

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 archaeologist Dr Estelle Lazer. From bases in Lecce, Matera and Trani, discover the rugged mountains, Mediterranean scenery and rich history of the Adriatic coastline. Ancient Greeks, Europe's oldest cave-dwelling population, Byzantine emperors and Norman kings have all left their mark on the towns, temples, castles and cathedrals of 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 by the extraordinary natural beauty of southern Italy.



TOUR LEADER

Dr Estelle Lazer is an archaeologist with an international reputation for her many years of work on Pompeii. She is an Honorary Research Associate at the University of Sydney.

TOUR DATES

October 24 - November 8, 2024

TOUR PRICE

\$10,880 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 (3 nights), Trani (3 nights), Vietri sul Mare (2 nights), Naples (4 nights)

INCLUSIONS

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

DETAILED ITINERARY



Start & Finish

The tour starts at 4.00pm on Thursday 24 October, at Rome Fiumicino airport. The tour ends at 12.00pm on Friday 8 November, at Rome Fiumicino airport.

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 and 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 twelfth-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 24 October

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 25 October

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 26 October

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]

Sunday 27 October

Alberobello

Departing Lecce today we travel north to Trani via the harbour town of Brindisi, the end point of the Appian Way.



**Basilica di Santa Croce
in Lecce**



Trani



Trulli of Alberobello

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 BC. We continue to Trani, pausing 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. Tonight we dine together in a local restaurant. Overnight Trani (B, D)

Monday 28 October

Trani

This morning we enjoy a relaxed walking tour of Trani. The beauty of this waterfront town derives from the harmonious limestone architecture, a fine Norman cathedral and a large Norman-Swabian fortress lining its two bays. Free time this afternoon to explore Trani at your leisure. Overnight Trani (B)

Tuesday 29 October

Bari and Bitonto

Today we visit the town of Bari, a port city on the Adriatic Sea and the capital of southern Italy's Puglia region to explore Bari's narrow streets and its 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)

Wednesday 30 October

Barletta, Cannae and Castel del Monte

Our destination today is Matera. We stop at the seaside 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 BC 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. We arrive at Matera in the late afternoon, with the evening at leisure. Overnight Matera (B)

Thursday 31 October

Taranto

This morning we make our way to Taranto, once a major centre of Magna Graecia and an important port on the Ionian coast throughout the 4th century BC. 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)



Paestum



Pompeii



Villa of the Mysteries

Friday 1 November

Matera

Our day begins with a walking tour of this ancient UNESCO town, dramatically situated on the edge of a gully. Matera 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)

Saturday 2 November

Venosa and Melfi

We make the journey across Italy to Vietri sul Mare today, 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 3 November

Magna Graecia - Paestum

After a background talk this morning we visit Paestum, the best preserved of the ancient Greek settlements in the region. En route we visit Tenuta Vannulo, an organic farm producing buffalo milk mozzarella to sample some of this local delight. After enjoying a light lunch here, we continue to the ancient town of Paestum to view the three fine Doric temples, impressive town walls and other structures. In the afternoon, we visit the excellent museum at the archaeological site, containing the famed 'Tomb of the Diver' and other important examples of pre-Roman culture. Overnight Vietri sul Mare (B, L)

Monday 4 November

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)

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

Trani, Hotel San Paolo al Convento

(3 nights)

hotelsanpaoloalconventotrani.it

Matera, Locanda San Martino

(3 nights)

www.locandadisanmartino.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 Autumn, when there are fewer tourists around. It will probably be cool to mild throughout the trip with daily maximum around 16°C - 22°C degrees, dropping to 10°C - 12°C degrees at night. There is of course some chance of grey skies and rain on a few days.

FITNESS REQUIREMENTS

Grade Two

This tour is designed for people who lead active lives. You should be able to:

- comfortably participate in up to five hours of physical activity per day, including walking at an easy to regular pace, sometimes on uneven terrain
- keep up with the group at all times
- negotiate challenging archaeological sites, which are often uneven and unstable
- climb stairs and bridges
- stand for one to two hours in galleries and museums at a time



Tuesday 5 November

Pompeii

Today, we travel to Pompeii to explore this remarkable archaeological site. We tour the site, which was buried for centuries beneath metres of volcanic debris, to survey the spectacular relics of the private and public buildings that have captured the imagination of visitors since the ruins were discovered in the 18th century. Our tour includes the Villa of the Mysteries, a large villa on the town's edge with superb frescoes. Overnight Naples (B)

Wednesday 6 November

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 7 November

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 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 8 November

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: sharon@academytravel.com.au