

Hidden Treasures of Puglia & Matera

Tour Style: European walking holidays

Destination: Italy

Trip code: PULCL

2 & 3



HOLIDAY OVERVIEW

For a true flavour of southern Italy, the lesser-visited Puglia appeals with whitewashed hilltop towns, amazing architecture, fascinating caves that promise a welcome relief from the heat, and a wealth of cultural attractions. Perfect for both history lovers and foodies, this holiday offers not-to-be-missed experiences at Alta Murgia National Park, UNESCO-listed Matera, Gravina, and the 13th century Castel del Monte. You'll also have time to explore Altamura, Alberobello, or Bari on your free day.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Full programme of guided walks led by local HF Holidays Leaders
- HF Holidays Tour Manager
- Comfortable accommodation
- Half-board (breakfast and evening meal)
- All sightseeing and entrance fees (as per itinerary)
- Air-conditioned transport
- Return flights from the UK including hold baggage and airport transfers

HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Exploring the stunning Puglia region on foot
- Walking through the rolling landscapes at Alta Murgia National Park
- Visiting ancient towns steeped in history
- Admiring whitewashed 'Trulli' houses in Alberobello
- Spending your free day in Altamura, Alberobello, or Bari
- Discover fauna and flora at Mercadante Forest

TRIP SUITABILITY

This is a level 2 and level 3 graded Activity, Easier walks: 5 to 8 miles (8-13km) on a mixture of good paths and tracks. Up to 1,200 feet (360m) of ascent in a day. Harder walks: 5 to 11 miles (8-17.5km) on a mixture of paths and tracks with some rocky sections. Up to 1,400 feet (420m) of ascent in a day.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Arrival Day

Welcome to Hotel San Nicola. Unpack and settle in.

Day 2: Altamura And The Pulo

Today both groups will visit the nearby national park of Alta Murgia to see one of its most spectacular features. During both walks we will visit the 'Pulo' of Altamura, one of the largest dolines (sink holes) in Italy. The caves in this cliff-lined depression were once home to prehistoric man. The area is a haven for wildlife and flowers, and you may see species of butterfly, orchid, crocus and cyclamen. Both walks will finish at the the Altamura Man exhibition, where there will be time to visit it.

Option 1 - Altamura & The Pulo

Distance: 7 miles (11.5km)

Total ascent: 165 feet (50m)

In summary: We'll start north of the Pulo and after a walk through typical Murgia scenery we will explore the rim of the Pulo with views into the depression. We will then descend through a further area of the National Park, first more steeply across the limestone, then on gravel paths before arriving at the Altamura Man Visitor Centre.

Highlight: The Pulo depression, the largest doline in southern Italy.

Option 2 - Altamura & The Pulo Extended

Distance: 8½ miles (14km)

Total ascent: 230 feet (70m)

In summary: The harder walk takes a longer and more securitious route to the Pulo, walking amongst typical Murgia scenery. Along the way we visit a well with a slightly gruesome history. Arriving at the Pulo we explore the rim of the depression before walking to the Altamura Man Visitor Centre by the same route as the easier walk.

Highlight: Visit the 'Altamura Man Visitor Centre' to learn about the preserved Genus Homo remains found in a cave near Altamura.

Day 3: Matera And The Sassi

Both groups will travel to the World Heritage Site of Matera, about 11 miles from our hotel. The whole group will follow the same route accompanied by an experienced and knowledgeable local guide. We are likely to visit a number of ancient rock churches and other antiquities and enjoy spectacular views across the ravine to the city and the limestone scenery. There will also be chance to explore the town of Matera with its troglodyte house museum and romanesque style cathedral, or enjoy a break in a local cafe bar to soak up the atmosphere. *The walking today will be approximately 5½ miles, with ascent and descent into the ravine.*

Day 4: Alta Murgia And Castel Del Monte

Today we visit our second World Heritage Site of the week. Castel del Monte stands as a beacon to beckon us forwards.

Option 1 - Castel Del Monte

Distance: 5 miles (8km)

Total ascent: 600 feet (180m)

In summary: This walk starts to the east of the castle and wanders on good tracks through olive groves and past many whitewashed 'Trulli' houses. Hopefully there will be an opportunity for lunch and drinks to be enjoyed at a remote farmhouse, before ascending to the castle itself, where there will be some time to visit the inside of the castle (payable locally) to speculate on the many oddities of its construction.

Highlight: View Castel del Monte - a World Heritage Site that was completed in 1250

Option 2 - Alta Murgia And Castel Del Monte

Distance: 10 miles (17km)

Total ascent: 1000 feet (300m)

In summary: The Harder walk begins near the small hamlet of San Magno, southeast of the castle and takes a longer route on good tracks throughout to reach Castel del Monte. This route crosses the heart of the park and offers a chance to see the characteristic vegetation and agriculture of the limestone soils, before joining the route of the easier group. After lunch there may be time for an early afternoon drink at a farm. We can enjoy the panoramic views from the castle, before descending to our end point where we can enjoy a drink with the Easier group.

