March: € 1.160

In single room

- From April to October: € 1.750
- From November to March: € 1.530

Supplements
High season (day of departure):
From 09/05 to 26/09: € 230

Bike rental
Trekking bike 21 gears: € 170
Rental e-bike: € 320
Gravel bike 14 gears: € 320

Prices standard hotels per person 2027: 14 DAYS TOUR

In double room

- From April to October: € 1.580
- From November to March: € 1.340

In single room

- From April to October: € 2.020
- From November to March: € 1.780

Supplements
High season (day of departure):
From 09/05 to 26/09: € 270

Bike rental
Trekking bike 21 gears: € 195
Rental e-bike: € 365
Gravel bike 14 gears: € 365

PRICES **** HOTELS

Prices hotels **** per person 2027: 8 DAYS TOUR

In double room

- From April to October: € 1.090
- From November to March: € 940

In single room

- From April to October: € 1.340
- From November to March: € 1.190

Supplements
High season (day of departure):
From 09/05 to 26/09: € 175

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

Prices per person hotels ** 2027: 12 DAYS TOUR**
In double room

- From April to October: € 1.710
- From November to March: € 1.490

In single room:

- From April to October: € 2.090
- From November to March: € 1.870

Supplements
High season (day of departure):
From 09/05 to 26/09: € 230

Bike rental
Trekking bike 21 gears: € 170
Rental e-bike: € 320
Gravel bike 14 gears: € 320

Prices ** hotels per person 2027: 14 DAYS TOUR**
In double room

- From April to October: € 1.970
- From November to March: € 1.730

In single room

- From April to October: € 2.420
- From November to March: € 2.180

Supplements
High season (day of departure):
From 09/05 to 26/09: € 270

Bike rental
Trekking bike 21 gears: € 195
Rental e-bike: € 365
Gravel bike 14 gears: € 365

PRICES **** / ***** HOTELS

Prices hotels ** / ***** per person 2027: 8 DAYS TOUR**
In double room

- From April to October: € 1.630
- From November to March: € 1.480

In single room

- From April to October: € 1.880
- From November to March: € 1.730

Supplements
High season (day of departure):

From 09/05 to 26/09: € 175

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

Prices per person hotels **** / ***** 2027: 12 DAYS TOUR

In double room

- From April to October: € 2.570
- From November to March: € 2.350

In single room:

- From April to October: € 2.950
- From November to March: € 2.730

Supplements
High season (day of departure):
From 09/05 to 26/09: € 230

Bike rental
Trekking bike 21 gears: € 170
Rental e-bike: € 320
Gravel bike 14 gears: € 320

Prices **** / ***** hotels per person 2027: 14 DAYS TOUR

In double room

- From April to October: € 2.970
- From November to March: € 2.730

In single room

- From April to October: € 3.420
- From November to March: € 3.180

Supplements
High season (day of departure):
From 09/05 to 26/09: € 270

Bike rental
Trekking bike 21 gears: € 195
Rental e-bike: € 365
Gravel bike 14 gears: € 365

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

Included in the tour

- 7 or 11 or 13 nights with breakfast in double room in the booked hotel category
- 2 or 3 or 4 tastings of cheese or wine and local products ***(it depends on the tour you choose)***
- Luggage transportation
- Route tracks, navigation app (1 for each booking) and phone holder
- Road book with cultural information and tips for your route
- Briefing and bike fitting at the start point
- Local assistance 24 hour
- CO2 emissions flat-rate compensation to the value of 20€

Not included in the tour

- Local tourist taxes, which have to be paid in th
- Lunches, dinners and drinks
- All not included in 'Included in the tour' sectio

Bikes: E-bikes, Gravel, Hybrid

Start of the tour: Matera / **End of the Tour:** Lecce

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