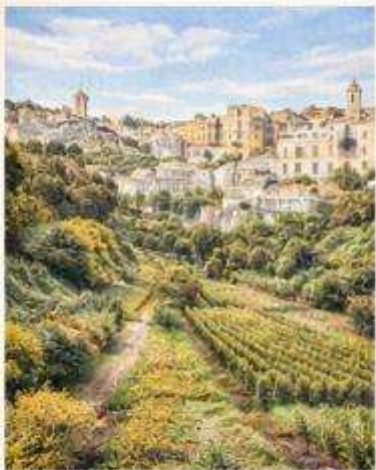


# Puglia and Malta

2026





# Tuesday, February 3, 2026

*The journey begins*

Depart IAD at 9:15 PM for Istanbul.

Turkish Airlines Flight TK 8.

Reservation code S6CFNQ.

Business Class. Seat 07K.

# Wednesday, February 4, 2026

*Arriving in Bari from Istanbul*

Lodging:

Apartment in Bari –  
Benedetto Cairoli

Arrive Istanbul at 3:20 PM.

Depart Istanbul at 7:10 PM for Bari.

Turkish Airlines Flight TK1465.

Reservation code S6CFNQ.

Business Class. Seat 03F.

Arrive Bari at 7:10 PM. (2 hr flight, 2 hr time zone difference.)

Pick up Rental Car. U-Save Car Rental.

Confirmation #7TU60E.

Expedia Itinerary 73209254344079.

Pick-up at 7:45 PM.

Mini Elite – Aygo X automatic, or similar.

Drive to Bari

Check-In Apartment in Bari around 8:30 PM



# BARI



# Thursday, February 5, 2026

## *Exploring Bari*

Lodging:

Apartment in Bari –  
Benedetto Cairoli

### Morning

- Basilica di San Nicola - A Romanesque masterpiece, important to both Catholics and Orthodox Christians. Admire the crypt (with the saint's relics) and the austere yet powerful architecture.
- Cattedrale di San Sabino - Another Romanesque gem, with a beautiful crypt and fine medieval details.
- Walk Bari Vecchia (the old town) - Stroll through the maze-like streets, peek into courtyards, and see women hand-making orecchiette pasta outside their doors on Arco Basso.
- Coffee break suggestion: Stop at Caffè Vergnano 1882 or a small bar in Bari Vecchia for an espresso and a pasticciotto (custard-filled pastry, originally from Lecce but beloved here too).

### Lunch

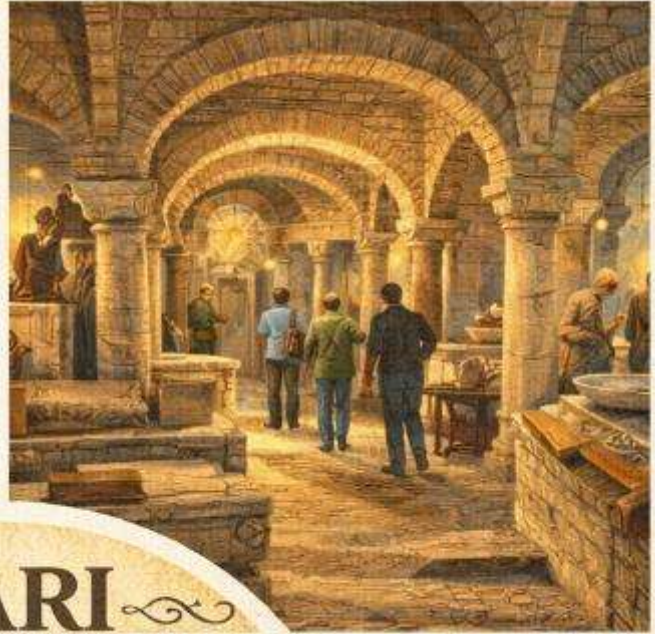
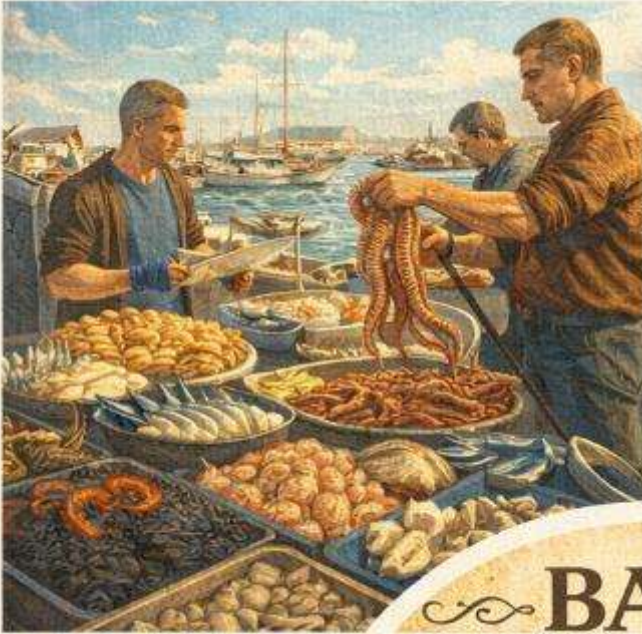
Try a classic osteria or trattoria in the old town. Local dish: orecchiette alle cime di rapa (ear-shaped pasta with turnip tops).

### Afternoon

- Castello Svevo (Swabian Castle) - Built by the Normans, expanded by Frederick II. Explore ramparts, courtyards, and exhibits.
- Muraglia (ancient city wall) - Walk along the walls for Adriatic views and pastel-colored houses.
- Lungomare Nazario Sauro - A scenic seaside promenade. Even in February, the sea air and wide views are restorative.

### Evening

- Aperitivo in Piazza del Ferrarese or Piazza Mercantile.



# BARI



# Friday, February 6, 2026

## *Exploring Bari*

Lodging:

Apartment in Bari –  
Benedetto Cairoli

### Morning

- *Teatro Petruzzelli* (guided tour if available) - One of Italy's great opera houses, rebuilt after a 1991 fire. Lavish interior, cultural history.
- *Museo Archeologico di Santa Scolastica* - Housed in a former monastery, with finds from prehistoric times through Roman and Byzantine Bari.
- *Mercato del Pesce* (Fish Market) - Watch fishermen selling the day's catch.

### Lunch

Try street food Bari-style. Best enjoyed from bakeries or small kiosks near Via Sparano or Piazza Mercantile.

- *Focaccia barese* (thick bread with tomatoes and olives).
- *Panzerotti* (fried dough filled with mozzarella and tomato).

