



8 days Jewish Itineraries in Apulia

WELCOME TO APULIA!

Upon arrival at Brindisi or Bari airport, you will be transferred by chauffeur driven car to your hotel in Lecce.

You are about to experience the many flavours and colours of **Salento**, the Southernmost region of Apulia, the Easternmost Italian peninsula, stretching towards Greece and the Eastern Mediterranean, a crossroad of civilizations from pre-historic times... Be prepared!

Welcome dinner (included)

DAY 1

ON FOOT. "BENEATH THE BAROQUE", EXPLORING MEDIEVAL JEWISH LECCE

Breakfast at the hotel

10:00 am Jewish Museum Lecce. Meeting with **Fabrizio Lelli** (Professor of Hebrew Language and Literature, University of Salento and Director of the Jewish Museum Lecce). Prof. Lelli will introduce you to the main phases of Jewish history in Lecce and will show you around the **Jewish Museum**, which stands on the remains of a **15th-century Synagogue**.

11:00 am Guided tour of the historic centre of Lecce. The visit starts from the majestic **Santa Croce Church**, the jewel in the crown of Lecce Baroque architecture (just outside the Jewish Museum) and continues to the nearby **Piazza Sant'Oronzo**, the former Market square, where you will admire the **Old Town Hall (Sedile)**, the **Roman Column** and the remains of the huge **Roman Amphitheatre**. Passing through **Corso Vittorio Emanuele**, with its stunning Baroque *palazzi* and the beautiful recently restored **Sant'Irene Church**, you will reach the breathtaking **Piazza Duomo**, one of the most critically praised in Italy. There, you will see the Archbishop's Residence, the Seminary, the elegant Bell Tower and the superb Cathedral.

1:00 pm Lunchtime. Enjoy the authentic cuisine of the Salento region.



- 3:00 pm** **Guided tour** of the lesser known traces of **Medieval Lecce**. You will now discover much more of the town's Jewish past. Visit starts from the **old Jewish neighbourhood**.
- 4:00 pm** **Jewish museum**: it's time to enjoy a **drink**: sipping **Kosher Salento wine** and tasting **local Kosher products**.
- 4:30 pm** **Back into the medieval past**: your guide will now take you to the romantic park surrounding the **Torre di Belloluogo**. You will visit the 14th century cylindrical tower, still accessible by a bridge over a deep moat. at the turn of the 15th century this was the summer retreat used by the countess of Lecce, Maria d'Enguien, a protector of Jewish traders and scholars throughout her dominions.
- 5:30 pm** **Free time for a stroll around the historic centre**, with its many churches and historic buildings.
- 7:30 pm** **Dinner (not included)**

DAY 2

BY BUS. "INLAND SOUTH": PORTRAYING JEWS IN MEDIEVAL SALENTO

Breakfast at the hotel.

- 9:00 am** **Departure from the hotel**. Through some of the most beautiful villages of the area south of Lecce, you will first reach **Acaya**, with its extraordinary castle. Here you will admire a late medieval fresco recently rediscovered during the restoration of the castle chapel. A Jew plays a significant role in all this, but why was he portrayed dressed this way?
- 11:00 am** After the guided tour, you will experience the enchanting **Salento countryside** on a walk around the centuries-old **olive trees**. Then it will be time to enjoy a selection of **extra virgin olive oil** and local **tarallini snacks**.
- 1:00 pm** **Lunch (not included)**
- 2:30 pm** **Guided tour** of the historic town of **Soletto** and its medieval **Santo Stefano Church**, with its **fabulous Gothic frescoes, depicting Jews from the late medieval period**.
- Your tour will conclude in the lovely town of **Galatina**, where you will visit one of the masterworks of late-medieval Southern Italian art, the **Santa Caterina d'Alessandria Church**. The interior is covered from floor to ceiling with stunning frescoes painted by Neapolitan followers of the internationally famous Tuscan artist **Giotto**.
- 6:30 pm** **Return to Lecce**
- 7:30 pm** **Dinner (not included)**



DAY 3

BY BUS. “GATEWAY TO THE EAST”: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE OLD JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN THE TERRA D’OTRANTO

Breakfast at the hotel.

9:00 am **Departure from the hotel.** In less than an hour you will reach **Otranto**, the “**Gateway to the East**”, Italy’s most Eastern settlement and once the capital of the whole Salentine Peninsula, then called *Terra d’Otranto*, the Land of Otranto.

