

Full Itinerary

LA BELLA VITA - JOURNEY THROUGH SOUTHERN ITALY



TALK TO OUR WELL
TRAVELLED TEAM OF
EXPERTS

0844 3350 197

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00
GMT



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

19 Aug - 01 Sep, 2026 - SOLD OUT!

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

The date listed above is for our scheduled group departure. If you'd prefer to travel privately with friends or family, we'd be delighted to arrange a bespoke tour on your preferred dates. Just contact us via email and we'll take care of the rest.

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: Welcome Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Pietra Blu Resort & Spa, 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 & Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel Pietra Blu Resort & Spa, 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: Hotel Delle Palme, 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 'Kallípolis', 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: Hotel Delle Palme, Lecce

DAY 5 - BEAUTIFUL BASILICATA

This morning brings a final opportunity to enjoy some free time in beautiful Lecce before we depart Puglia and travel west towards the stunning Basilicata region and the iconic hilltop city of Matera.

On our journey, we'll pause in Grottaglie, renowned as the ceramic capital of Puglia. Here, we visit a traditional ceramic studio, home to centuries-old medieval ovens, where artisans will demonstrate the remarkable craftsmanship behind their pottery—shaping, firing, and hand-painting each piece with time-honoured skill. You will have time at leisure in Grottaglie to enjoy lunch at your own pace and perhaps browse some of the charming ceramic shops.

We then continue to Matera, one of Italy's most extraordinary cities, famed for its ancient cave dwellings and dramatic landscape. After checking into our hotel, we head out for a delightful introduction to the region's renowned wines. Enjoy an afternoon presentation and tasting at La Gattabuia Cantina, or a similar local venue, set in the heart of Matera.

This evening, we gather for dinner together, savouring local flavours and atmosphere as we look forward to the adventures ahead.

Included meals: Breakfast & Dinner

Accommodation: Aquatio Cave Luxury Hotel, 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: Aquatio Cave Luxury Hotel, 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: Hotel Tropis, Tropea

DAY 8 - SAILING THE AEOLIAN ISLANDS

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

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

We sail first to Stromboli, where we explore the traditional village of San Vincenzo, known for its whitewashed houses and distinctive Aeolian architecture. Enjoy free time to stroll through charming streets, admire the imposing silhouette of Mount Stromboli, or swim at the striking black-sand beaches.

We then cruise onward to Lipari, the largest of the islands, brimming with places to discover: visit the Acropolis and Lipari Cathedral, or relax by the tranquil shores of Marina Corta and Marina Lunga.

Next, we take a short boat trip south to the island of Vulcano, believed to be the mythological home of the Greek god Hephaestus and his Roman counterpart Vulcano—after whom all volcanoes are named.

On Vulcano, admire the impressive jets of steam rising from the volcanic landscape and, for those who wish, take the volcanic trail for breathtaking views from the crater (subject to local conditions and minimum mobility requirements).

As we cruise back towards Tropea, keep an eye out for the dolphins frequently spotted in these waters.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Hotel Tropis, 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: Hotel Tropis, Tropea

DAY 10 - TRAINS, TEMPLES & BUFFALO MOZZARELLA

We check out early this morning and make our way to the nearby Lamezia Terme Station to board the high-speed Frecciarossa train north to Salerno. These bright-red trains—whose name translates to "Red Arrow"—are an iconic sight across Italy, gliding through the countryside at remarkable speed and offering a smooth, comfortable way to travel.

We arrive in Salerno around lunchtime, where our coach awaits for the onward journey toward the Amalfi Coast. Our first visit is to a local Buffalo Mozzarella farm, one of the region's most renowned culinary treasures. Here we enjoy a fascinating tour of the production process, meet the buffalo, and savour a light lunch made with the freshest ingredients.

Our journey continues past the World War II landing beaches of the area, where our guide will offer an evocative presentation about the historic events that unfolded here. Time permitting, we then visit the extraordinary ancient city of Paestum. This remarkable archaeological site is home to three magnificent Doric temples—traditionally dedicated to Poseidon (Neptune), Hera, and Ceres—dating from approximately 550–450 BC. With our guide, we explore the temples, amphitheatre, and museum, gaining a deeper understanding of the region's Greek and Roman heritage.

We then travel onward to the Amalfi Coast, our base for the next two nights, where we can relax and unwind after a full and fascinating day.