### Afternoon

- *Pinacoteca Metropolitana di Bari* (Provincial Art Gallery) - Paintings from the Middle Ages to the 20th century (including Venetian, Neapolitan, and Puglian masters).
- *Quartiere Murat* (the “new town” built in the 19th c.) - Elegant grid of streets, wide boulevards, Liberty-style architecture. Great for window shopping along *Via Sparano da Bari*.

### Evening

Dinner in Bari. Suggestion: *La Uascez* (casual, excellent local cuisine).

Dessert: *sporcamuss* (flaky pastry filled with cream and dusted with sugar – name means “dirty your face”).



## POLIGNANO



## MONOPOLI



# Saturday, February 7, 2026

*Road Trip: The Coast - Polignano & Monopoli*

Lodging:

Apartment in Bari –  
Benedetto Cairoli

08:30 – Depart Bari for Polignano a Mare- Driving time to Polignano a Mare: ~1 hr with stops.

Potential sites along the way:

- Torre a Mare (10 km south of Bari) - Small fishing village with a lively little harbor and seafood stalls. Worth a 15–20 min walk along the pier for views of fishing boats.
- Cala Fetente / Cala Colombo (before Polignano) - Rocky coves with dramatic limestone cliffs. Easy pull-over for photos; popular with locals in summer, but quiet in February.
- *Grotta delle Rondinelle* overlook - Coastal viewpoint just outside the town center. You can't boat into the caves in February, but you can admire them from above.
- Abbazia di San Vito (3 km north of *Polignano*) - Historic seaside abbey with a tiny fishing hamlet. Lovely photo stop: white abbey buildings reflected on the Adriatic.

09:45 – Arrive in Polignano a Mare

- *Lama Monachile (Cala Porto)* - Iconic pebble cove with dramatic cliffs and the Roman bridge. In February, it's usually very quiet — ideal for photos without summer crowds.
- Centro Storico walk - Enter through *Arco Marchesale* into the whitewashed old town. Wander via small lanes to scenic balconies over the sea ("*balconi panoramici*").
- Other suggestions: Visit Fondazione Pino Pascali (contemporary art museum) if open — nice sea views.

12:45 – Drive to Monopoli. Short hop: ~15 min (12 km) south.

1:00 – Arrive in Monopoli

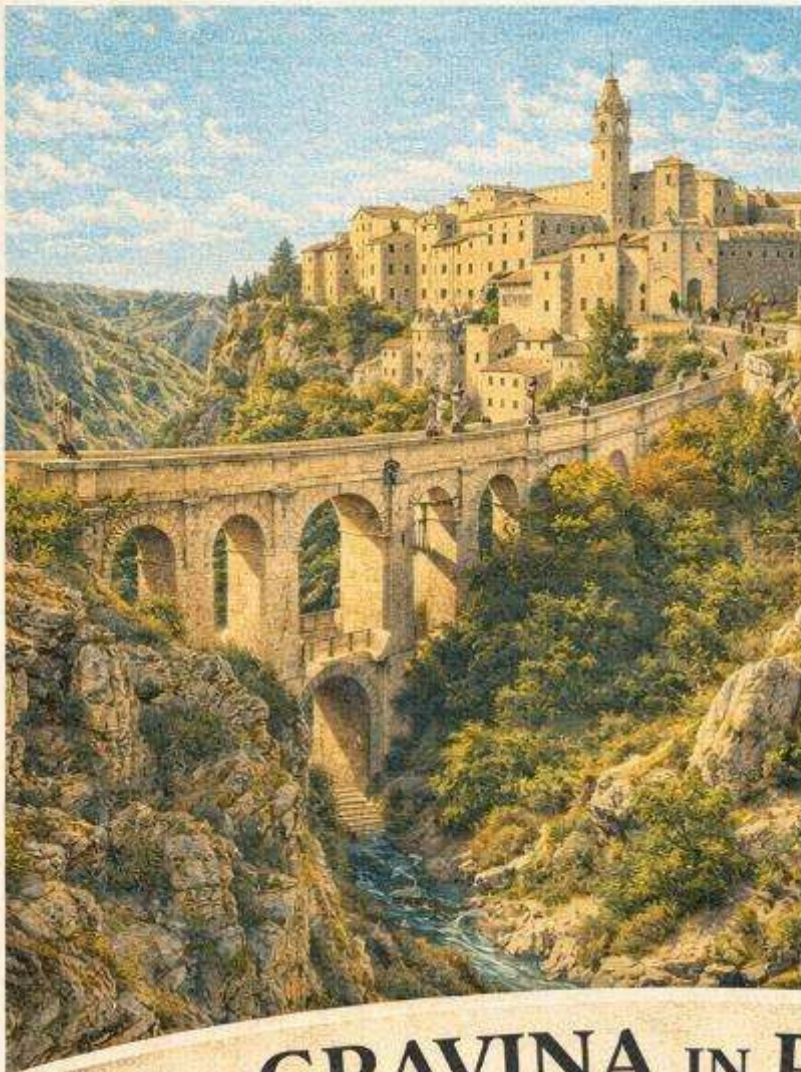
- Port & Seafront - The old harbor with colorful fishing boats (*gozzi*) and seafront walls.
- Monopoli Centro Storico - Explore medieval alleys, whitewashed houses, and small piazzas.
- Don't miss *Cattedrale di Maria Santissima della Madia* with its Baroque interior.
- Walk the *lungomare* perhaps visit *Castello Carlo V* (if open).

4:00 - Drive back to Bari (about 1 hr with stops)

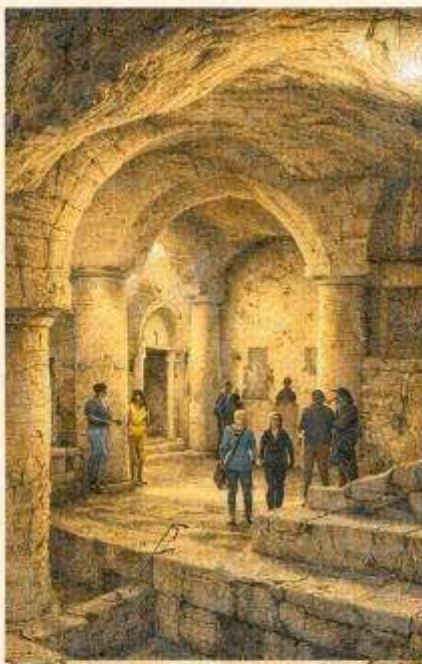
Potential sites along the way:

- *Porto Ghiacciolo* (south of Monopoli, 3 km) - Small beach overlooked by *Abbazia di Santo Stefano*, a fortress-like abbey. Great for moody photos with the waves.
- Conversano (optional) - Hilltown with a Norman castle, Romanesque cathedral, and quiet stone streets.

