

THE **TRAVEL CLUB**

Puglia: Southern Italy's Gem

9 DAYS: Saturday, November 2-Sunday, November 10, 2024

SINCE OUR FIRST JOURNEY TO MYSTERIOUS PUGLIA, The Travel Club has discovered there's even more to explore in this southern, sun-soaked province. Join us in "the real Italy" as we reveal the art, culture, tradition and cuisine of Puglia. From our home-base in Martina Franca—whose old quarter is a picturesque maze of winding alleys, blindingly white houses and blood-red geraniums, airy piazzas and curlicue ironwork balconies—we'll start with a visit to Locorotondo, one of Puglia's prettiest towns. Elegant Lecce is an "open air exhibition" of Baroque architecture where we'll enjoy a cooking lesson in an old Palazzo. We've included lunch in a fishing village near Bari, a visit to seaside Polignano a Mare, an excursion to Matera—famous for its extensive rock dwellings—where we'll have lunch in a "cave" restaurant. Our last tour days include the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Trulli of Alberobello—the world-famous picturesque cone-shaped houses—lunch at a country agriturismo and a winery visit. Explore the unique character and charm of this "mostly undiscovered" slice of Italian heaven!

Includes

- Round-trip air transportation on regularly scheduled **ITA Airlines** flights from Boston to Bari, via Rome
- Seven nights' four-star accommodations: **Park Hotel San Michele, Martina Franca** (or similar)
- Welcome beverage on arrival
- Fifteen meals; seven buffet breakfasts, four lunches, four dinners with wine
- Wine tasting & snacks
- Escorted round-trip, private airport/hotel transfers
- Services of professional local Tour Manager

Accommodations

Park Hotel San Michele

Viale Carella, 9, 74015 Martina Franca TA

Phone: +39 080 480 7053

Transformed from an antique farmhouse dating back to the 1600s to a magnificent villa of the early 1900s and now a modern hotel complex. Park Hotel San Michele is situated in a large park in the centre of Martina Franca, in the region of the famous Trulli, one of Apulia's archaeological treasures. Wi-Fi is free throughout. San Michele's elegant atmosphere

Rates

\$3699 per person double occupancy

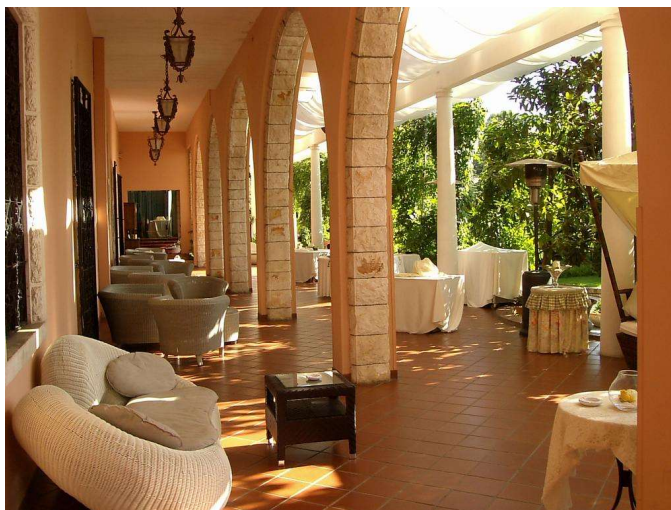
Single supplement is \$245

Includes round-trip airfare, fuel surcharge and all air taxes and fees. Fuel surcharge, air taxes and fees subject to change. Triple accommodations may be available upon request. Passport required. Per person deposit is \$300.

Features

Martina Franca tour. Cooking lesson and lunch in a countryside Trullo. Visit to Locorotondo. Excursion to Lecce. Bari tour, Mola di Bari fishing village lunch, visit to Polignano a Mare. Excursion to Alberobello, lunch and wine tasting at Masseria Brancati estate, tour of Ostuni. Excursion to Trani followed by wine tasting with snacks at Cantina Torrevento winery. Excursion to Matera including visit to the "Sassi" and lunch at a cave restaurant.

is immediately perceived in the external patio and in the outdoor swimming pool set in the park, guaranteed to provide relaxing and refreshing moments during hot summer days. The hotel also offers a complete gastronomic experience with its 5 restaurants, 3 indoors and 2 outdoors, which comprise a whole set of traditional and classic Italian dishes, with seasonal menus.



