

PACKING SUGGESTIONS

Traveling Essentials

Valid Passport
Credit cards (& cash upon arrival)
Travel Itinerary

Biking

Jerseys, T-shirts, button down cotton/linen shirts, or other clothing that protects your shoulders from sun and breathes easily
Shorts, pants or padded cycling shorts that allow you to move freely
Light to medium jacket
Sunscreen
Sunglasses
Bandana, scarf or sweatband
Closed-toed shoes for biking

Clothing

Clothes for evening and non-biking days
Light waterproof jacket and/or warm sweater
Bathing Suit

Please prepare for warm weather and sun! Bring clothes that breathe easily, but cover your shoulders and/or arms to minimize exposure to the sun. It doesn't usually rain in June, though rainstorms and drizzles can definitely occur. Please prepare for rain as well as sun. Your vacations will be much more enjoyable when you're prepared for all kinds of weather!

The Rest

US to Europe plug or power converter

Medication to last for 2 weeks after your scheduled departure
Copies of prescriptions
Vitamins (they are difficult to find in Italy)
Toiletries (shampoo, conditioner, etc)
Camera & memory card

Helmets, locks, pumps, and panniers are provided.

WEATHER

In June, the coolest part of the day occurs in the early morning and late evening. The average low temperature for this period is 65 °F. The hottest part of the day occurs from noon to 3pm. The average high temperature is 85 °F with 70% relative humidity.

We will do most of our riding in the morning and evening, with a long break at midday.

[Lecce Average Temperatures & Forecast](#)



SAFETY

Puglia is largely rural and it's inhabitants very friendly and helpful to travelers. However while traveling to Puglia, you'll pass through some large cities: Rome, Naples, Bari, Brindisi. We've learned a few tricks that prove useful while navigating the big cities.

Don't Look Like a Tourist

Even laden with luggage, struggling away from the train station, though you will look like a *traveler*, try not to look like a clueless tourist. Walk quickly and with purpose, even if you don't know where you're going. It will be harder for people to hassle you. Don't walk around with your nose in a map. If you must consult your map, do it discretely. And inform yourself of your route and destination before you leave the hotel or train.

Don't Flash Cash

This is a given. Be careful opening wallet where others can see it. Luckily, most Italian ATMs require you to enter a closed ante-chamber to withdraw, which reduces your risk of public bill flashing.

Photocopy Your Documents

Photocopy your documents and carry them separately from the originals (keep one on your person and the other in your luggage/ at your hotel).

Use Common Sense

Many of us are used to living in an urban area. Please use the common sense you've developed and be aware of your surroundings.

More...

Wikipedia offers additional advice on health and safety:
[Stay Safe & Healthy](#)

ITALIAN PHRASES

Wikipedia also offers an excellent Italian phrase-book:
[Italian Phrasebook](#)

Biking terms are offered by BiciVeneto:
[Italian Bicycle Terms](#)

REGIONAL TOURISM

Italy's national train network:
[Ferrovie Dello Stato](#)

Puglia's slow, but quaint, regional train:
[Ferrovie Sud Est](#)

Puglia Tourism Board has a wealth of resources:
[Regione Puglia](#)

PUGLIA, WHAT? SALENTO, WHERE?

a humble guide to an incredible place

Salento: Lu Sule, lu Mare, lu Jentu

Beloved by its people for the summer sun, sparkling sea and haunting wind, Salento is a land of wild beauty and ancient mystery.

Salento is the name of the peninsula we visit, it makes up the southernmost part of Puglia, the "heel" of Italy's geographical boot. Once a prosperous stopover between East and West, Salento is rich with a long history and a vibrant culture.

Described as part of the cradle of Western Civilization in both the Odyssey and Aeneid, Salento has seen millennia of civilizations, empires, and conquerors¹.