5:30 – Arrive back in Bari



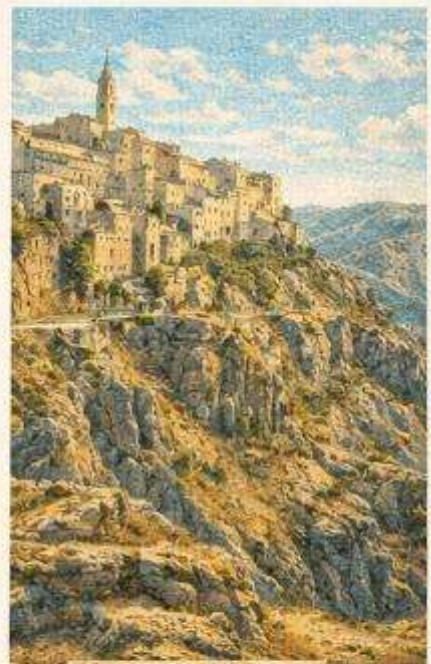
**GRAVINA IN PUGLIA  
& MATERA**



**Palombaro Lungo**  
-Cistern



**Casa Grotta**  
Furnished Cave



**Belvedere**  
della Murgia Timone

# Sunday, February 8, 2026

*Road Trip: Matera!*

Lodging:  
Apartment in Bari –  
Benedetto Cairoli

08:30 – Depart Bari - Head inland toward the Murge plateau.

09:15 – Arrive Gravina in Puglia - Small but atmospheric cliffside town.

- Walk across the Roman bridge into the historic quarter.
- Peek into rupestrian churches carved into the rock—like Matera, but less known.

10:30 – Continue to Matera (30 min drive)

11:00 – Arrive Matera

- *Piazza Vittorio Veneto* - Start here for your first panoramic view into the *Sasso Barisano*.
- Peek into *Palombaro Lungo*, a massive underground cistern beneath the square.
- *Sasso Barisano* (Northern Quarter) - the “livelier” Sassi district, with many restored caves.
- Visit a *Casa Grotta* (furnished cave dwelling, shows how people lived until the 1950s).
- Walk along *Via Fiorentini*, lined with rock-hewn houses and workshops.
- *Duomo di Matera* - The Romanesque cathedral has a beautiful rose window and frescoes.
- Climb to the *Civita* hilltop for sweeping views over both Sassi.

1:00 – Lunch Break

Suggested: *Osteria al Casale* or *Trattoria Lucana*. Typical dishes: *Pane di Matera* (UNESCO-protected bread), *Cavatelli con ragù di carne* (winter pasta), *Peperoni cruschi* (crispy dried peppers).

2:00 – Sasso Caveoso (Southern Quarter) - Quieter, more atmospheric than Barisano.

- Visit *Santa Maria de Idris* (church carved into a rock spur, with frescoes).
- Wander down into the winding alleys, passing semi-ruined cave houses.
- Return Stroll via *Sasso Caveoso* → *Piazza San Pietro Caveoso*
- *San Pietro Caveoso*, a baroque church perched above the ravine with nearby viewpoints.
- Optional: visit *Santa Maria de Idris* (church in the rock).
- Try *tette delle monache* (a local pastry, literally “nun’s breasts”).

3:30 – Belvedere della Murgia Timone (Optional Short Drive, 10 min)

Cross to the opposite canyon rim for the most iconic view of Matera. If short on time, you can skip and just linger inside the Sassi.

4:00 – Drive back to Bari via Altamura - Drive 30 min west to Altamura, famous for its bread.

- See the Altamura Cathedral, built by Frederick II.
- Grab a slice of focaccia barese or a loaf of warm pane di Altamura to take back.

