

PUGLIA TO POMPEII

CLASSICAL SOUTHERN ITALY

OVERVIEW

Take the road less travelled through the Italian regions of Puglia and Basilicata, and explore archaeology in depth in the stunning Bay of Naples.

Encounter a wealth of little-visited Byzantine, medieval and Baroque sites in southern Italy on this 16-day tour with with classicist Dr Eireann Marshall. From bases in Lecce, Matera and Trani, discover the rugged mountains, Mediterranean scenery and rich history of the Adriatic coastline. Learn about the Ancient Greeks, Byzantine Emperors and Norman Kings, who have all left their mark on the towns, temples, castles and cathedrals in Puglia and Basilicata.

In the panoramic surrounds of the Bay of Naples, understand the long history that lies behind this region's impressive line-up of world-class archaeological sites, with some of the most outstanding Greco-Roman art and architecture to be found anywhere in the Mediterranean. The experience is rounded out by a vibrant regional food and wine culture, and the extraordinary natural beauty of southern Italy.



TOUR LEADERS

Dr Eireann Marshall is an Honorary Research Associate and Associate Lecturer with the Open University, as well as an Honorary Research Fellow of the University of Roehampton. Eireann will be accompanied by a trained tour manager for the duration of the tour.

TOUR DATES

February 27 - March 14, 2025

16 Days

TOUR PRICE

\$11,720 per person, twin share

\$2,340 single supplement

TOUR DEPOSIT

A **\$1,000** non-refundable deposit is required per person to confirm your booking on tour.

GROUP SIZE

Maximum number of **16** in group

ITINERARY

Lecce (3 nights), Matera (2 nights), Trani (4 nights), Vietri sul Mare (2 nights), Naples (4 nights)

INCLUSIONS

15 nights' accommodation in centrally located 4 and 5-star hotels. All breakfasts, 2 lunches and 7 dinners. Services of an expert tour leader and an experienced tour manager throughout. All ground transport, entrance fees and tipping.

DETAILED ITINERARY



Start & Finish

The tour starts at 4.00pm on Thursday 27 February, at Rome Fiumicino airport, before our group flight to Brindisi and a coach transfer to Lecce.

The tour ends after breakfast on Friday 14 March, with a group transfer available to Rome Fiumicino airport, arriving at 12.00pm for onward flights.

TOUR HIGHLIGHTS

Archaeological Treasures

Visit key sites in harder to reach locations, such as the magnificent temples of Paestum, and the well-preserved Roman settlements of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

Tradition & Tenacity in Matera

Admire the traditional yet challenging way of life in Matera's sassi, Europe's oldest inhabited cave dwellings that were recognised with a World Heritage listing in 1993.

Baroque Splendour in Lecce

Delight in the exuberant barocco leccese, a style recognised by UNESCO for its unique riot of figurative and architectural detail sculpted in Lecce's honey-coloured local stone.

The Normans in Southern Italy

Discover the impact of the Normans on southern Italy, from Frederick II's magnificent hunting lodge Castel del Monte to outstanding mosaics in Otranto's 12th-century cathedral.

The Best of Italian Regional Cuisine

From pasta made daily to the freshest fish, purest olive oil and fine local produce, appreciate why the South is the market garden of all Italy.

Included meals are indicated with B, L, D.

Thursday 27 February

Arrival

Meet your tour leader at Rome's Fiumicino airport, where the tour begins. There is a group flight to Brindisi and a coach transfer to Lecce, a journey of about 45 minutes. We check into our hotel and, after time to freshen up, enjoy dinner in the hotel. Overnight Lecce (D)

Friday 28 February

Lecce

After a talk in the hotel, we set out on foot with a local guide to explore Lecce, the crown jewel of the Mezzogiorno. There is a fine range of monuments to visit, including Roman ruins and the exuberant 16th and 17th-century baroque architecture spread throughout the town. While Lecce's Roman heritage is evident, it is most notable for its vibrant 'Southern Baroque' architecture, an expressive and highly decorative incarnation of the genre replete with gargoyles, asparagus columns and cavorting gremlins. The afternoon is free to explore independently or simply relax, then in the evening we have our welcome dinner at a fine local restaurant. Overnight Lecce (B, D)

Saturday 1 March

Otranto

This morning we visit the seaside town of Otranto, home to a superb 12th-century Norman cathedral with spectacular medieval floor mosaics, and an Aragonese castle from the time when this Spanish dynasty ruled southern Italy. We travel south on the Salentine peninsula to enjoy a tasting of Pugliese cuisine at a traditional Masseria farmstead. The area is known for its excellent primitivo wine and delicious canestrato cheese, among other delights. Olive oil is considered 'Apulia gold' with the region producing almost two-million tons of oil annually. En route back to Lecce we visit a local olive oil farm to sample the home-grown produce. Overnight Lecce (B, L)



