

Full Itinerary

LA BELLA VITA: JOURNEY THROUGH SOUTHERN ITALY



TALK TO OUR WELL TRAVELLED TEAM OF EXPERTS

Toll Free US and Canada: 1 (855) 342-4127

Office open: Monday - Thursday 9:00am - 8:00pm, Friday 9:00am - 5:30pm (London time). Call answered 24/7



JOURNEY SNAPSHOT

ACTIVITY LEVEL:

Level 2

DESTINATION:

La Bella Vita: Journey through Southern Italy

DURATION:

14 days / 13 nights

FLIGHT INFORMATION:

Please arrange your flights into Bari Airport [BRI] on Day 1 and to depart from Naples Airport [NAP] on Day 14

PICKUP LOCATION:

Bari Airport [BRI]

OVERVIEW

Choose your own departure date for your group

Southern Italy boasts many historical, cultural & natural gems which are often overlooked. Join us as we travel through Italy's 'Heel & Boot' as we discover the 'bella vita' in Puglia, Basilicata, Calabria & Campania

From the scenic beaches of Polignano a Mare or Gallipoli, the iconic white trulli houses of Alberobello, the historic caves of the hilltop Matera, the volcanic Aeolian Islands to the renowned scenery of the Amalfi Coast, and the historic ruins of Paestum and Pompeii, southern Italy has sights, history and wonders to discover that more than rival those of their more famous cities in the north.

Join us as we weave our way on an exciting two week journey through southern Italy's regions. Starting in Puglia, we discover the 'heel' of Italy, before making our way through to the hilltop region of Basilicata and then descending to Calabria, the 'toe' to Italy's boot. Finally, we work our way north to Campania, home of the Amalfi peninsula and the Bay of Naples where our voyage of discovery finishes.

We'll pass by ancient ruins, sail to beautiful islands, travel through glorious countryside and visit historic hilltop cities and coastal towns. We'll discover the local cuisine, enjoy wine tasting and even learn about mozzarella and pottery on the way as we discover 'la bella vita' in southern Italy.

ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAY 1 - Welcome to Puglia

DAY 2 - Fortresses, Farmhouses & Folk Music of Puglia

DAY 3 - Alberobello's Famous 'Trulli' White Conical Houses

DAY 4 - The Salento Peninsula - the Heel to Italy's Boot

DAY 5 - Beautiful Basilicata

DAY 6 - Magical Matera

DAY 7 - Captivating Calabria - The Region of Italy's Toe

DAY 8 - Sailing the Aeolian Islands

DAY 9 - Enjoying Calabrian Cuisine

DAY 10 - Trains, Temples & Buffalo Mozzarella

DAY 11 - The Amazing Amalfi Coast

DAY 12 - Chic Capri - Playground of the Rich & Famous

DAY 13 - Historic Pompeii & Mount Vesuvius

DAY 14 - Arrivederci Italia!

FULL ITINERARY

DAY 1 - WELCOME TO PUGLIA

Upon arrival at Bari Airport, you will be met and transferred to our hotel in the coastal resort of Polignano a Mare.

There'll be free time to relax before joining together this evening with your Big Journey Tour Manager and fellow group members for a Welcome Presentation and dinner.

Included meals: Dinner

Accommodation: Polignano A Mare

DAY 2 - FORTRESSES, FARMHOUSES & FOLK MUSIC OF PUGLIA

After breakfast, we head out on our first excursion into glorious the Puglian countryside.

Our first stop will be an unmissable excursion to Castel del Monte, one of Puglia's most beautiful buildings and one of the most impressive fortresses of the Middle Ages, with its eight towers built in a perfect circle. It was constructed during the 1240s and dominates the surrounding flat landscape with incredible views.

Afterwards, we will enjoy a delicious country-style lunch in a 'masseria', a 16th century classic Puglia fortified farmhouse with traditional folk music.

We'll continue our journey this afternoon heading back towards the Adriatic Sea and to the lovely coastal town of Trani. Here, we will meet our local guide for a walking tour of the town and to see the cathedral of San Nicola Pellegrino, one of the most beautiful Romanesque churches in southern Italy.

The rest of the evening is at leisure.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Polignano a Mare

DAY 3 - ALBEROBELLO'S FAMOUS 'TRULLI' WHITE CONICAL HOUSES

After breakfast, we depart Polignano a Mare and head on our way to Lecce.