Day 1: Departure from Boston

Evening departure from Boston on ITA Airlines, non-stop flight to Rome. There will be meal service aloft.

Day 2: Arrive Rome - connecting flight to Bari - transfer to hotel in Martina Franca

Upon arrival at the Rome airport we'll clear immigration/passport control and transfer to our connecting flight to Bari. In Bari we claim our luggage and clear customs and be met by our Tour Manager who will direct us to the motorcoach for the transfer to the **Park Hotel San Michele** in Martina Franca. Enjoy a welcome drink and this evening we'll have a welcome dinner with wine at the hotel restaurant. **(D)**



Day 3: Martina Franca & Locorotondo

After breakfast we'll set off on a guided visit of Martina Franca including the lovely historic center. After our tour, we'll enjoy a cooking lesson and lunch at a Trullo in the countryside. Later we'll visit Locorotondo. **(B,L)**

Martina Franca The old quarter of this town is a picturesque scene of winding alleys, blinding white houses and blood-red geraniums. There are graceful baroque and rococo buildings here too, plus airy piazzas and curlicue ironwork balconies that almost touch above the narrow streets.



Martina Franca



Locorotondo is endowed with a whisper-quiet pedestrianised centro storico, where everything is shimmering white aside from the blood-red geraniums that tumble from the window boxes. Situated on a hilltop on the Murge Plateau, it's a borgo più bella d'Italia (www.borghitalia.it) – that is, it's rated as one of the most beautiful towns in Italy. There are few 'sights' as such – rather, the town itself is a sight. The streets are paved with smooth ivory-coloured stones, with the church of Santa Maria della Graecia as their sunbaked centrepiece. From Villa Comunale, a public garden, you can enjoy panoramic views of the surrounding valley. You enter the historic quarter directly across from here. Not only is this deepest trulli country, it's also the liquid heart of the Puglian wine region. Sample some of the local verdecia at Controra.



Day 4: Lecce

Today's excursion is to Lecce, well known for its many beautiful baroque monuments. Due to the richness of its setting, Lecce is called an elegant, sumptuous, open-air exhibition of Baroque art. Among its countless monuments: the wonderful façade of Santa Croce, Piazza del Duomo, one of Italy's most beautiful squares, Sant'Oronzo square and the Roman amphitheatre. Return to hotel for dinner, with wine. **(B,D)**

Lecce If Puglia were a movie, Lecce would be cast in the starring role. Bequeathed with a generous stash of baroque buildings by its 17th-century architects, the city has a completeness and homogeneity that other southern Italian metropolises lack. Indeed, so distinctive is Lecce's architecture that it has acquired its own moniker, barocco leccese (Lecce baroque), an expressive and hugely decorative incarnation of the genre replete with gargoyles, asparagus columns and cavorting gremlins. It's a lively, graceful but relaxed university town with some upmarket boutiques, decent Puglian restaurants, and a tradition for papier-mâché making.



Day 5: Bari & Polignano a Mare

After breakfast, we'll depart on an excursion to Bari where we'll have a guided visit of the old town, including the Cathedral. Next we'll head to the fishing village of Mola di Bari and have lunch at the local restaurant "Il Rifugio del Pescatore." Later we'll transfer to Polignano a Mare and visit the medieval district overlooking the sea. Return to hotel. **(B,L)**

Bari If Lecce is the south's Florence, Bari is its Bologna, a historic but forward-looking town with a high percentage of young people and migrants lending it vigor. More urban than Lecce and Brindisi, with grander boulevards and better nightlife, Bari supports a large university, an opera house and municipal buildings that shout confidence. Most travellers skip Bari on their way to Puglia's big-hitter, Lecce (the towns have a long-standing rivalry, especially over soccer), but Bari doesn't lack history or culture. The old town contains the

bones of St Nicholas (aka Santa Claus) in its Basilica di San Nicola, along with a butch castle and plenty of unfussy trattorias that have the local nosh – cucina barese – down to a simple art.



Bari



Polignano a Mare

Dip into this spectacularly positioned small town if you can. Located around 34km south of Bari on the S16 coastal road, Polignano a Mare is built on the edge of a craggy ravine pockmarked with caves. The town is thought to be one of the most important ancient settlements in Puglia and was later inhabited by successive invaders ranging from the Huns to the Normans. Don't miss the cornetterias (shops specialising in Italian croissants) in the atmospheric centro storico.