Between the 9th and 12th centuries, **Otranto** was the main centre of Jewish learning in Southern Apulia. As the Jewish community prospered thanks to commerce and their entrepreneurship, scholars produce lasting contributions to the study of the Bible, the *Mishnah* (the oral Torah) and the Babylonian Talmud. When the Medieval Jewish traveller, **Benjamin of Tudela** visited Otranto in mid-12th century, he found about 500 Jews there. It was considered one of the most important rabbinical centres in Europe. In fact, in the 12th century *Sefer ha-Yashar* (The Book of the Righteous), the rabbi **Rabbenu Jacob Tam** quotes an old saying paraphrasing Isaiah 2:3: “For out of Bari shall come forth the Law but the word of the Lord shall come from Otranto.”

In this splendid sea-port, still surrounded by its medieval walls, you will visit the **Norman Cathedral** with its unique **Byzantine mosaic floor**. According to many scholars, its complex decoration was partly inspired by contemporary Jewish sources. Medieval visitors were surprised to see a huge **Menorah** candelabrum standing in front of the Cathedral. Legend holds that the artifact is still kept hidden in some secret room inside this medieval building. After walking around the lovely historic centre, you will have lunch at a famous restaurant, overlooking the harbor. On clear days the Albanian coast is visible across the Strait.

Our guided tour will then take you into the **rich archaeological site** in **Roca Vecchia**, an ancient settlement right on the edge of the sea. Traces of animal sacrifices and prehistoric graffiti have been found in a sinkhole next to a sea cave, the **Grotta della Poesia**. You may wander around the remains of the old fortress, and then head over to the *Grotta* for a swim or just take in the sun!

5:30 pm **Departure for Lecce**

7:30 pm **Dinner (not included)**



DAY 4

BY BUS. "TO THE LIGHTHOUSE": 20th CENTURY JEWISH DIASPORA ALONG THE ADRIATIC COAST TO CAPO DI LEUCA

Breakfast at the hotel.

9:00 am **Departure from the hotel.** The itinerary will take you through one of the most evocative stretches of the **Salento coast**. You will visit the areas that hosted **DP (Displaced Persons) camps** from 1944 to 1947, where many Jews en-route to the Land of Israel were given shelter under the auspices of the Allied Forces. Most of the Jewish refugees were Holocaust survivors and also members of Zionist parties who aimed to build a new life beginning in Salento.

The tour winds through the little coastal towns of **Santa Cesarea Terme, Tricase Porto** and **Santa Maria di Leuca**, where you will visit some of the **villas** that accommodated Jewish refugees and which still retain traces of their stay.

1:00 pm **Lunch at the gorgeous Villa La Meridiana**, a 19th-century Neoclassical aristocrat summer residence on the beautiful **sea promenade** of Santa Maria di Leuca, and which was the Anglo-American forces dining hall after WWII.

3:00 pm **Boat tour** of the stunning **sea caves around Leuca**.

5:00 pm **Return to Lecce.**

7:30 pm **Dinner at the Patria Palace Hotel.** Traditional Salentine cuisine will be accompanied by a selection of the best local wines. Please request vegetarian or kosher menus upon reservation.



DAY 5

BY BUS. "INLAND WEST": IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF JEWISH LIFE ON THE IONIAN COAST

Breakfast at the hotel.

- 9:00 am** **Departure from the hotel.** This itinerary will take you to the West coast of the Salento peninsula. Once outside Lecce, you will first reach **the lovely town of Copertino, with its superb Renaissance castle.** Heading south, you then reach beautiful **Nardò**, only second in size to Lecce, and once capital of a small Duchy.
- 10:30 am** **Guided tour of Nardò.** You will tour the old Jewish neighbourhood and find out what happened to the **old Synagogue.** After a stroll in the lovely old-town centre, still partly enclosed within its medieval walls, we will head to **Le Cenate**, an area known for its elegant 18th to early 20th century villas, used after WWII to accommodate Jewish refugees in the local DP Camp.
- 12:30 pm** **Arrival in Santa Maria al Bagno.** This picturesque sea-front village hosted the largest of the four DP camps, between 1944 and 1947. The camps were managed by the Anglo-American Forces to temporarily host Jewish refugees who had survived the Holocaust. You will visit the Jewish museum (**Museo della Memoria e dell'Accoglienza**) with its unique murals, painted by Rumenian-born **Zvi Miller** in 1946. The museum opened in 2009 and contains documented evidence of the presence of several thousands of Jewish refugees after WWII.
- 1:30pm** **Lunch in Santa Maria al Bagno (not included)**
- 2:30pm** **Departure for Gallipoli**, whose Greek name means "Beautiful town". Guided tour of the old town centre, an island only reachable by a bridge, with its lovely Baroque architecture and breathtaking views of the **radiant colours of the Ionian Sea.** We will admire the **Aragonese Castle, the Cathedral** and **the small Church of Purity** with its lavish decoration. We will stroll around the old **Jewish neighborhood**, just close to the **Renaissance Greek Fountain** (16th century).
- 4:00 pm** **Enjoy the superb view over the old town** from the **Grattacielo** skyscraper building, while sipping a glass of wine and tasting local products.
- 5:30 pm** **Departure for Lecce**
- 7:30 pm** **Dinner (not included)**