Cave paintings dating back to the stone age² recount stories of the earliest known inhabitants. Ancient stone tables, similar to (though smaller than) those found at Stonehenge, live among the few traces left by the mysterious Messapian people. Nobody knows exactly what the structures are or just how long they've been around. Legend and imagination offer intriguing possibilities: an entrance to parallel dimensions, a sacrificial altar used for human offerings, funeral monuments, idols to sun worship, remnants of fertility rights, or energy nodes with healing powers³. The Romans left a 350-mile paved road to Rome built of stones fit so tightly together that it still stands today⁴. Years of Byzantine rule added other interesting influences to Salentine culture. A colorful mosaic they created that decorates Otranto's cathedral could be the finest surviving piece in southern Italy⁵. Fancy castles with moats and winding staircases are part of the legacy of the Normans. While refugee Greek monks brought the culture and language of Ancient Greece, as well as special techniques for making olive oil. The parade of foreign conquerors continued, the Swabians, Aragonese, the Spanish, each brought their own distinctive color to Salento's rich culture.



Lecce: The "Florence of the South"

Described in travel guides as the "hidden pearl of Italy," Lecce is a beautiful, old aristocratic city. The delicately carved facades of its churches gracefully reach toward a brilliant blue sky, their profiles accented by tufts of green palms waving in the wind. Known for its fanciful ornate architecture, the city's unique character was created over a 200 year period beginning in the 1500's when, after overcoming years of plague, slaughter and poverty under foreign rule, the city burst into a creative flowering of art and architecture known as the Lecce Baroque.

It was a period of prosperity, creativity and happiness. And the mood of the time is reflected in its fanciful, fun art. Sculptors carved imaginative designs of gargoyles, winged horses, flowers, animals, humans, gods, grape vines, and lots of curlycues. They combined painting, sculpture and architecture to create "spectacular visual effects"⁶. Their enthusiasm spilled over from church facades to other areas as well. In fact, they really decorated everything.

From church altars, to balconies, porticoes, windows, and columns, anything with a stone surface became a canvass for the people's creative expression.⁷ Lecce's baroque was different from that which took hold of Rome. The Roman style is considered more "heavy and monumental"⁸ and to is quite overwhelming. I find Lecce's style, however, much more palatable as it is lighter, fanciful and more fun. The overall effect is not of dizzying ornamentation, but, rather, of majestic beauty.



Lecce's artists also worked with a special material that may never have been seen in the north. The city's local stone, *pietra leccese*, is a honey colored limestone so soft it can be "carved with a penknife," but is made hard and durable through an unusual process. The finished stone is "soaked in a fluid containing whole milk [which] reduce[s] its porosity [and makes] the surface hard and compact." This helps it resist rain and humidity as well as chips and scratches.⁹

This special stone enabled Lecce's artists to carve unusually detailed works from a single stone and its manmade durability has helped those works remain very well preserved today. At night the stone glows a golden yellow. Lecce, called "Florence of the South" by the Italians, is a true artistic gem.

Otranto

Narrow streets and winding stairs open onto the sunny ramparts of Otranto's old castle. Complete with moat, towers and cannons, the castle was built in response to a bloody Turkish invasion 1480 from which the devastated city never quite recovered. The Turkish army killed 12,000 men and gave the survivors a choice: to convert to Islam or die. They chose death; eight hundred men were executed outside the city. Their bones are kept as remembrance in the town's cathedral, and the "Valley of the Martyrs" commemorates their story.¹⁰



Though they still remember their dead, the people of Otranto today choose to celebrate life. Especially in summertime, the city vibrates with music, dancing and fun. It has some of Salento's coolest clubbing and outdoor concerts are held atop the old castle. Its white sandy beaches are fervently loved by the locals and they have won numerous awards for the "cleanest sea of Italy," while Otranto itself was listed among Italy's 14 most beautiful towns by the *Associazione Nazionale dei Comuni Italiani*.¹¹

The countryside nearby is home to many *masserie*, old haciendas build in under Spanish rule that function today as small farms. Many offer beautiful lodging and incredible fresh local meals.

Santa Maria di Leuca: The End of the Earth

Also called *Santa Maria di Finibus Terrae*, Leuca represents the end of the earth. Travelling down the Italian peninsula, with the Adriatic Sea on the east and the Ionian on the west, Leuca, situated at the very tip of the boot's heel, is the place where both seas converge. The name Leuca has a double etymology in Arabic and Greek, meaning "light" and "white" respectively.¹² The city does indeed gleam with the light it reflects off the sea. Even after dark the town shines beautifully; its lighthouse glows golden, hundreds of sailboats moored in the harbor twinkle in the moonlight, and the outdoor market tents and waterfront discos stay open all night long.