Trulli of Alberobello



Trani

Sunday 2 March Brindisi and Taranto

Departing Lecce today we travel north to Matera via the harbour town of Brindisi, the end point of the Appian Way. From here Romans, and later pilgrims, set off for the east. Our next stop is Taranto, once a major centre of Magna Graecia and an important port on the Ionian coast throughout the 4th century BCE. Many objects recovered from the sites and tombs in the region can be seen at Taranto's National Archaeological Museum. The museum dates from 1887 and its collection of Greek and Roman antiquities is considered to be one of the most important in Italy. This evening we have dinner at a local restaurant. Overnight Matera (B, D)

Monday 3 March Matera

Today we take a walking tour of the ancient UNESCO town of Matera, dramatically situated on the edge of a gully. The town is famous for its unique sassi, some 1,500 ancient cave dwellings that honeycomb the flanks of a steep ravine. First occupied in the Paleolithic Age, the myriad natural caves were gradually burrowed deeper and expanded into living spaces by peasants and artisans throughout the classical and medieval periods. Nowadays these underground residences are being reinhabited and staying in one of the sassi cave hotels is a popular and unique experience. By contrast, the so-called 'New Town' has many elegant Baroque churches, palazzi, and broad piazzas to explore. Overnight Matera (B)

Tuesday 4 March Alberobello and Egnazia

Departing Matera this morning we travel north to Trani, pausing first to visit the nearby town of Alberobello, an amalgamation of more than 1,000 ancient trulli: beehive-shaped, whitewashed stone huts with conical roofs, huddled together along steep, narrow streets. We continue to Egnazia, an important Messapian centre during the 5th century BCE, fortified with over 2km of walls, large parts of which still stand in the northern corner of the ruined town – up to seven metres high. This evening we dine together in a local restaurant. Overnight Trani (B, D)

Wednesday 5 March Trani

This morning we enjoy a relaxed walking tour of Trani. The beauty of this waterfront town derives from the harmonious limestone architecture, a large Norman-Swabian fortress lining its two bays and monumental Romanesque cathedral thrillingly perched on the very edge of the sea. There is free time this afternoon to explore Trani at your leisure. You may even spot the local fishermen bringing in the afternoon catch. Overnight Trani (B)



Thursday 6 March

Barletta, Cannae and Castel del Monte

Today we visit a range of sites a short distance inland from Trani. First, we stop at the neighbouring town of Barletta to view the Colossus of Barletta, a large bronze statue of an Eastern Roman Emperor, nearly three times life size. We then visit the site of the Battle of Cannae, where in 216 BCE the Carthaginian general Hannibal routed the Roman army. A small museum and viewing platform at the site allow for a good understanding of this famous event. We continue on to Castel del Monte, a remarkable octagonal fortress built by the medieval emperor Frederick II and one of the most significant medieval buildings in southern Italy. The design and purpose of the castle is somewhat mysterious, and has been hotly debated for centuries. Overnight Trani (B)

Friday 7 March

Bari and Bitonto

This morning we visit the town of Bari, a port city on the Adriatic Sea and the capital of southern Italy's Puglia region, to explore its narrow streets and maze-like old town. In the afternoon we travel to nearby Bitonto to visit the largest cathedral in Puglia, not well-known but very much worth a visit. It boasts impressive Romanesque architecture and well-presented excavations dating back to the 5th century. Overnight Trani (B)

Saturday 8 March

Venosa and Melfi

Today we make the journey across Italy to Vietri sul Mare, gateway to the Amalfi Coast. En route we visit the unassuming town of Venosa, once the thriving Roman colony of Venusia. Venosa's main square, Piazza Umberto I, is dominated by a 15th-century Aragonese castle, containing a small Archaeological Museum. We also see the ruins of the Abbey of Santissima Trinità, believed to date back to the 8th century. We continue to the town of Melfi to visit its National Archaeological Museum, which contains artefacts from all periods of settlement, including the Daunian, Samnite, Lucanian and Roman periods. This evening we have dinner in a local restaurant. Overnight Vietri sul Mare (B, D)

