



Cycling week across Salento

8 days/ 7 nights

Salento is in the most southeastern region of Italy lying in the so-called "heel of the boot". Situated in the centre of the Mediterranean Sea, this region is filled with memories of the different civilizations that inhabited it, from the Messapii, to the Greeks, followed by the Romans and then the Normans. Crossing Salento with a bicycle is like cycling through an open-air museum. Prehistoric Dolmen, Byzantine shrines hidden in the caves, Baroque cathedrals, secluded corners of the coast etc. are all but a few of the things you can see when visiting this area.

Salento is also internationally renowned for its characteristic cuisine which combines flavours from the sea and the earth and the fantastic rhythm of its folk music: most notably the Pizzica.

YOUR PROGRAM

Day 1 - Arriving in Lecce

Arrival in Lecce. Meeting to give you all the documents and your bikes (if rented).

Day 2 - From Lecce to Otranto

Flat route today, with many interesting cultural and naturalistic sights. First we visit Acaya – a fortified city with a huge castle - and then we plunge down to “Le Cesine” – a WWF protected area, crossing point for many species of migratory birds. From there, we head towards the coast, along the ruins of Roca Vecchia – an ancient Bronze age city – and ‘Alimini’ Lakes. Some more kilometers and we are in Otranto, where narrow streets reveal wonders at every corner: the St. Peter church Byzantine frescoes, a walk along the ramparts overlooking the sea and finally the cathedral with its paved mosaic, a sort of figurative Middle Age encyclopedia. 56Km



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Day 3 - Otranto's surroundings

Exploring Otranto's surroundings day. Riding along the little river "Idro" ("water"), which gave the name to the city, we arrive in Casamassella, where old looms are still being used in "le Costantine" foundation. After a guided tour we move toward Giurdignano, crossing a Bronze age megalithic park containing huge stones ("dolmen" and "menhir"), and we arrive to "La Cutura" botanic garden. Here 'Toto' will lead us through his incredible plants collection (unique in Europe for its cactus species) and will offer us some lunch. In the afternoon, visit to a characteristic stone-made oven and then we'll enjoy a wine and cheese tasting in a wine cellar. Return to Otranto and free dinner in the historical centre.

35Km.



Day 4 - From Otranto to Leuca

Today we cycle along the wildest Salento coastal stretch. We visit 'Palacia' lighthouse (eastern most point of Italy) and a little red lake surfaced in a disused bauxite quarry. After a little stop in a fresh cheese farm, for a sampling, we carry on riding along the coast: nestled among the cliffs above the sea, this road is a huge balcony that looks onto Otranto Strait. With a little bit of luck we will be able to see the mountains of Albania and Greece. You could visit 'Zinzulusa' cave, going down nearly 200 feet into the earth bowels. On the way we admire some terraces and dry walls, the ingenious devices of peasants to get arable land in barren and impervious areas.

Around 52Km.



Day 5 - From Leuca to Gallipoli



Today we discover Leuca Cape, the southern part of Apulia. After an astonishing defense tower - situated in the centre of a small village - it is time to visit an ancient mill, dug into the rock, and then an enigmatic funerary monument made by big stones (its name "centopietre", means "hundred stones"), coming from Vereto, an ancient pre-romanic town situated nearby. Finally we visit Leuca piccola ('little Leuca'), an important pilgrimage station which still maintains a vast underground area. We'll go through the hill that houses the remains of Vereto, an ancient Messapian city, and we'll reach the so called "Maldives of Salento", one of the most beautiful beaches in the region. In the afternoon we'll cross the countryside, where karst rivers create a stunning scenery. Around 61Km



Day 6 - Gallipoli's surroundings

Day dedicated to Gallipoli's surroundings. First stop in Sannicola to discover its underground oil mill, then Tuglie with its amazing "rural culture museum". We ride through Neviano, to visit the remains of Macugno abbey, and then Cutrofiano, where we step inside the "fossil park. Option to have lunch at "Piccapane" bio farm house, where you can pick up yourselves vegetables Giuseppe will cook for you. In the afternoon we reach Galatina where we can contemplate the church of Santa Caterina, totally painted with frescoes in Giottesco style, and then visit the beautiful historical center of the town. Return possible by train. 30 or 60Km.





Day 7 - Way back to Lecce

Last day of our trip. We'll pass by many 19th century fortified farmhouse and villas we meet on our way back to Lecce. We stop in Nardò to visit its decadent baroque style historical center. Next stop in Copertino to discover its impressive Norman castle and listen to stories about Sant Joseph of Cupertino, 'the Saint of flights'. Some km before Lecce a last stop at a handcraft traditional pottery, at the Martina brothers, skilfull keepers of this ancient art. Late afternoon arrival in Lecce, guided city tour and bikes drop off. Around 42Km.



Day 8 - End of trip

End of trip after breakfast.

Additional information

TARIFFS

600 euros per person.

Electric bike rental : 180 euros per person.

Leisure bike rental : 80 euros per person.

Single room : 160 euros per person.

Trip in 4* hotels : 170 euros per person.

Cooking class (on day 6 morning, with lunch, instead of Gallipoli tour) : 75 euros per person.

Transfert from Brindisi airport to Lecce (per person - to be paid locally) : 30 euros per person.

Transfert from Bari airport to Lecce (per person - to be paid locally) : 75 euros per person.

INCLUDED

Luggage transfers, nights in B&Bs or in agriturismo (double bedrooms), breakfasts, 2 wine and cheese tasting sessions, GPS



data (itinerary included).

NOT INCLUDED

Transport options to the meeting point and from the point of dispersal, transfers which are not included in the tour, insurance, beverages, meals (except breakfasts), bike rental, visits of tourist sites, optional activities which are not included in the tour, personal expenses.

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Suitable for everyone. The Salento is a flat region.

Distance: between 30 and 50km a day on quiet roads.

CARRYING

Luggage transfers by vehicle. You only need to take with you what you wish to have available during the ride (picnic lunch, camera etc.).

ACCOMMODATION

Nights in charming B&Bs or in agriturismos - double bedroom basis.

SIZE OF GROUP

From 2.

DEPARTURES

Every fridays and saturdays from the beginning of April to the end of October (except August)

DEPARTURE

Lecce.

DISPERSION

Lecce.