Our journey will take us through Le Murge - a plateau that extends along the upper part of the Puglia region. Here we will see the white 'trulli' houses so typical of the region with their conical-shaped roof.

In Alberobello, where there are about a 1,000 of these 'trulli' used as houses, today often converted into shops, bars and restaurants. A guided tour of the village will reveal some of their secrets and history.

After passing Locorotondo, a picturesque little town that takes the name from its circular (or rotund) shape, we arrive at Martina Franca, a small medieval town where rococo and baroque palaces were built during the 16-1700s. There are nice examples of the Apulian baroque, the council building is assigned to Bernini.

Our final stop on our way to Lecce is at the charming town of Ostuni, where all houses are painted white and beautifully maintained by the local womenfolk.

We arrive this afternoon in Lecce, our base for the next 2 nights. Lecce is a delightful city famous for its baroque architecture, mainly produced with the local yellow stone which very easy to shape. Together with many palaces and churches from this era there are also the remains of a Roman amphitheatre. Enjoy the evening at leisure to explore the city.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Lecce

DAY 4 - THE SALENTO PENINSULA - THE HEEL TO ITALY'S BOOT

Galatina is one of the larger towns in the Salento Peninsula, and here we enjoy a sightseeing tour with local guide through the historical centre,

seeing several elegant palaces. The city's most important monument is the church of Santa Caterina d'Alessandria, built at the end of the 1300s, of which the interior decorations were completed at the beginning of the 1400s with excellent frescoes from local artists influenced by the Giotto school.

Afterwards, we drive to the charming little town of Gallipoli, built on an island of limestone connected with the mainland by a bridge. Its name is derived from the Ancient Greek 'Kallipolis', which literally means 'Beautiful City' and is renowned as one of Puglia's hidden gems.

We continue to Otranto on the eastern tip of the 'heel'. In the Byzantine period, Otranto was the most important on the Salento Peninsula. The dominant building is the fortress constructed by Ferdinand of Aragon at the end of the 1400s, and whose main attraction is the Cathedral of the Annunziata with its interesting 12th century mosaic floor. Enjoy time at leisure to explore Otranto before we return to Lecce in the evening.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Lecce

DAY 5 - BEAUTIFUL BASILICATA

This morning we enjoy some last free time in Lecce before departing Puglia and heading west towards the central Basilicata Region and the famous hilltop city of Matera.

En route, we will stop at the town of Grottaglie, the ceramic capital of Puglia. Here we will visit a ceramic studio with medieval ovens and watch how pots are made and decorated. There'll be time for lunch at leisure in Grottaglie before we continue our way to Matera.

Upon arrival in Matera, after checking in to our hotel, we will then head off to try one of Italy's most famous products - wine!

This evening, we will join together to enjoy dinner before resting ahead of our next day's adventure.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Matera

DAY 6 - MAGICAL MATERA

Today, we will enjoy a full day in the city of Matera and its surroundings with our guide.

We'll discover the history of this famous hilltop city, the capital of the Basilicata Region. It is thought by some as the third oldest city in the world after Aleppo and Jericho. It was once renowned as the worst place to live in Italy and the Sassi area was evacuated in 1952 due to poor living conditions. However, in recent years enjoyed a renaissance like no other and been declared an UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Firstly we will enter the Caveoso Sasso, the cave-dwelling area of the city, then pass by the Porta Empia which will reveal a breathtaking panorama to us, after which a fascinating visit to some 'rock churches' and the typically furnished Casa Grotta (cave house).

After lunch at leisure, we board our coach to transfer to the Rock Church Archaeological Park of Natural History with a brief trip on the Matera Moors to discover the treasures of past civilizations and the area's faunistic and botanical heritage.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Matera

DAY 7 - CAPTIVATING CALABRIA - THE REGION OF ITALY'S TOE

After breakfast at hotel, it is time to depart Matera and, passing the Gulf of Taranto (the arch to Italy's foot) the city of Cosenza, we enter the Region of Calabria, Italy's toe.

Our destination is the so named 'Coast of the Gods' where we find Pizzo Calabro, a charming fishing village located on a steep cliff overlooking the Gulf of Saint Euphemia and dominated by the castle built by Joachim Murat, King of France. Here we will have the chance to taste the speciality of the town: truffle ice cream before enjoying lunch at leisure.