DAY 6

BY BUS. “IL GRANDE SALENTO”: AN EXTENDED TOUR AROUND THE WHOLE SALENTO PENINSULA.

This is a tour around the whole region, once part of the “Land of Otranto”, a large area that extends roughly from the sea-port of Brindisi to the sea-port of Taranto, thus connecting the two seas that surround the Salento peninsula. Here you will discover the **earliest traces** of Jewish settlements of the Western European diaspora.

Breakfast at the hotel.

9:00am **Departure from the hotel.** You will be driven to **Brindisi**, the most important Adriatic sea-port in **Roman times**. It was here, after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE that thousands of Jewish prisoners landed on their way to Rome: some of them settled here thus establishing the earliest Jewish communities in Italy. In the following centuries, from Brindisi they spread around Apulia settling in the main towns along the major Roman roads.

In Brindisi you will see the **remains of the majestic column** that marks the end of the **Via Appia**, the most important communication highway of the time between Rome and the East. After a pleasant walk from the old port area, you will discover the street that still carries the name of its former inhabitants: **Via Giudea** (Jewish street).

11:30 am From Brindisi you will head to **Oria**, perched on a hill, and one of the most thriving centres of Jewish culture in the early Middle ages. The town was home to one of the earliest Jewish medieval authors from Apulia, **Ahimaatz ben Paltiel** (10th-11th century). In his lively chronicle, entitled **Sefer Yuhasin** (The Book of Genealogies), Ahimaatz vividly describes the glorious deeds of his ancestors from Oria.

1:30 pm **Lunch in Oria with reading from Ahimaatz ben Paltiel’s book.**

3:00 pm You will then reach lovely town of **Manduria**, where you will visit the **Jewish neighborhood**, with its **Synagogue** and the “**Rabbi’s house**”.

5:30 pm **Tasting of local Primitivo wines** at the wine museum, the **Museo della Civiltà del Vino Primitivo**.

6:30 pm **Departure for Lecce**

8:30 pm **Dinner (not included)**



DAY 7

BY BUS. “IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF EMPEROR FREDERICK”: JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN TRANI

Breakfast at the hotel

9:00 am From Alberobello you will head to the medieval town of **Trani**, where you will visit its magnificent sea-front **Norman Cathedral**. During your guided tour you will observe the many traces left by the significant Jewish community that had lived in this sea-port for centuries. Included is a guided visit to the **Jewish neighborhood** and the beautiful **Jewish Museum**, housed in the largest of the medieval Synagogues in Trani, which then became the Church of Sant’Anna at the end of the 13th century.

1.30 pm **Lunch in a local fish restaurant**, overlooking the picturesque harbour.

2.30 pm In the afternoon you will head to the truly stunning **Castel del Monte**, a fortified castle built in the 13th century by Emperor Frederick II who was an important protector of Jewish merchants and scholars. Perfectly octagonal and most mysterious, this fabulous castle is one of Southern Italy's most talked-about landmarks and a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Return to Trani and farewell dinner.

“VINI LEUCI” KOSHER WINE TOUR AND TASTING

During the whole Jewish itinerary, you can choose to continue your experience with a **Kosher wine** tour and tasting at “**Vini Leuci**” winery, Guagnano (Lecce).

Leuci Winery has almost a century old tradition in winemaking, so much that the company name “*Lucio Leuci*” is the grandchildren’s tribute to the hard work of their grandfather, who produced wines from Salento grapes since 1924. Today, with the same passion, the winery produces kosher products with the most important **International Jewish certification**, contributing to promote Salento wines in the Jewish world.



DAY 8 GOODBYE

Breakfast at the hotel. Check out and transfer to Brindisi or Bari Airport.

>> Info and Reservations: INFOTAB TOURS

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