5:00 – 5:45 - Return to Bari



Ladies Making Pasta

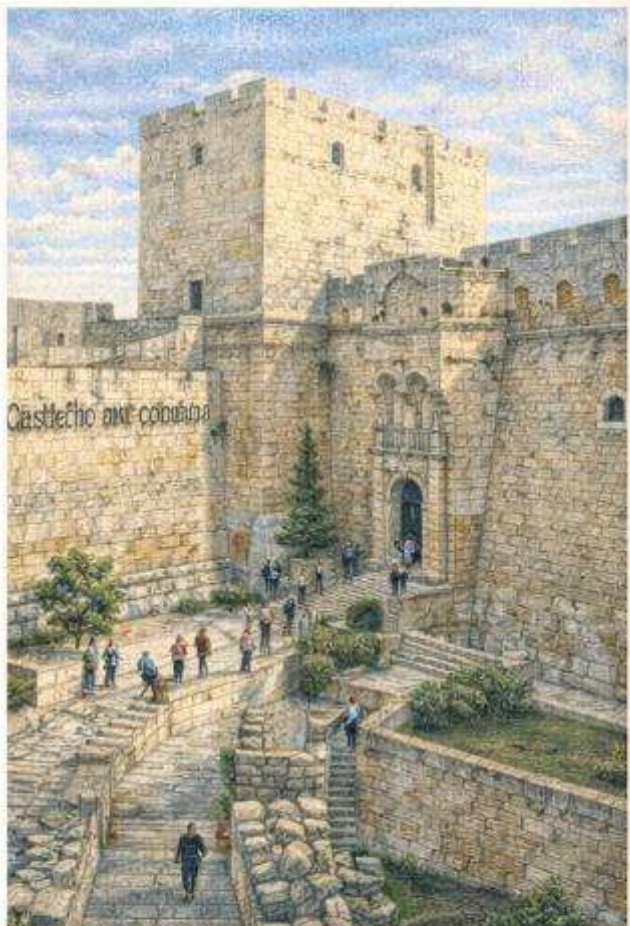


Unloomint a Conviciano

## BARI, ITALY



Harbor & Old Town



Castello Normanno-Svevo

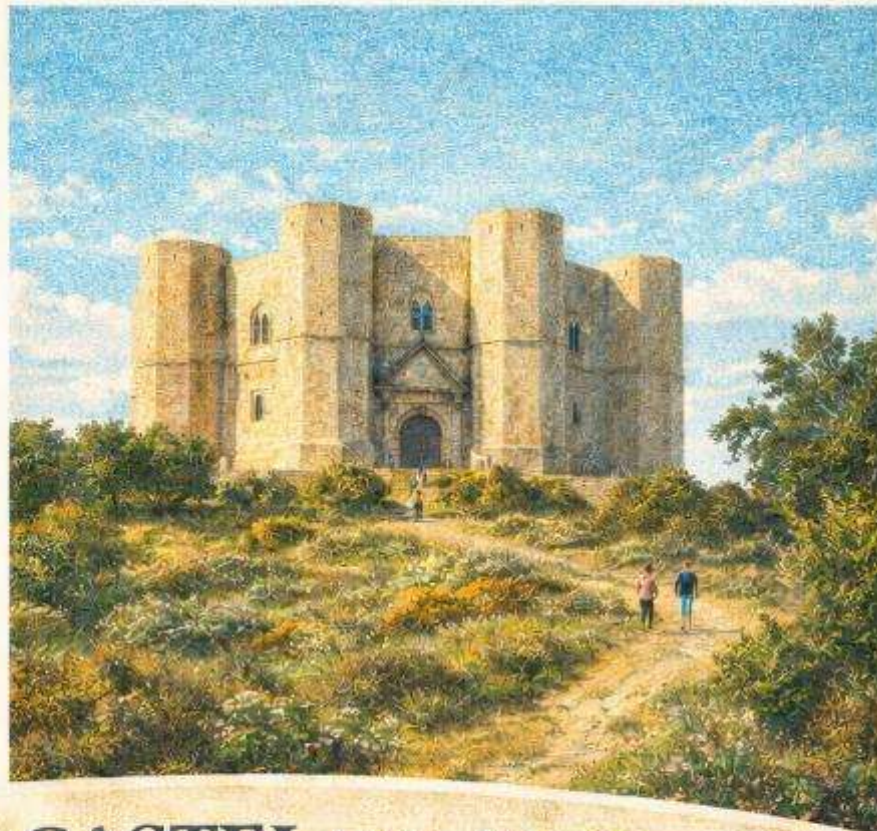
# Monday, February 9, 2026

*TBD*

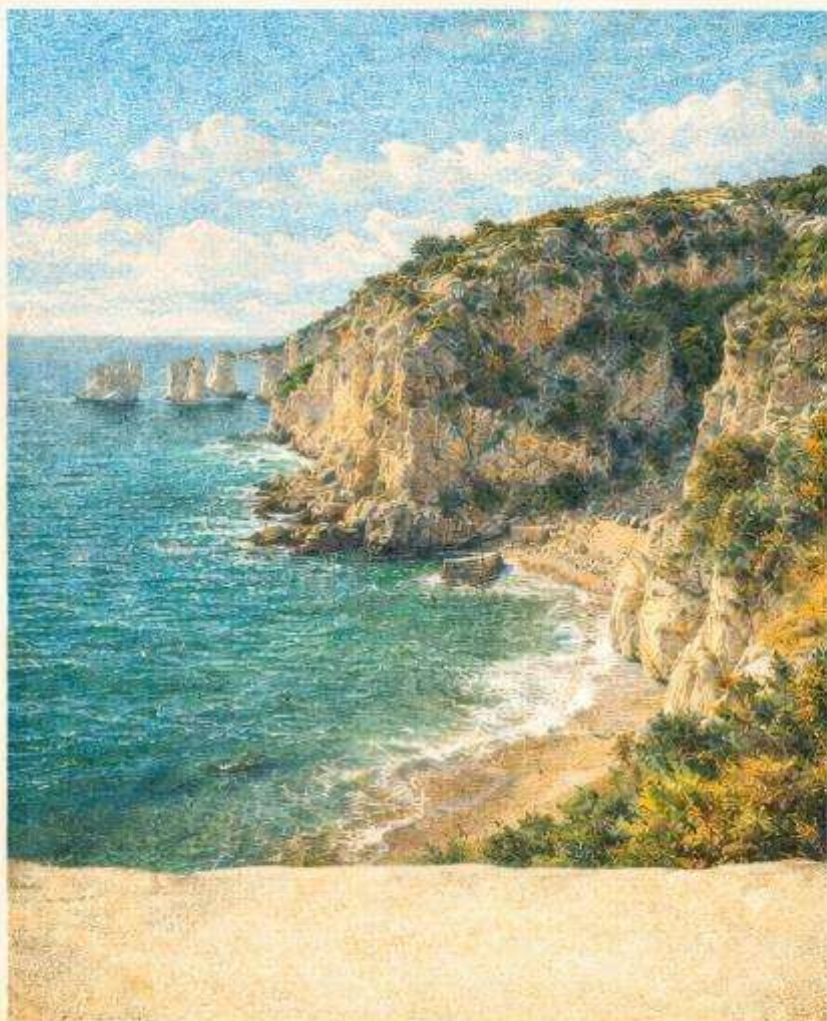
Lodging:

Apartment in Bari –  
Benedetto Cairoli

This is a free day in Bari. Many things are closed on Monday. Suggest renting a bicycle and biking to Monopoli riding along the coast. Or out towards Matera or Castel del Monte.



**TRANI, CASTEL DEL MONTE  
& THE COAST**



**Coastal Drive  
to Baia delle Zagare**

# Tuesday, February 10, 2026

## *Scenic Drive to Vieste!*

Lodging:  
Vieste Condominium  
Via Barbacane, 47

08:30 – Depart Bari towards Trani (1 hour, 58 km)

09:45 – Trani (1-hour stop)

Visit the Trani Cathedral (*Cattedrale di San Nicola Pellegrino*), dramatically perched by the sea. Stroll the harbor, lined with pastel palazzi.

10:45 – Depart Trani for Castel del Monte (near Andria) (40 min, 32 km)

11:30 – Castel del Monte (1 hr, 15 min stop)

The famous octagonal castle of Frederick II (UNESCO World Heritage). In February, you may have it almost to yourself.

12:45 – Depart Castel del Monte for Manfredonia (1 hr 30 min, 91 km)

2:15 – Manfredonia (1 hr, 15 min stop)

Back on the coast, gateway to the Gargano peninsula. Walk the seafront and see the Swabian-Angevin Castle. Have lunch.

3:30 – Scenic Drive from Manfredonia to Mattinata (30 min, 18 km)

Take the SP53 coastal road north toward Mattinata. This stretch is stunning: cliffs, olive groves, and sea panoramas. Pause at *Belvedere di Monte Saraceno* (short stop, breathtaking views).

4:00 – Mattinata & Monte Saraceno (45 min stop)

Explore this whitewashed town nestled between the mountains and sea. Optional: short walk up Monte Saraceno for views over the Adriatic and ancient Daunian necropolis.