Day 6: Alberobello & Ostuni

After breakfast we'll depart for the Ostuni area and one of the oldest masseria set among the ancient Apulian olive groves. (What is a Masseria? According to Rick Steves, it's a rustic farmhouse found in Southern Italy). After a visit of the ancient underground olive oil mill, we'll get to try a taste. Continue on to fairytale Ostuni and enjoy lunch with wine at a local restaurant. Next we'll head for Alberobello and see the famous Trulli of Alberobello, picturesque cone shaped houses that take you back in time to a traditional countryside lifestyle. Needless to say, Alberobello is a UNESCO world heritage site. Dinner with wine at hotel restaurant. **(B,L,D)**



Trulli of Alberobello

Ostuni is one of Puglia's most beautiful cities, a tumble of white-washed buildings perched strategically atop a hill with views of the endless olive trees in the Valle d'Itria countryside, and the glimmering Adriatic Sea just 8 km away. The medieval walled city was built without a plan, and it shows. The web of streets is confusing, a maze of alleyways, staircases and arches. Buildings were built on top of each other, and the archways support the houses they connect, making up for the lack of strong foundations. You turn one way and find a dead end, another and get a glimpse of the sapphire sea. Puglia has seen a stream of invaders—Greeks, Romans, Goths, Byzantines, Normans—and the labyrinth of Ostuni is the perfect way to confuse the enemy. The main street in

Ostuni is lined with boutiques and souvenir shops selling local olive oil and Salentino sandals, but the best way to experience the town is by diving down the narrow side streets and like the invaders once did, getting lost.



Day 7: Trani

Today we'll head to Trani, known as the 'Pearl of Puglia', with a sophisticated feel. The historic center, with its medieval churches, glossy limestone streets, historic Jewish quarter and faded yet charming palazzi is an enchanting area to explore. But it's the cathedral, pale against the deep-blue sea, that is the town's most arresting sight. After our visit we'll head to the Cantina Torrevento winery, (or similar) for a visit of the cellars, followed by a wine tasting and snacks of the local products. Tonight, enjoy a farewell dinner, with wine, at the Hotel. **(B,D)**





Day 8 : Matera

Today we'll journey to Matera, one of the most spectacular cities in Italy and one of the oldest inhabited cities in the world. Matera is made up of rock-cut caves in which its citizens have traditionally lived. The town was named a UNESCO world heritage site in the '90s, and is set to be one of the European Union's two Capitals of Culture for 2019—quite the coup considering its post-World War II reputation as “the shame of Italy.” We'll enjoy a guided visit of the “Sassi,” followed by lunch at a local cave restaurant. Return to the hotel for a farewell dinner with wine. **(B,LD)**



Matera, Basilicata's jewel, may be the third-longest continuously inhabited human settlement in the world. Natural caves in the tufa limestone, exposed as the Gravina cut its gorge, attracted the first inhabitants perhaps 7000 years ago. More elaborate structures were built atop them. Today, looking across the gorge to Matera's huddled sassi (cave dwellings) it seems you've been transported back to the ancient Holy Land. Indeed, the 'Città Sotterranea' (Underground City) has often been used for biblical scenes in films and TV. The sassi, many little more than one-room caves, once contained such appalling poverty and unthinkable living conditions that in the 1950s Matera was denounced as the 'Shame of Italy', and the sassi-dwellers were moved on. Only in later decades has the value of this extraordinarily built environment been recognized.



Day 9: Return to Boston

This morning transfer to Bari airport for our flight to Rome and our transatlantic flight back to Boston. **(B)**

Proof of Citizenship is required for all trips outside the United States. U.S. citizens require valid Passport. Passports are the responsibility of each client.

PLEASE NOTE: This pre-departure itinerary is designed to give you an idea of how this itinerary is structured. We reserve the right to make any changes to your final itinerary if deemed necessary, at any time prior to departure.

PLEASE NOTE: This is not your final itinerary. You will receive final documents (itinerary, tickets (if applicable), etc.) approximately 2-3 weeks prior to departure. Although we try our best to ensure that information is accurate at the time of publication, we are not responsible for any error, omission, misprint or liability that results from the use (or misuse) of this information.