This afternoon sees us at the enchanting clifftop city of Tropea, and free time to enjoy the atmosphere of its little streets that overlook the turquoise sea. On clear days it is possible to admire one of the Aeolian Islands: Stromboli, which we'll visit.

We check into our hotel base in Calabria and enjoy dinner together this evening.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Tropea

DAY 8 - SAILING THE AEOLIAN ISLANDS

An early departure from our hotel this morning takes us to the Port of Tropea and to meet our guide for a full day boat trip to the Aeolian Islands of Stromboli, Lipari, and Vulcano.

Lying just off the coast of the Calabrian mainland, the seven volcanic islands that combine the Aeolian Islands are said to be named after Aeolus, the mythical ruler of the winds. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, they are one of Italy's most beautiful natural wonders.

We sail first for Stromboli where we discover the traditional village of San Vincenzo, full of white houses and Aeolian architecture. Enjoy your free time with the chance to walk along charming streets, admire Mount Stromboli, or go swimming at the seafront's black sand beaches.

We then a cruise to Lipari, the largest of the islands with so much to discover: sightseeing at the Acropolis and Lipari Cathedral or listen to the peaceful sounds of the ocean at Marina Corta and Marina Lunga.

Then it's a short boat trip south to the island of Vulcano, said to be the mythological home of the Greek God of blacksmiths, Hephaestus, or the Roman God Vulcano, hence the island's name, from which name we get the word 'Volcano'.

On Vulcano we can admire the jets of steam from the volcano, and trek along the volcanic trail to be amazed by the views from the crater (subject to local conditions and minimum mobility requirements)

On our cruise back to Tropea, watch out for the many dolphins sighted in the area.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Tropea

DAY 9 - ENJOYING CALABRIAN CUISINE

Today we will enjoy the delicious local cuisine of the area of Calabria by making it and tasting it!

The morning is at leisure and before we partake in a lunch-time cookery course to learn the secrets of making the best home-made Calabrian pasta and pizza. We'll learn about the local dishes, such as 'fileja e maltagliati' as well as other exclusive products of the area including the 'sweet' red onion of Tropea PGI or the n'duja of Spilinga PGI, a famous spicy salami based on pork and Calabrian pepper.

In the afternoon, it will then be time for a relaxing oil and wine tasting in vineyards that are located in a privileged position in the hills not far from the sea and overlooking Tropea. They enjoy the sun and the sea breeze, and the soil is based on fine sediments (silt-clay) of marine origin. We'll discover the winery and walk in the vineyard followed by a tasting of 3 wines as well as some local 'bruschette', salami and cheese, honey and organic jams.

Included meals: Breakfast & Lunch

Accommodation: Tropea

DAY 10 - TRAINS, TEMPLES & BUFFALO MOZZARELLA

We check out early this morning and make our way to the nearby Lamezia Terme Station where we will board the high-speed Frecciarossa train north to Salerno. The bright-red high speed trains - their name translates as the 'Red Arrow' are a commonly seen sight in Italy, dashing through the countryside at enormous speed and a great and relaxing way to travel the country.

We arrive around lunchtime in Salerno, in the Campania Region where we will be met by a coach for our onwards journey through to Amalfi. Our first stop will be to visit the production of one of the region's most famous products - Buffalo Mozzarella.

We'll stop at a Buffalo Mozzarella Farm in the Salerno area for a fascinating tour where you can see the famous cows and enjoy a light lunch.

We continue via the area's World War II Landing Beaches, with an evocative presentation from our guide before we arrive at the historic Ancient Greek site of Paestum. Home to three magnificent Doric temples, thought to be dedicated to the city's namesake Poseidon (known to the Romans as Neptune), Hera and Ceres. We will explore these remarkably well-preserved ancient temples which are thought to date from

about 550 to 450 BC with our guide as well as the amphitheater and museum.

Finally, we make our way to Amalfi, our base for the next three nights and relax after a long day travelling.

Included meals: Breakfast & Light Lunch

Accommodation: Amalfi

DAY 11 - THE AMAZING AMALFI COAST

We head out today for a full day tour of the world famous Amalfi Coast.

This stretch of coastline offers arguably the world's most beautiful and thrilling of sightseeing roads. Stretching some 30 miles between Sorrento and Amalfi, the community that gave the coast its name, picturesque villages cling precariously to steep sea cliffs with breathtaking rocky-shoreline vistas. The landscape is profuse with bright-hued flowers and the coastal air is rich in fresh ocean-spray scents.