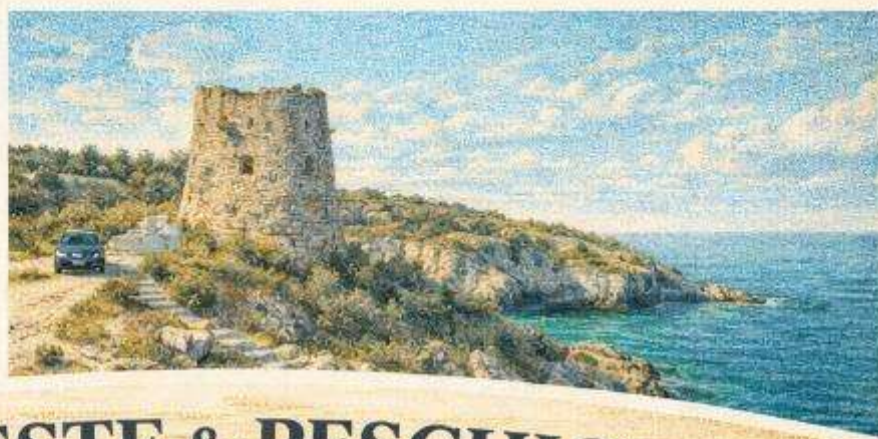
4:45 – Scenic Drive from Mattinata to Vieste (1 hr, 39 km)

Continue on the coastal road (SP53 → SP52bis) from Mattinata to Vieste - one of Italy's most dramatic: sea caves, limestone cliffs, and hidden coves. Stop at *Baia delle Zagare* (famous white cliffs & sea stacks) for photos. Continue toward Vieste, passing pine forests and panoramic bends.

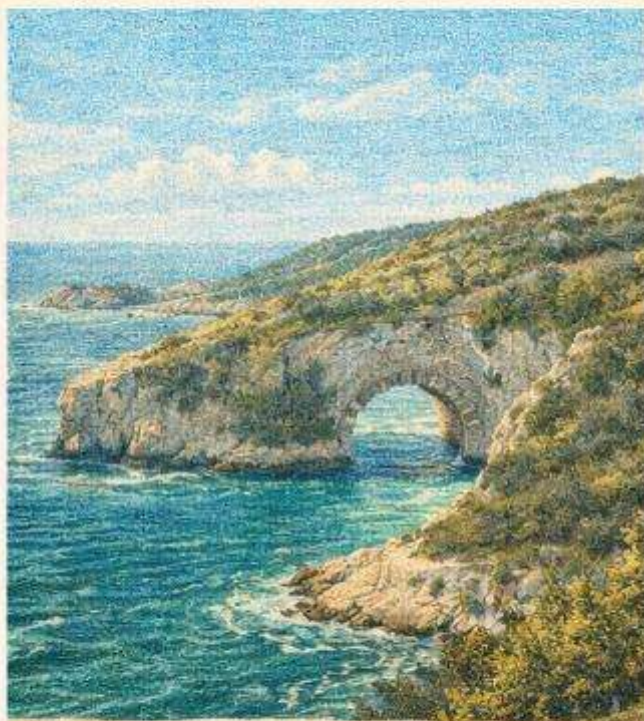
5:45 – Arrival in Vieste

Check into the Condominium.

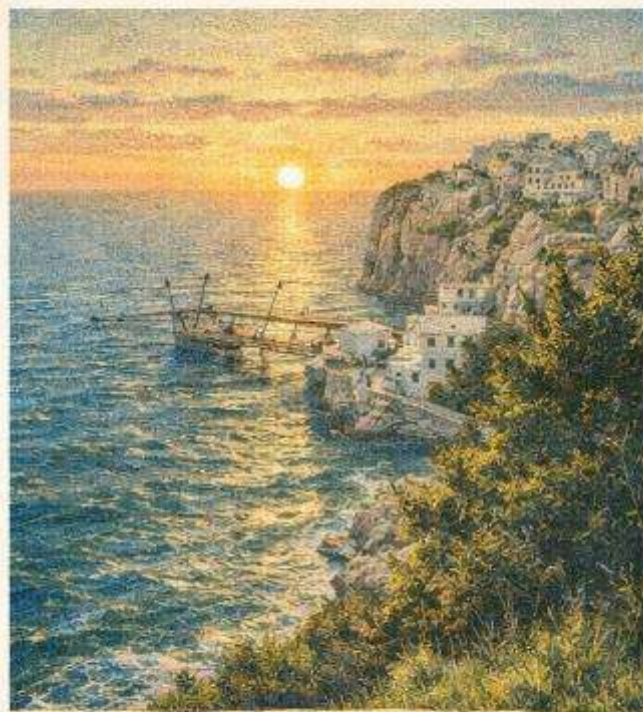
Evening stroll in the old town and dinner with Gargano pasta dishes.



## VIESTE & PESCHICI



Watchtower Overlook



Peschici & Trabucco Sunset

# Wednesday, February 11, 2026

*Vieste and Peschici*

Lodging:  
Vieste Condominium  
Via Barbacane, 47

## Morning – Vieste Old Town

Breakfast in *Piazza del Seggio* (coffee + cornetto), then wander the *Centro Storico*:

- Vieste Cathedral (*Santa Maria Assunta*).
- Narrow, whitewashed lanes with sea views.
- Pizzomunno monolith on the beach.
- *Castello Svevo* (exterior only, military zone).

## Lunch

1:45 - Scenic Drive to Peschici (30–40 min).

Along the way:

- Stop at a coastal watchtower (e.g. *Torre di San Felice* or *Torre Porticello*) for sweeping sea views.
- Enjoy viewpoints over olive groves and cliffs.