This is Italy's "deep south". It rarely sees foreign tourists. Any road you choose will encounter people hard at work, who will probably greet you curiously, and wonder "mah, chi e'?" who is this stranger?" They work, as they have for centuries, tilling the abundant land. The narrowest roads take you through olive orchards, they pause every so often at an ancient pajare, filled with rakes, hoes, and tools. Farmers putt along in their tiny 3-wheeled trucks. Others haul buckets of water, while more tend to piles of burning leaves. Horses stretch their long necks from behind the ancient mortarless stone walls for a pat or a caress. And prickly pear cactus drop their brilliant purple fruit onto the road..a luscious reward for wandering off the beaten path.

Gallipoli: Old City & New City

This ancient fortified city seems to grow directly out of the ocean. Waves crash right up against its walls while gulls fly overhead. This area, the old town of Gallipoli, is built on a limestone island that is linked to the new and modern city by an ancient bridge from the 16th century.¹³ The island town is fortified by nearly a kilometer of high wall, which offers great walks with panoramic views of the ocean below.



Twice each day at sunrise and sunset, the town's fishermen take their boats out to sea. They return with a fresh catch of swordfish, bass, mullet or sea urchins to sell at local markets and restaurants. The shellfish and urchins are so fresh that they're often eaten raw with a squeeze of lemon, bought from little stands by the sea.

As both a modern city (on the mainland) and a one with deep history and summer tourism (the old town on the island), Gallipoli's shop windows display the work of many local artists. From handmade jewelry, to specialty pieces carved from the local stone, *pietra leccese*,

P I C C O L I N A A D V E N T U R E S

from oil paintings of the sea, to stunning black and white photographs, Gallipoli's shops create a rich gallery of local talent.

Valle D'Itria: Alberobello & Trulli Towns

From [Frommer's](#):

North of the Salentine peninsula, "in the center of a triangle made up by Bari, Brindisi, and Taranto, the Valley of Itria has long been known for olive cultivation and the beehive-shaped houses dotting its landscape. These curious structures, called **trulli**, were built at least as early as the 13th century. Their whitewashed limestone walls and conical fieldstone roofs utilize the materials available in the area in such a way that mortar isn't needed to keep the pieces together. Theories abound as to why they aren't built with mortar, the most popular being that the *trulli*, considered substandard peasant dwellings, had to be easily dismantled in case of a royal visit.



The center of the Trulli District, and home to the greatest concentration of *trulli*, is Alberobello. Here the streets are lined with some 1,000 of the buildings. You might feel as if you've entered into a child's storybook as you walk amid the maze of cobbled streets curving through Italy's most fantastic village. The crowds of visitors will quickly relieve you of any such thoughts, however.

Martina Franca lies 9 miles away, and manages to mix a Moorish flavor in with it's traditional trulli. The town's earliest settlers fled from the coastal cities to escape Saracen attacks in the 10th century."¹⁴

Salento

1. [Southern Italy Tour, "History"](#)
2. [Southern Italy Tour, "Archaeology"](#) and [Wikipedia, "Stone Age"](#)
3. [Southern Italy Tour, "Archaeology"](#) and [Wikipedia, "Stone Age"](#)
4. [Wikipedia, "Appian Way"](#)
5. [Wikipedia, "Mosaic"](#)

Lecce

6. [HighBeam Encyclopedia, "Baroque"](#)
7. [UNESCO, "World Heritage Sites on the Tentative List: Salento and the 'Barocco Lecce'"](#)
8. Fodor's Italy 2001, "Lecce" Fodor's Travel Publications 2001
9. [UNESCO](#)(same as above)

Otranto

10. [Wikipedia, "Otranto"](#)
11. "In 2002, 2003 and 2004 Otranto won "the five flags" prize for the cleanest sea of Italy by "Legambiente" and "Touring Club Italiano" (Italian associations about environment and Tourism), and the National Association of the Italian Towns listed Otranto among the first 14 more beautiful towns in Italy." [Porta d'Oriente, "The School"](#)

Leuca

12. [Santa Maria di Leuca, Comune of Castrignano Del Capo, and Elios Tours](#)

Gallipoli

13. [Wikipedia, "Gallipoli"](#)

Valle d'Itria

14. [Direct Quote: Frommer's "Introduction to Alberobello and the Trulli District"](#)