Sunday 9 March

Magna Graecia - Paestum

After a background talk this morning, we venture into the once Greek-speaking coastal areas of Southern Italy, known as Magna Graecia. Our first stop is at an organic farm in Tenuta Vannulo to learn more about one of the region's most famous produce – buffalo milk mozzarella. Following a guided tour of the estate, we enjoy a light lunch together with a chance to sample some of this local delight. Continuing on to the archaeological site of Paestum, the best-preserved of the ancient Greek settlements in the region, we explore the three fine Doric temples, before visiting the excellent museum containing the famed 'Tomb of the Diver' and other important examples of pre-Roman culture. Overnight Vietri sul Mare (B, L)





Pompeii



Villa of the Mysteries

Monday 10 March Herculaneum and Oplontis

Today we travel to Naples, stopping en route in Herculaneum to relish the wonderfully well-preserved site, with mosaics, paintings and even wooden architecture and furniture still to be found in situ. Herculaneum was a 'resort' town on the coast, and the site features large seafront houses, baths, shops and other public buildings typical of Roman towns. In the afternoon, we visit the Imperial 'Villa of Poppea' at Oplontis, a massive structure with stunning frescoes. The villa is believed to have belonged to the Emperor Nero and been used by his second wife Poppea Sabina. After checking in to our hotel, we stroll to a local restaurant for dinner. Overnight Naples (B, D)

Tuesday 11 March Pompeii

Today we travel to Pompeii, once a flourishing market town south of ancient Rome, nestled along the coast of Italy in the shadow of Mount Vesuvius. Its most famous eruption took place in the year 79 CE, when it buried the city under a thick carpet of volcanic ash. Pompeii offers a huge variety of artifacts and we spend the day exploring the private and public buildings which have captured the imagination of visitors since the ruins were discovered in the 18th century. There will be some free time for individual exploration before we conclude our visit at the well-preserved Villa of the Mysteries, a large villa on the town's edge with superb frescoes. Overnight Naples (B)

Wednesday 12 March Archaeology and Art

This morning we venture underground to Napoli Sotterranea to explore the complex layered history of the city. Later in the day we visit Italy's most important archaeological museum to see its outstanding collection of paintings, mosaics, sculptures and everyday objects from Pompeii, Herculaneum and the Bay of Naples. We also see the 'Farnese collection', Roman works assembled in the Renaissance by the aristocratic Farnese family and acquired through marriage by the Bourbons. The museum itself, housed in a splendid palace, is a testament to the influence of the European Enlightenment in Naples. Overnight Naples (B)

Thursday 13 March Art and Artefacts

Naples' 900 churches boast a range of architectural styles and repositories of spectacular artworks. This morning we take a walking tour of Central Naples and stroll back through vibrant Spaccanapoli along the decumani, the ancient Greco-Roman thoroughfares. We visit Museo Cappella San Severo, at the centre of which is a remarkable sculpture of the veiled Christ. Finally, we walk to the Pio Monte della Misericordia to view Caravaggio's *Seven Acts of Mercy*, painted in 1607. Later in the day we travel to the hills above

HOTELS

Hotels have been selected principally for their central location. All hotels are excellent four and five-star properties that are renovated palazzi.

Lecce, Risorgimento Resort

(3 nights)

www.risorgimentoresort.it

Matera, Locanda San Martino

(2 nights)

www.locandadisanmartino.it

Trani, Hotel San Paolo al Convento

(4 nights)

hotelsanpaoloalconventotrani.it

Vietri sul Mare, Lloyd's Baia Hotel

(2 nights)

www.lloydsbaiahotel.it

Naples, Grand Hotel Saint Lucia

(4 nights)

www.santalucia.it

WEATHER

This tour takes place in early Spring, when there are fewer tourists around. It will probably be cool to mild throughout the trip with daily maximum around 14°C - 18°C degrees, dropping to 4°C - 8°C degrees at night. There is of course some chance of rain on a few days.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Two

This tour is physically demanding. To participate on this tour, you should be able to:

- keep up with the group at all times
- walk for 5-7 kilometres over the day at a moderate pace
- stand and slow walk for up to 90 minutes galleries and museums
- negotiate uneven ground
- walk up and down steps and slopes
- get on and off a coach unassisted
- move your luggage unassisted

Naples to the grand Bourbon palace of Capodimonte, home to southern Italy's largest and richest art gallery. It includes a range of works, from exquisite 12th-century altarpieces to works by Botticelli, Caravaggio, Titian and Warhol. We finish our tour with a farewell meal together at an excellent local restaurant. Overnight Naples (B, D)

Friday 14 March

Departure

The tour concludes this morning after breakfast. There is a coach transfer to Rome's Fiumicino airport for those on late afternoon flights. (B)



ENQUIRIES & BOOKINGS

For further information or to secure a place, please contact **Sharon Williams** on 9235 0023 (Sydney) or 1800 639 699 (outside Sydney) or email:

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