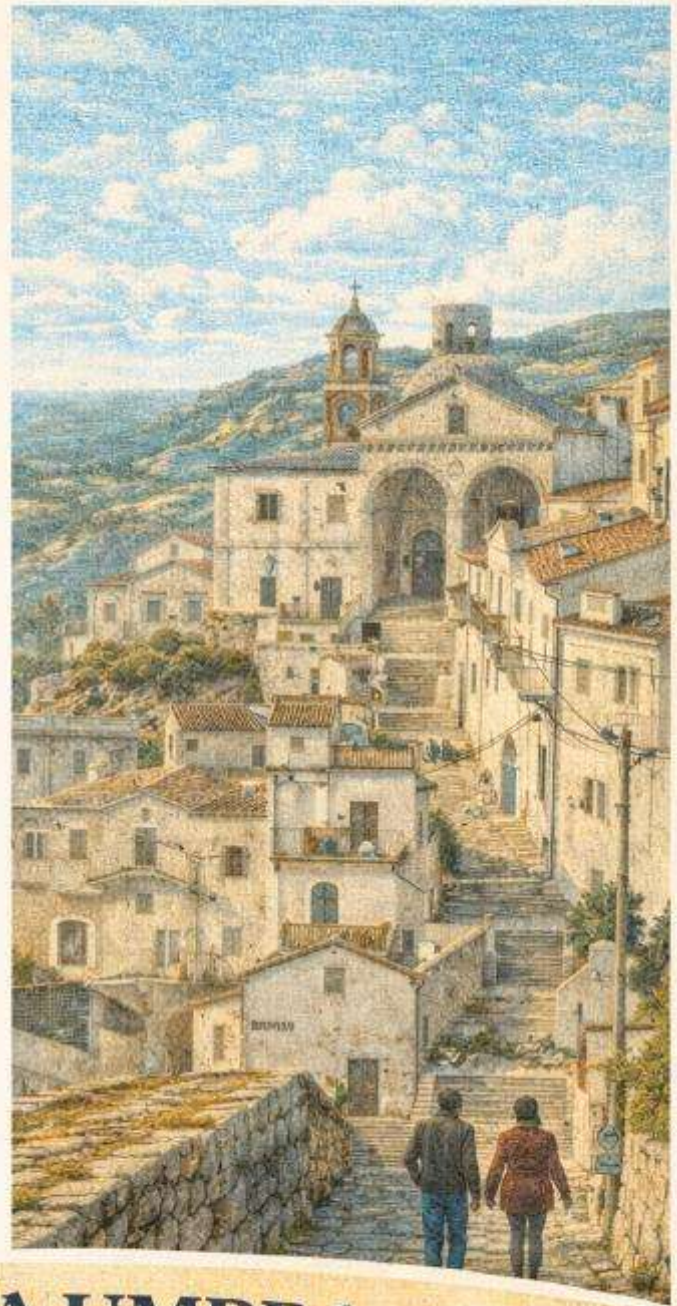
2:30 - Peschici

Explore its medieval borgo:

- Wander cobbled alleys with whitewashed houses.
- Visit Peschici Castle (exterior; clifftop views).
- Sunset from *Belvedere del Trabucco*, with views of the Adriatic and old fishing machines (*trabucchi*).

5:30 Return to Vieste (~40 min).

Dinner: try local *paposcia*, a stuffed flatbread specialty.



**FORESTA UMBRA  
& MONTE SANT'ANGELO**



**Biking in Foresta Umbra**



**Monte Sant'Angelo**

# Thursday, February 12, 2026

*Vieste and Gargano National Park*

Lodging:  
Vieste Condominium  
Via Barbacane, 47

## Morning – Biking in Foresta Umbra

- Drive (~40 min) to Mooveng, in Mattinata (~1 hr) to rent an E-bike for a self-guided bike tour.
- Half-day biking (3 hrs) into the Foresta Umbra
- Quiet, mystical atmosphere in February; watch for deer and ancient beech trees.

## Lunch

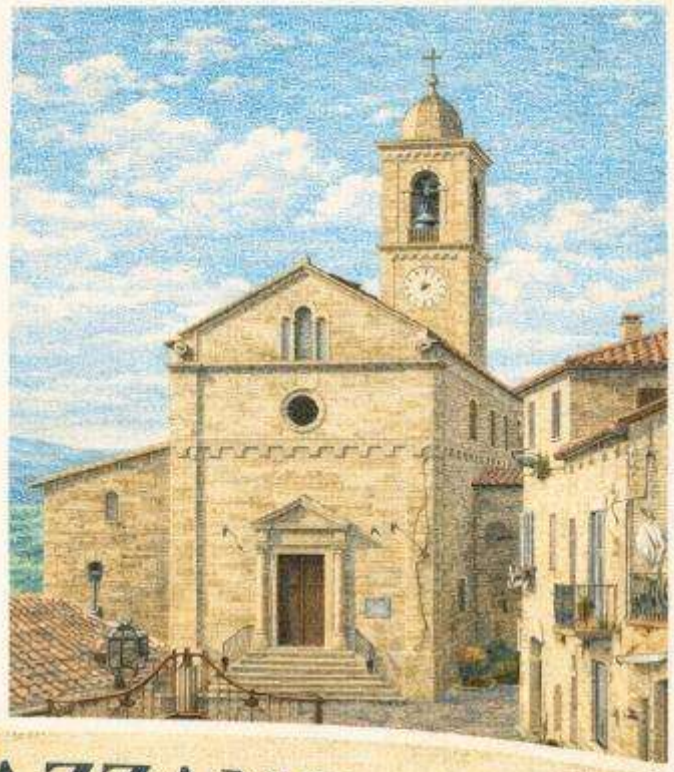
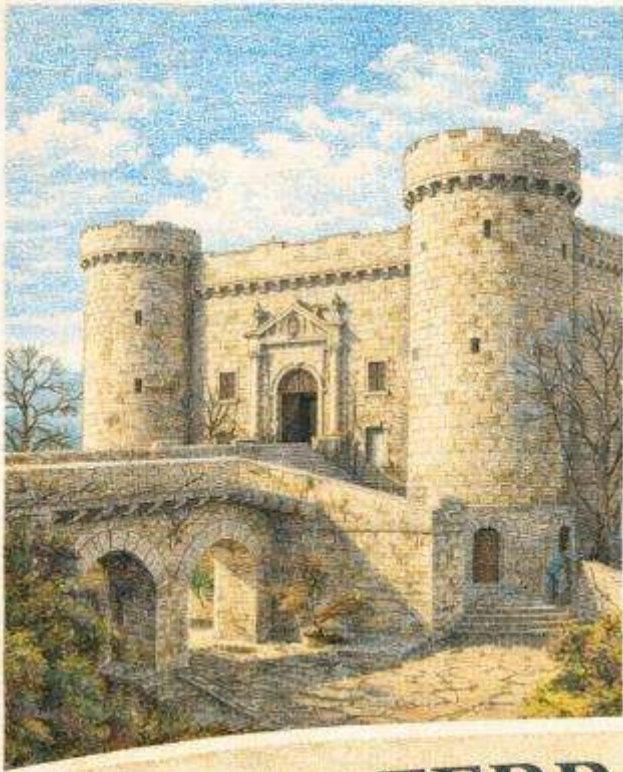
Picnic in the forest OR stop at a rustic *agriturismo* afterward for Gargano specialties (*caciocavallo* cheese, *orecchiette*, wild boar stew).

## Afternoon – Monte Sant'Angelo

Return bike and drive, or bike to Monte Sant'Angelo. Explore:

- Sanctuary of Monte Sant'Angelo (UNESCO, built into a cave).
- Old quarter with whitewashed houses and panoramic views.
- Short stroll for gelato or local sweets (ostie ripiene, almond-filled wafers).