You'll be sure to know the names of the famous coastal villages - Positano, Ravello, Praiano, Conca dei Marini and Sant'Agata sui Due Golfi – we'll see them all as we travel this most famous road.

We return in the evening to our hotel for an evening at leisure.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Amalfi

DAY 12 - CHIC CAPRI - PLAYGROUND OF THE RICH & FAMOUS

Today, an unforgettable day on the island of Capri awaits, rich with natural beauty, scenery and history, and frequented by the rich and famous.

We leave Sorrento by fast hydrofoil, sailing past the beautiful Sorrento coastline. Upon arrival on the island at Marina Grande, a fleet of minibuses will take us up the island to Anacapri for a visit to the villa of Dr Axel Munthe, a Swedish doctor whose best selling book "The Story of San Michele" tells of his time on Capri.

After free time and lunch at leisure in Anacapri, we go on to chic Capri town and visit the Gardens of Augustus, from where we admire the famous Faraglioni rocks and Marina Piccola, where Gracie Fields once lived. Enjoy free time to visit the elegant boutiques, stroll in the famous main square, symbol of the elegant and prestigious Capri.

We return back down the port and sail back to Sorrento and transfer to our hotel.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Amalfi

DAY 13 - HISTORIC POMPEII & MOUNT VESUVIUS

It is time to depart the Amalfi Coast as we make our way round the Gulf of Naples towards the famous city.

Firstly we will visit the famous ruined Roman city of Pompei. Destroyed and completely buried during a long catastrophic eruption of Mount Vesuvius spanning two days in 79 AD, the volcano buried Pompei under 20 m (66 ft) of ash and pumice, and it was lost for nearly 1,600 years before its accidental rediscovery in 1592. Since then, its excavation has provided an extraordinarily detailed insight into the life of a city at the height of the Roman Empire.

After lunch at leisure, we start to climb the famous volcano of Mount Vesuvius up to the 1,000 meter mark, one of the most well-known volcanoes on earth. On clear days, one can see the silhouette of this gigantic presence from the whole of the Bay of Naples. The volcano, with its nickname of "the hunchback", is seen as a friendly companion by the people of Naples despite its destructive potential, but has led to the area being high in superstition. Mount Vesuvius has been dormant since 1944 under the watchful eyes of vulcanologists, who regularly measure its temperature.

We make our way back down Vesuvius for our final night of our Italian adventure in the bustling city of Naples. To celebrate our last evening together, we will have a splendid Farewell Dinner in Naples.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Naples

DAY 14 - ARRIVERDERCI ITALIA!

Sadly our Italian Experience has come to an end and its time to depart. Transfers to Naples airport will be arranged according to your onwards flight home.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: none

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Meet & Greet on arrival at Bari Airport
- Accommodation as detailed in the itinerary
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary
- All transfers/touring and excursions in air-conditioned deluxe motor vehicles
- All entrances and English speaking guides as indicated in the programme
- Tourist taxes
- Services of a Big Journey Company Tour Director throughout (subject to minimum numbers)

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED

- Flights to arrive into Bari Airport [BRI] on Day 1 and depart from Naples Airport [NAP] on Day 14
- Additional food and beverage unless otherwise included in the programme
- Personal expenses
- Personal Travel & Medical Insurance
- Optional excursions/entrances
- Gratuities
- Any COVID tests or related entry & exit requirements

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- Please let The Big Journey Company know prior to travelling if you have any medical needs or take any medication that we need to be made aware of to ensure that you have a safe and pleasant tour.
- Check in is after 2pm and check out is before 11am unless otherwise specified in the itinerary.
- Cancellation 90 – 0 days prior to departure cancellation fee is 100%. It is your responsibility to ensure the correct travel insurance in place to protect you against the need to cancel your holiday. Deposits are non-refundable and final payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure.
- Further terms and conditions apply and will be provided upon request or at the time of booking. The Big Journey Company reserves the right to withdraw any offer prior to accepting a reservation request. This does not affect your statutory rights. This offer is subject to availability and space is limited.

BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

Choose from the list of dates below

Call to Book

Toll Free US and Canada: 1 (855) 342-4127

Office open: Monday - Thursday 9:00am - 8:00pm, Friday 9:00am - 5:30pm (London time). Call answered 24/7