Highlight: Our route to the castle takes us through beautiful scenery - enhanced in the spring by wonderful wildflowers.

Day 5: Free Day

Each week there is a free day when no guided walks are offered. This is an ideal opportunity to relax around the hotel, walk independently or visit local places of interest. Some options for your free day may include:

Altamura: You may like to explore the historic town of Altamura, with its spectacular cathedral, archaeological museum, market, shops and ancient walls.

Alberobello: Alternatively, you may like to join an organised visit to the pretty World Heritage town and tourist hotspot of Alberobello, with its whitewashed 'Trulli' houses.

Bari: Easily reached by public transport, this old town and port contains many buildings of historical interest. Puglia's capital contains many churches but the most well known is the 11th century Romanesque Basilica de San Nicola, dedicated to St Nicholas, also known as Santa Claus. There are also many art galleries and, more recently, the futuristic football stadium was a venue for the 1990 World Cup.

Day 6: Gravina In Puglia

Today both groups will enjoy a circular walk from the town of Gravina in Puglia. We walk through archaeological areas occupied from the 5th century BC, amongst olive groves, fruit orchards and pastures used by grazing goats. We can also enjoy far reaching views across the town and beyond. On our return we will cross the ravine using the very substantial beautiful old stone aqueduct and enjoy the medieval town centre before visiting the amazing 'old underground town' complexes; rock cut basements used for living and working, the stone having also been used to built the houses above ground accompanied by a guide.

Option 1 - Gravina In Puglia & Botromagno Hill

Distance: 7 miles (11km)

Total ascent: 800 feet (240m)

In summary: From the centre of Gravina we make our way across an ancient aqueduct to the far side of the ravine. We ascend Botromagno Hill, site of an Iron Age hill fort, to a plateau where we can explore several archaeological sites. Our walk takes us along tracks and paths with lovely views. On our return to Gravina, we visit the amazing Sotteranea archaeological complex before exploring the town and perhaps enjoying refreshments.

Highlight: We'll use an English-speaking guide to tour the Sotteranea - a fascinating underground complex.

Option 2 - Gravina In Puglia, Serra Pendino And Botromagno Hill

Distance: 7½ miles (12km)

Total ascent: 1,100 feet (330m)

In summary: The harder walk starts to the south of Gravina and follows tracks and quiet lanes, traversing the flanks of the Serra Pendino and walking gently uphill to reach the plateau of Botromagno, where it joins part of the route of the easier walk. There are opportunities to visit some of the archaeological remains on the plateau

before descending to Gravina and joining the easier party to visit the Sottoranea complex and maybe have refreshments.

Highlight: The summit of Botromagno Hill features the remains of an Iron Age fort.

Day 7: Mercadante Forest

Today's walks in the Mercadante Forest provide a contrast to the open landscape of the limestone plateau.

Option 1 - Jazzo And Masseria

Distance: 6 miles (10km)

Total ascent: 560 feet (170m)

In summary: Our route starts in the forest taking us through the northern edge of this woodland and out to open heathland. We continue to a deserted 'jazzo' before our route heads back into the woods and returns us to the taverna.

Highlight: This 'artificial' forest is home to many species of birds

Option 2 - Mercadante Forest Exploration

Distance: 9½ miles (15km)

Total ascent: 850 feet (260m)

In summary: We follow the same route as the easier walk to the deserted 'jazzo'. From here we will continue south of the forest before heading back into the woodland to join the easier party for refreshments.

Highlight: We find a peaceful and sun-dappled spot perfect for a picnic lunch.

Day 8: Departure Day

We hope to see you again soon.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel San Nicola - Puglia

The 4-star Hotel San Nicola is located in the heart of the old town of Altamura just 150 metres from Federico's Cathedral. A former palace built in 1741 as the residence of the Cagnazzi family, the hotel has 24 comfortable bedrooms, 24 hour reception, bar and restaurant and free Wi-Fi throughout. Take the opportunity to sample the local Focaccia de Altamura from a nearby bakery which has been producing bread since 1421.

Rooms

There are 24 modern en-suite bedrooms.

All bedrooms are equipped with a:

- Phone
- Air conditioning
- Flat screen
- TV
- Minibar

- Complimentary toiletries
- Hairdryer

About Your Stay

The hotel has:

- 24-hour reception
- Room service
- Laundry
- Ironing and dry cleaning service (extra charge)

Food & Drink

Breakfast

Continental buffet breakfast: this is served from 7am in the courtyard dining room. This will include cereals, fruit juices, yoghurt, fresh fruit, cheeses/meats, selection of breads and croissants, jams, tea and coffee.

Lunch (Payable Locally)

Packed lunches can be bought from the local shops a few minutes from the hotel and can also be purchased from the hotel.