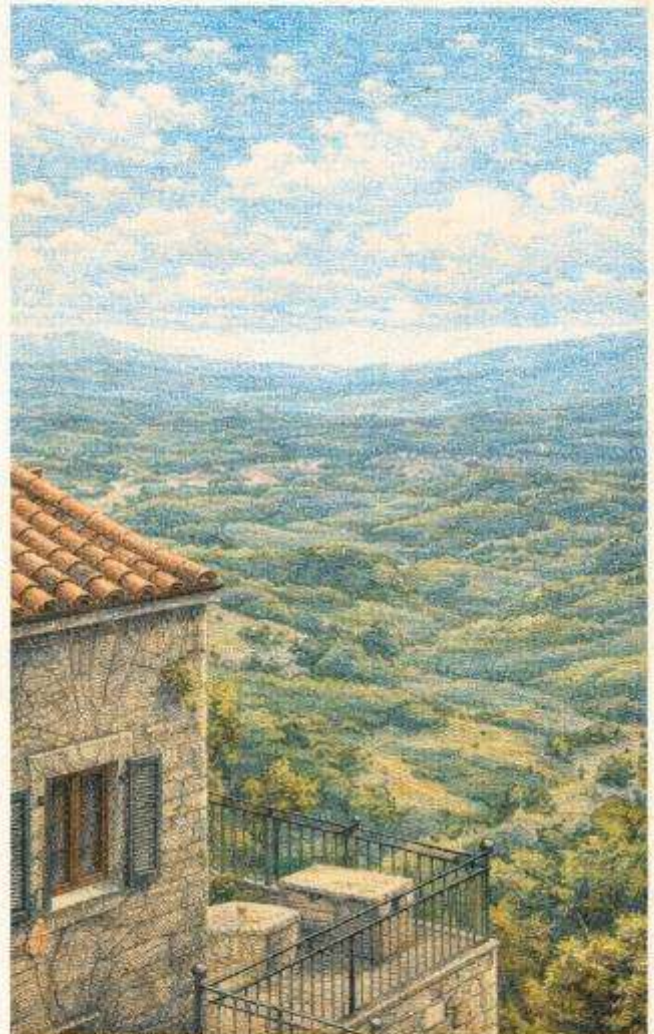
Return to Vieste (~1 hr).



# FERRAZZANO



Castello Carafa



Terrace Views

# Friday, February 13, 2026

*Drive to Campobasso, Ferrazzano*

Lodging:  
Castle in Ferrazzano-  
Piazza Spensieri

## Morning

Check out of the Vieste condominium by 9:00 AM and drive to Ferrazzano arriving around noon.

## Afternoon

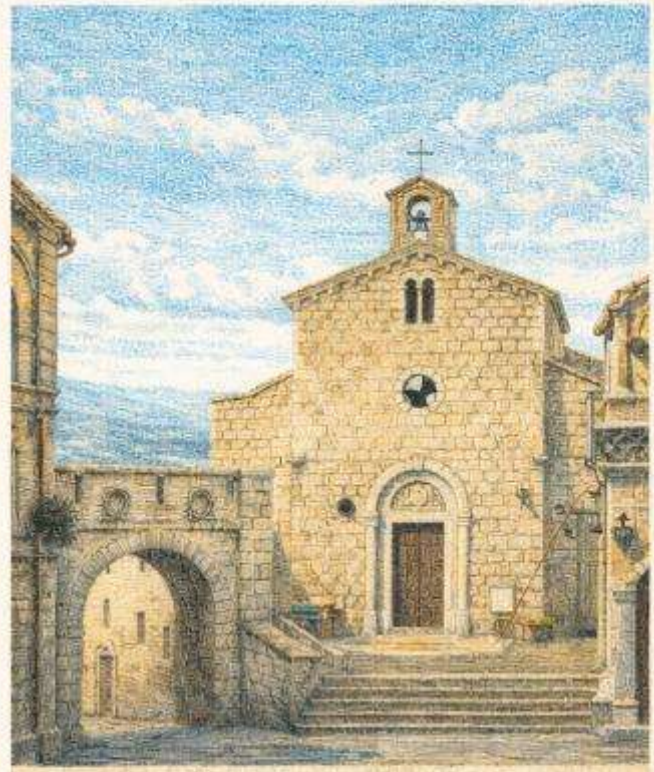
Check in to the castle lodging when available. Explore Ferrazzano. Ferrazzano sites include:

- *Castello Carafa* (Castle of Girolamo Carafa) - A 16th-century castle, built or rebuilt by the Carafa feudal family. It features two round/turreted towers, a stone bridge entrance, arch with coat of arms, a central courtyard with a well. This is also where I will be staying.
- Parish Church of *Santa Maria Assunta (Chiesa dell'Assunta)*. Dating back to at least the 13th century (with earlier Romanesque elements). Features include a Roman-column baptismal font, a pulpit supported by three-lobed arches and marble inlaid capitals.
- Other Churches: Santa Croce and Sant'Onofrio. These are smaller historic religious sites. Sant'Onofrio, for instance, is a modest church with character.
- Belvedere (Terrace Views). Ferrazzano is on a hill (~900 m above sea level) and offers panoramic views over the countryside: you can see from the Matese mountains to the Mainarde and even the Maiella, depending on weather. The *Belvedere di Ferrazzano* (lookout terraces) and *Piazza Spensieri* are notable spots.
- Historic Walls / Megalithic Remains & Torrione. There are remains of old defensive structures: megalithic walls on the north side and the "Torrione" (tower area) that hint at the town's medieval and even earlier importance.
- *Teatro del Loto*- A cultural venue where local shows and community events take place. Good option if something is on when you're in town.
- The Old Village Streets. Wandering the narrow, winding alleys, traditional stone houses, clay tile roofs, and the small piazza (with a fountain) offers a feel of old-world Molise.
- Antiquarium (Archaeological Display). There is a small antiquarium in the town (in or near the historic center) housing local finds and sculptures.

At this point, you can go into Campobasso for dinner, or stay in Ferrazzano, or just explore the castello!

