

# APULIA & BASILICATA WINE, FOOD & CULTURE



Altamura, Matera, Martina Franca, Lecce...



Scenic Travel Service S.r.l. - Tour Operator

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## Program

### Accommodation in a typical Masseria (Farmhouse)

We'll begin our week by gathering in your hotel or if possible **Masseria**, a grand Italian noble farmhouse converted into a hotel, for an introduction into how olive oil is made and how different types of intervention and different critical points in the process (from variety and weather to date of harvest and processing mode) can influence the way olive oil tastes. Then we'll have a structured **olive oil tasting**, gaining new insights into the differences between premium extra-virgins and ordinary supermarket olive oils, what different flavors relate to (celery? artichokes? tomato leaves?), what makes them the way they are. We will also taste the best Pugliese olive oils to learn about regional variations and preferences. Once the tasting is over, we'll share an aperitivo and enjoy a welcome dinner in the masseria's dining room featuring the cucina casareccia for which Puglia's Valle d'Itria is justifiably renowned.

**Day 2** We'll start our first morning together off with a visit to the **weekly farmer's market** to see what is there. There will be plenty of choices as Puglia provides much of Italy's (and northern Europe's) fruits and vegetables and autumn is no exception. There are likely to be wild mushrooms, wild and foraged greens, the first chestnuts of the season, cime di rapa, broccoli romaensco, chicories and the last of the summer bounty of peppers, eggplant, tomatoes. Marketing concluded; we'll visit a century-old, fortified farmhouse with an olive oil mill that predates Roman times. We'll learn all about olive trees and olive oil while touring this estate, concluding our visit with a taste of the organic olive oil made here. Next, we head down to the coast for a seafood lunch on the rocks featuring the exquisite bounty of the Adriatic. Caught that morning, you'll learn why the cuisine of Puglia draws heavily on the ocean for its inspiration. From antipasti to fresh-caught sea bream cooked over an open fire, this is seafood like you've never experienced it. Then we return to our home base at the masseria for **our first cooking lesson**. We'll focus on the range and depth of Pugliese antipasto, which features the bounty of Puglia's in-season vegetables and much-loved Pugliese flavors. A traditional antipasto here might include as many as twelve dishes, all of which reflect the culinary traditions of the many cultural traditions represented here. We'll learn how to balance these flavors to create your own antipasto along with several regional dishes like riso, patate e cozze or tiella (rice, potato and mussels cooked in an earthenware pot), agnello al forno (roast, farm-raised lamb), braised turnip tops, funghi gratinati (local mushrooms baked with breadcrumbs, parsley and olive oil) and even fresh, fried olives! Our menu will reflect the season, using our market produce and your masseria hotel's own organically grown vegetables. Before dinner, we'll learn about the breadth and depth of Pugliese wine, with a special focus on local varieties and traditional as well as modern local winemaking. A certified sommelier will lead us through a tasting of offerings from the best local cellars, pairing our choices with the evening's meal.

**Day 3** Today we'll head to **Altamura**, one of the best places in Italy for **wood-burning oven-baked breads**. These iconic breads are delivered all over Italy the day they're baked and once you taste them, it's easy to see why. We'll visit one of the town's oldest continuously operated wood-burning ovens and learn how to make this bread along with the other baked treats for which Altamura is justly famous. Next, we'll dip over the regional border into Basilicata to visit the stunning town of Matera, just named the European Capital of Culture for 2019. Matera is unique in all of Italy for the sassi or cave dwellings that ring the central city. Inhabited by refugee clerics and monks from Greece and the Balkans during the 8th and 9th centuries, the cave churches and domestic dwellings carved into the town's sandstone cliffs at one time housed as many as 25,000 people. Today, the churches and caves are preserved as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We'll learn about the subtle differences between the cuisine of Basilicata and that of Puglia at lunch, then take a guided walking tour of the famous sassi to appreciate this deeply evocative place. We'll head back to Martina Franca, participate in the honored southern Italian tradition called the passeggiata and enjoy an aperitivo all'aperto. Dinner tonight is fornello pronto, another local institution, in the elegant Baroque city center.