Evening Meal

For our evening meals we eat out at local restaurants close to the hotel. The restaurants are within easy walking distance of our hotel and guests can experience the "passiagata", an Italian tradition where the locals with their families and friends walk out in the evening socialising, and take in this unique atmosphere.

Your Evenings

The friendly atmosphere of our holidays continues into the evening.

Most of our socialising at Altamura is over a relaxed meal, opportunity to talk about your day with your fellow guests and sample some local wines and dishes. See the town come alive in the evening with all the local families walking out, treating their children to ice creams and just sitting over a coffee.

TRAVEL DETAILS

Address

Hotel San Nicola
Via Luca de Samuele Cagnazzi 29
70022 Altamura (BA)
Puglia

Tel: [0039 080 3105199](tel:00390803105199)

USEFUL HOLIDAY INFORMATION

Joining Instructions (With Flights)

Book your holiday 'with flights' and you can choose to depart from a range of UK airports* to your destination. For latest flight times and prices please call us on 0203-974-8865 or email reservations@hfholidays.co.uk

If you choose to book your flights with us, we automatically include return transfers between the destination airport and hotel.

Joining Instructions (Without Flights)

Alternatively, tailor your journey to suit you by booking your holiday 'without flights' and you'll have the freedom to book your own flights from your local airport.

If you choose this option, transfers are not included in the price. However, below are some suggestions to help you reach your destination:

Shared group transfer

You can still purchase a seat on our group airport transfer, but you must arrive in destination prior to the main group. It is your responsibility to book flights which allow enough time to meet our shared transfer.

Please note, all flight times are subject to change. If your arrival and/or departure time changes and no longer fits our group transfer, we will be unable to delay departure for you. Should this occur, we will refund you the cost of the transfer and you can either make your own way to the accommodation or we can book a private taxi transfer (at your expense). HF Holidays cannot be held responsible for your onward travel if you are unable to meet the transfer coach.

Private taxi transfer

Depending on your destination, we may be able to arrange a private taxi transfer for you. Please call us up to 5 weeks in advance to enquire about availability and costs for this option on 0203-974-8865.

*Subject to availability

Essential Information

It's best to be prepared for all weather conditions. To make it easier, here is a list of items you should consider packing.

Essentials

- Walking boots
- Waterproof jacket
- Waterproof trousers
- Insulated jacket/top
- Walking clothing
- Walking socks (plus spares)
- Sunhat
- Gloves/mitts and warm hat
- Water bottle (minimum 2 litre capacity)
- Headtorch
- High-factor sunscreen (minimum SPF 30)
- Sunglasses with a dark lens
- Rucksack (15-30 litres)
- Mobile phone

- Personal first aid kit (containing your medication, blister plasters, etc.)
- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Copy of your travel insurance policy
- UK Global Health Insurance Card (**formerly known as EHIC**)

Recommended

- Collapsible walking poles
- Swimwear and travel towel
- Snacks
- Dry bags
- Rubbish bags
- Insect repellent

Optional extras

- Camera
- Sit mat
- Flask for hot drinks
- Durable lunch box
- Gaiters
- GPS device

Useful Information

The language of Puglia and Sorrento Peninsula is Italian.

Tap water is considered safe to drink, but if you prefer, bottled mineral water can be purchased from the hotel or local supermarkets.

If the international number you wish to call starts with a 0, you must drop the starting digit when dialling the number.

To dial a UK number 0044

To dial an Italian number 0039

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is a condition of booking. Therefore, if you have not already arranged insurance, it is imperative that you do so, and advise us of the insurance company and policy number.

We work with Campbell Irvine to provide you with competitive single and annual multi-trip insurance. Please see our website for more information and details of how to contact them for a quote:

<https://www.hfholidays.co.uk/about-us/booking-information/insurance>.

For more information about healthcare abroad and its costs, please visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/>.

Local Currency

The local currency is the Euro (€)

Electricity

220 Volt AC with round two pin plugs; you will need an adaptor for any appliances brought from the UK.

ATM Availability

There are several ATM machines in Altamura and several ATM machines in Sorrento where you can obtain money.

TRIP NOTE VALIDITY

These Trip Notes are valid based on the date printed at the bottom of the page. They will occasionally be updated post booking and pre-departure. We will send you the latest trip notes prior to departure through a link in your pre departure documents or we can send you a copy in the post if preferred.

In booking this trip you should be confident in your ability to participate in all activities described in these Trip Notes. If you have any doubt about your suitability you should call HF Holidays and ask to speak to one of the team about this itinerary.

The information in these Trip Notes is given in good faith. Where differences exist between the Trip Notes and our current brochure, the Trip Notes supersede the brochure. All holidays can be subject to unexpected changes; so please be prepared to be flexible where necessary. At times, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned due to weather conditions, political, physical or other factors. In these circumstances we will make the best possible alternative arrangements to maintain the integrity of the original itinerary.

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