PUGLIA (ITALY)

FOOD, WINE & WALKING

ITINERARY: 10 DAYS

Day 1

ARRIVE LECCE

Arrive in Lecce, and after setting in to your centrally located accommodation head out to begin exploring this captivating small city.

Lecce offers a perfect blend of culture, history, cuisine and Southern Italian warmth and charm. Often referred to as the 'Florence of the South', Lecce is renowned for its stunning Baroque architecture with impressive limestone buildings, ornate churches and vibrant piazzas lined with cafes that contribute to this city's special atmosphere. Wandering through the winding streets you'll discover ancient Roman ruins, intricate facades of churches and palaces, hidden courtyards, artisan workshops and a thriving culinary scene. Lecce is also famous for its traditional crafts, particularly papier-mâché works, which are unique souvenirs.

As dusk falls we recommend you enjoy a cherished Italian tradition of the aperitivo – a key aspect of local life in Puglia and in Lecce in particular. This social ritual brings locals together over drinks and light snacks after work, before the main evening meal which typically will be enjoyed later in the night. In Lecce's old town there are a multitude of venues to enjoy the apertivo, from outdoor cafes where you can relax and watch the city's lively evening life begin to bustling traditional local trattorias and vibrant bars with cocktails and music frequented by the younger crowd.

Meals: None



Day 2

HALF DAY STREET FOOD WALKING TOUR OF LECCE

Start your day with a morning street food walking tour through Lecce's historic walled town centre, accompanied by a local guide. As you explore this beautiful city's alleyways and lesser-known corners on foot, you'll be introduced to Puglia's cuisine and culture. Stop at hidden cafes and eateries loved by locals, sampling beloved regional specialties while learning about the city's rich culinary traditions.

The afternoon is at leisure to continue exploring Lecce at your own pace. You may like to visit some of the historic landmarks like Piazza del Duomo, the Basilica di Santa Croce, and the Roman Amphitheater or relax and people watch at a local café with a pasticciotto and a caffè leccese.

Meals: B

Day 3

LECCE TO OTRANTO WITH WINERY VISIT (7KM)

The day begins with a morning transfer from Lecce for approx. 45 minutes through the southern Puglian countryside. This area, known as 'Salento', boasts a rich history that is still proudly reflected in the local dialect, traditional cuisine and architectural styles.

Arriving at an organic winery, scenically nestled between the vineyards and the stunning coast, you'll enjoy a guided visit and a tasting of some of the region's finest wines. Afterwards begin the leisurely walk on to Otranto, passing by some picturesque beach spots perfect for a refreshing dip.

Otranto is a captivating port town nestled on the Adriatic Sea, known as the Pearl of the East (or the Gateway to the East). The town is famed for its vibrant mediaeval quarter or 'Centro Storico' with its maze of narrow cobblestone streets and alleyways. The centrepiece is the magnificent Otranto Cathedral and the impressive Aragonese Castle that dominates the town – be sure to take in the sunset views from a vantage point on the castle walls.

As dusk falls enjoy strolling along the picturesque waterfront and the alleyways inside the atmospheric old town. Here you can enjoy an aperitivo with the locals and discover the small boutiques, cafes, bars, and arts and crafts shops. For dinner, inviting cafes and restaurants offer plenty of options to sample the delicious local cuisine, including traditional Puglian dishes. Fresh seafood is in



abundance including mussels, sea bass, bream and cuttlefish...the calamari is to die for!

Ascent 20m / descent 20m

Meals: B

Day 4

OTRANTO WITH CHEESE PRODUCER VISIT AND COASTAL WALK (8–12KM)

A morning short transfer will take you to a famous local dairy farm and cheese producer located outside Otranto on a stretch of spectacular Adriatic coastline. Learn about their traditional farming methods and the cheese production process of their master cheesemaker, from cultivation all the way through to processing and conservation of cheese products. The visit includes a tasting of a selection of their highly regarded cheeses, accompanied with some other renowned local produce including honeys, jams and pates.