**Day 4** Today we'll spend the most of our day with a pair of delightful grandmothers and their classically-trained chef sons in Martina Franca. Both generations are passionate advocates of the healthy Mediterranean diet as represented in the traditional food of Puglia and they will share their extensive experience along with personal memories and traditions, focusing on the role that durum wheat has played in the development dishes like **handmade pastas** (orecchiette, fricelli, sagne 'ncannulate and more), breads (pizza, panzerotti, foccace, puce and the golden semolina breads of Altamura) and Puglia's ubiquitous taralli and friselle. We'll learn to make these dishes and more, culminating in a shared luncheon featuring our morning's work. We'll return to our resort masseria for a rest after lunch, reconvening in the masseria's salotto for our second **olive oil colloquium and tasting**. We will taste a range of olive oils designed to help us identify olive oil defects, improving our ability to assess olive oils before we buy them. Dinner tonight will be in the nearby delightful town of Locorotondo, where we'll explore the Pugliese tradition of preserving the harvest in the form of sott'olii and sott'aceti and taste some of the best pizza you've ever had. We'll end our meal with a discussion of the role that liquori and digestivi play at the Pugliese table, with how-to tips from liquori experts and a tasting of traditional flavors like, bay leave, green walnut, quince and pomegranate liquor.

**Day 5** Today we're heading south to Maglie, home of **Pastificio Benedetto Cavalieri**, one of Italy's finest artisanal pasta companies. Since the early 1800s, the noble Cavalieri family has grown wheat in northern Puglia's fertile Tavoliere plain. In 1918, the family inaugurated its own pasta company, pioneering a process that preserves the nutritional values and flavor of the durum wheat they grow. We will visit the antique factory, where pasta is still made traditionally, then join members of the Cavalieri family for lunch featuring, yes, extraordinary pasta paired with Pugliese accompaniments. After lunch, we'll walk off some of that pasta with a guided walking tour of Lecce's enchanting centro storico, learning about the origins of Lecce's frothy baroque architecture and its role as the center of traditional carta pesta or papier-mache craft. Dinner is at an outdoor enoteca or wine bar, tasting Salentine specialites and watching the parade of Lecce's fashionable residents as they join the evening passeggiata. Tonight you'll want to turn in early because tomorrow is olive harvest day, so we'll return to the masseria in time for a good night's sleep.

**Day 6** Today we don our **harvest attire**, pick up our harvesting tools and learn how olive harvesting is done right to produce top quality, extra virgin olive oil. Olive farmers will join us to show us the ropes, then we'll learn what's involved in growing, picking and milling olives when we take our morning's gleanings to the nearby **frantoio (olive mill)** to watch the crushing process first hand. The olive miller will lead us on a tour of the mill, explaining the olive milling process in depth as we watch our olives make their journey through the mill. We'll also taste the oil from olives we just harvested as it drips off the press—a once in a lifetime moment that will become a taste memory for a long time to come. There will be an opportunity to purchase olive oil to take home, too. We'll enjoy an olive harvest lunch featuring our new olive oil at a farmhouse near the olive mill, then return to the masseria for a rest before we start our afternoon cooking class. This afternoon, we'll focus on the ways that olives and olive oil are incorporated into every course in a meal, from appetizers to dessert. We'll also learn how to cure olives using various techniques for long preservation. Dinner this evening will be our last one together, so we'll include some of our masterpieces from the afternoon cooking class and some additional special treats to make this a meal to remember.

**NOTE: Olive harvest activities take place only during our late October-early November programs. During the spring and earlier in the fall, the itinerary reflects Puglia's seasonal bounty, e.g. winery visits at harvest time.**

**Day 7** After breakfast at your masseria and perhaps a final stroll around the grounds, it will be time to say goodbye. We'll send you home with some organic extra virgin olive oil from the estate where you participated in the harvest and a booklet of the recipes you learned during your week in Puglia.

**Day 8** After breakfast, coach transfer to the Airport. End of our services