Included meals: Breakfast & Light Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel Tramonto D'Oro, Praiano (Amalfi Coast)

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 and Conca dei Marini – 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: Hotel Tramonto D'Oro, Praiano (Amalfi Coast)

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

After breakfast, we check out of our hotel in Praiano and make our way to Sorrento Port for a memorable day on the enchanting island of Capri.

An unforgettable experience awaits, filled with striking scenery, natural wonders, and a touch of glamour—Capri has long been a favourite retreat for artists, writers, and the world's jet set.

We depart Sorrento by fast hydrofoil, enjoying views of the spectacular Sorrentine coastline as we glide across the water. Upon arrival at Marina Grande, a fleet of minibuses will take us up the winding roads to Anacapri, where we visit the charming Villa San Michele. Built by Swedish physician and author Dr. Axel Munthe, the villa is beautifully perched with stunning panoramic views and is lovingly described in his famous memoir *The Story of San Michele*.

Afterwards, enjoy free time and lunch at leisure in Anacapri before continuing on to the elegant town of Capri. Here we visit the tranquil Gardens of Augustus, offering breathtaking views of the iconic Faraglioni rock formations and Marina Piccola—once home to the beloved Gracie Fields. You will then have time to explore Capri's stylish boutiques, wander its picturesque lanes, or relax in the town's famous piazzetta.

Later this afternoon, we return by hydrofoil to Sorrento, where our coach will be waiting to transfer us to Naples. Upon arrival, we check in to our hotel for the next two nights.

Included meals: Breakfast

Accommodation: Hotel Palazzo Turchini, Naples

DAY 13 - HISTORIC POMPEII & MOUNT VESUVIUS

On our penultimate day, we depart Naples and travel first to the remarkable archaeological site of Pompeii. Once a thriving Roman city, Pompeii was catastrophically destroyed and buried during the two-day eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. Roofs collapsed under the weight of volcanic debris, and the city disappeared beneath more than 20 metres (66 ft) of ash and pumice.

Lost for nearly 1,600 years, Pompeii was accidentally rediscovered in 1592, and ongoing excavations have since revealed an astonishingly detailed snapshot of daily life at the height of the Roman Empire. As we explore its streets, villas, baths, and public spaces, we gain a vivid insight into a world frozen in time.

Following lunch at leisure, we continue our day by ascending Mount Vesuvius itself, travelling up to the 1,000-metre mark. One of the world's most iconic volcanoes, Vesuvius dominates the Bay of Naples, its distinctive silhouette visible for miles on a clear day. Affectionately known locally as "the hunchback," it remains a symbol of both beauty and power. Though dormant since 1944, it is closely monitored by volcanologists who keep a careful watch on its temperature and activity.

We then return to Naples for a short walking tour of the historic centre before concluding our final evening together in style.

To celebrate the end of our wonderful journey, we gather for a splendid Farewell Dinner in Naples—a perfect finale to our time together.

Included meals: Breakfast & Farewell Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Palazzo Turchini, 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
- ATOL Protection
- 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

- **Flights:** International flights to/from your chosen destination are not included in this package. The Big Journey Company will be happy to provide a quotation for your flights—please contact us for further details.
- **Vaccinations & Health:** Vaccinations may be recommended depending on your destination. Please consult your doctor or travel clinic for the most up-to-date medical advice.
- **Visas & Entry Requirements:** Entry requirements vary by destination, and a visa may be required. Please refer to the travel tips section for full details. It is your responsibility to ensure you have the necessary travel documentation prior to departure.
- **Medical Needs:** Please inform The Big Journey Company prior to travel of any medical conditions or medications you take that we should be aware of to help ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.
- **Accommodation Check-in/Out:** Unless otherwise stated in your itinerary, check-in is after 2–3pm and check-out is before 10am. Please note that hotels may be subject to change to the same or similar standard due to availability.
- **Cancellation Policy:** Cancellations made within 90 days of departure are subject to a 100% cancellation fee. Deposits are non-refundable, and balance payments are due 14 weeks prior to departure. It is your responsibility to ensure adequate travel insurance is in place to protect against the need to cancel your holiday.
- **Minimum Numbers:** The Big Journey Company host will accompany the tour should minimum guest numbers be met. We will confirm this closer to the departure date.
- **Terms & Conditions:** 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. This does not affect your statutory rights. All offers are subject to availability and space is limited.

BOOK YOUR JOURNEY

Choose from the list of dates below

Call to Book

0844 3350 197

Monday to Friday 09:00 - 18:00 GMT