Afterwards begin walking back towards Otranto alongside a quiet coastal road with fine seaside views. Alternatively for those who prefer a longer, more challenging hike, there is the option to take an approx. 6km loop detour to visit Punta Palascia Lighthouse. This is the most eastern point of Italy and just 71km from Albania, which can be seen on clear days. After visiting the lighthouse, hike towards Otranto either alongside the road or for the more adventurous via a rugged coastal track that hugs the cliff tops. Both routes converge at the turn off to an interesting bauxite lake. After visiting the lake continue along a gentle and mostly flat gravel coastal trail passing by several WWII bunkers and around a series of pretty coves until arriving back nearby the Otranto Port.

Ascent 50–290m / descent 100–310m

Meals: B

Day 5

OTRANTO TO SANTA CESAREA TERME (10KM)

This morning, you'll transfer from Otranto to the picturesque seaside inlet of Porto Badisco. Before setting off on your hike, we recommend grabbing a fresh coffee and a picnic lunch here from the friendly local bar and supermarket. You may also like to take a quick refreshing dip in the rocky cove. From Porto Badisco your hike follows a very rocky shepherd's path that contours along the edge of the rugged coastline. Along the way, you'll spot traditional "pagliari" – round, flat-topped dry stone huts once used as shelter by local shepherds. This hiking section is relatively short at around 6km and offers truly spectacular sea views; however, it can be 3



challenging for some due to the rough terrain underfoot and the remote, exposed terrain. Less confident hikers may prefer to skip this section and opt for a less challenging walk alongside the road.

After around 6km, the rough trail leaves the coast and crosses the road before ascending to an inland plateau, then winding through open fields and a small pine forest. You may be able to find a shady spot here to enjoy a welcome rest. The final section as you descend into Santa Cesarea Terme is on a quiet, surfaced road.

Perched on cliffs overlooking the Adriatic Sea, Santa Cesarea Terme is a coastal 'spa town' with striking sea views and elegant Moorish architecture, famous for its natural thermal springs that are said to have therapeutic healing properties. Known for its wellness culture, it's been attracting visitors for centuries to relax, swim in the crystal-clear waters, and soak up the atmosphere. The town has numerous rocky coves, and the thermal waters from the natural caves are rich in sulfur used for treating skin and respiratory conditions.

Santa Cesarea Terme is also known for its simple and flavourful Puglian cuisine that highlights the freshest local ingredients. Due to its coastal location a wide variety of fresh seafood dishes features heavily, however for those looking to try something a little different, Orecchiette con cima di rapa (Orecchiette with Turnip Tops) is a well known traditional Puglian meal from this area, and Santa Cesarea Terme is the perfect place to sample this popular classic dish.

Ascent 170m / descent 160m
Meals: B

Day 6

SANTA CESAREA TERME TO CASTRO (7KM)

Today is a leisurely walk from Santa Cesarea Terme to Castro. The hiking route climbs uphill alongside surfaced roads before reaching an old dry-stone walled road. Follow the narrow paths inland through the fields until arriving in the fortified historic town of Castro. As today's walking distance is short, if you prefer you may like to spend the morning relaxing in Santa Cesarea Terme or taking time to indulge in one of the numerous therapeutic spa or wellness treatments on offer there. These should be booked in advance to avoid disappointment. Alternatively you can enjoy the short walk to Castro in the morning, arriving in time for a lunch with the afternoon at leisure there.

Castro's medieval old town features a spectacular hilltop location with imposing high walls, a romanesque cathedral dating from the 12th century and narrow lanes leading to its cliff-edge castle with panoramic ocean views. Spend some time exploring Castro's old town before descending to the pretty harbour area below where you can take a break for lunch. This afternoon there are opportunities for short boat trips, swimming in hidden sea caves, and

relaxing by the clear turquoise waters.

Ascent 125m / descent 60m

Meals: B

Day 7

CASTRO TO MARINA SERRA (14KM); EVENING COOKING CLASS

This morning transfer from Castro to Marittima, where you will begin the walk to Marina Serra. Departing sleepy Marittima you wind your way through typical Salento rural countryside on quiet countryside lanes lined by rough stone walls, passing groves of olive trees until you reach the first of several traditional "tratturi" – a system of ancient footpaths through the arid farmland that was traditionally used by local people to connect their orchards and villages.

With the sea in front of you, descend on these stony tracks until you reach the paved roads on the outskirts of Tricase Porto. In this scenically located village with its small marina you can enjoy a dip in the azure sea, before taking a break for lunch and a refreshing ‘caffè in ghiaccio’ – a popular local iced coffee speciality of the region. From here you still have a few kilometres of walking remaining along some paved roads until you reach your overnight destination Marina Serra – a small coastal hamlet with grottoes to explore and lovely swimming spots, including a picturesque natural swimming pool that is popular with visitors.

Your welcoming accommodation tonight is in a local family run B&B establishment. Late afternoon join your friendly hostess for a local cooking lesson, where you will have the opportunity to learn more about the family and the local way of life in this area while you learn how to make some traditional Puglian home-style dishes. In the evening join the other guests for a communal set course family style dinner in their open-air dining room.

Ascent 313m / descent 372m
Meals: B D

Day 8

MARINA SERRA TO SANTA MARIA DI LEUCA (13KM)

Your last day’s walk starts with a short transfer from Marina Serra to Marina di Novaglie – a rocky bay and marina where you can enjoy a quick swim in the deep blue sea from one of the coves. From Novaglie embark on a short but stunning almost 3km walk along the breathtaking "Cipolliane path", which is named after the caves that can be visited along the way.

This famous ‘mule path’ that hugs the rocky sea front is lined with Salento’s typical dry stone walls, and previously was used by merchants, smugglers, local farmers and fishermen. Historical places of interest and natural remnants are still evident, with finds said to date back to the Upper Paleolithic period. The rocky path leads you to the



impressive Ponte Ciolo (Ciolo bridge) that towers over the tiny Ciolo cove far below – an iconic swimming spot.

Leaving Ciolo cove behind, hike inland up the steep path through the Ciolo valley to Gagliano del Capo town. After a well earned break for lunch, embark on the last stage of your Puglian walking adventure as you hike back towards the sea and your final destination. Stroll on country lanes and tranquil roads through the classic mediterranean scrub landscape with more dry stone walls lining the way, passing arid olive groves, *pajare* (ancient Salento circular stone farm shelters) and small farms, before beginning the final gentle descent toward Santa Maria di Leuca on quiet secondary roads.

Santa Maria di Leuca, or Leuca, is located on the southernmost point of Puglia where the Ionian and Adriatic Seas meet. This seaside resort town has a unique flavour and is famous for its beaches, charming waterfront promenade, eclectic, colourful mansions and its vibrant fishing port. If you arrive early you may like to take a short optional boat trip to visit some of the nearby caves and grottos, or watch local fishermen bring in their daily catch which you can sample in one of the town's many fine seafood restaurants. If energy levels permit, we recommend a visit to the Leuca lighthouse and the iconic Basilica of Santa Maria de Finibus Terrae, which overlooks the town and offers breathtaking panoramic ocean and countryside views from its hilltop location. You may even like to add on an optional additional night stay here, to give more time to relax or to explore the town and its surrounds.

A set menu dinner is included tonight.

Ascent 170m / descent 170m
Meals: B D

Day 9

TRANSFER TO GAGLIANO DEL CAPO FOR TRAIN TO LECCE

A short morning transfer will take you to nearby Gagliano del Capo train station, to catch the train to Lecce (frequent departures, duration approximately 2.5 hours - train tickets at own arrangements).

Conclude your Puglia Food, Wine and Walking Adventure where you began, in enchanting Lecce, where Puglia's history, art, and culinary delights come together. After arriving and checking back into your hotel, the rest of the day is at your leisure - wandering through the charming streets of the old town, picking up last-minute shopping, or indulging in local delicacies. For your final evening you may like to treat yourself to a memorable dining experience at one of Lecce's acclaimed Michelin-starred restaurants or opt for a more local experience at a hidden trattoria for a last authentic taste of Puglia.

Meals: B



Day 10

DEPART LECCE

You are free to check out of your hotel any time before 10am. If you would like to explore further you are able to leave your bags with reception.

Meals: B

RAW TRAVEL
ICONIC WALKS WORLDWIDE