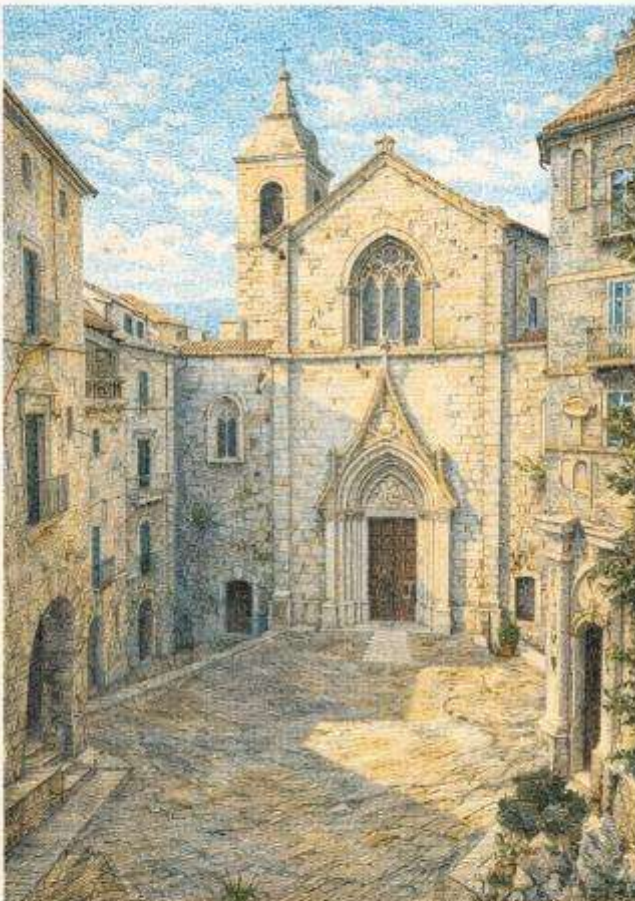


Castello Monforte

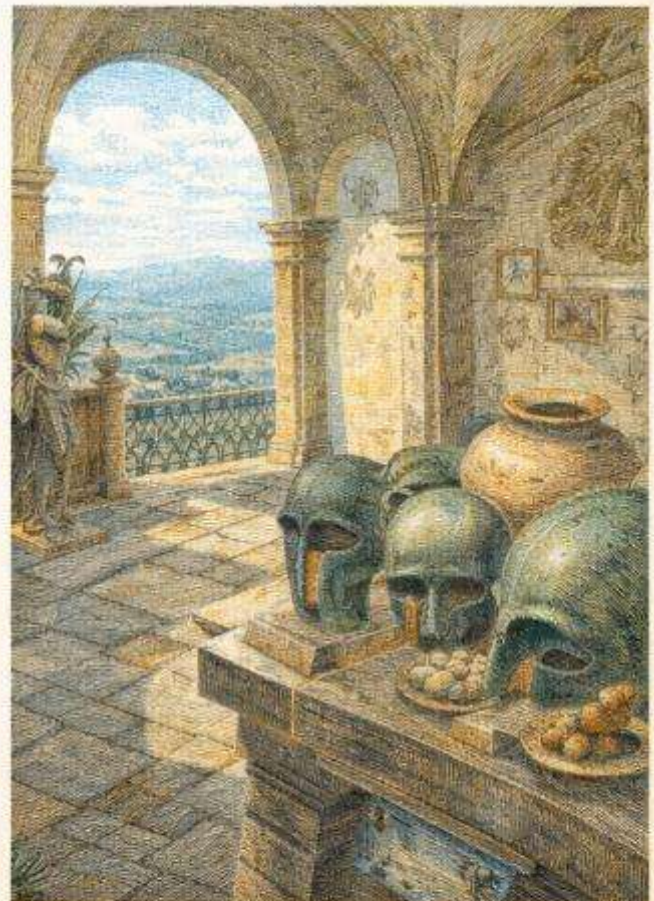


San Giorgio

## CAMPOBASSO



San Leonardo



Museo Sannitico

# Saturday, February 14, 2026

*Campobasso and a drive to Cisternino*

Lodging:

Trullo in Cisternino -  
Via Tanzarella, 1

## Morning

Check out of the castle lodging by 9:00 AM and drive to Campobasso. Begin the walking tour at *the Piazza Prefettura* (City Center). Set in the modern heart of Campobasso, this square is lively during the day — the prefecture building on one side, cafés on the other. Grab a quick espresso at *Caffè Lupacchioli* before heading uphill.

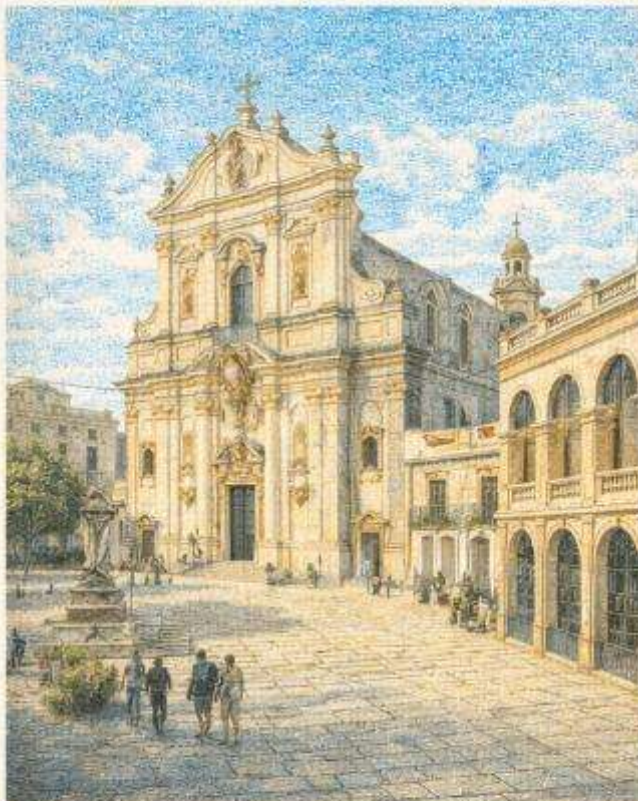
- Castello Monforte (20 min uphill walk, ~45 min visit) - From *Piazza Prefettura*, follow *Corso Vittorio Emanuele II* uphill until you see signs for *Castello Monforte*. When you reach the top; you'll be rewarded with panoramic views of Molise's snow-dusted mountains. Inside the castle, step into the small Chapel of St. George; outside look down at the tiled roofs of the old town.
- Chiesa di San Giorgio & Medieval Quarter (5 min walk) - Descend gently toward the *Chiesa di San Giorgio*, the oldest church in Campobasso (11th century). Its Romanesque stone walls feel even older in the winter stillness. Wander the surrounding lanes - *Via Orefici* is especially atmospheric, lined with small houses and arches.
- San Leonardo & Via Ferrari (10 min walk, ~20 min visit) - Follow the narrow medieval streets downhill toward San Leonardo, a Gothic church with a striking pointed portal. This stretch of the old town feels like a time capsule.
- Museo Sannitico (5 min walk, ~45 min visit) - Head down to *Via Chiarizia 12*, where the *Museo Sannitico* awaits in an elegant palazzo. Warm up indoors while exploring Molise's Samnite past — from weapons and jewelry to everyday objects of an ancient tribe that resisted Rome. The museum is compact but fascinating, perfect for a winter stop. Exit the museum and walk back toward the main streets. Stop at *Pasticceria Jolly* or *Dolce Vita* for a warming cappuccino and a sweet treat, like *Mostacciolo* (spiced chocolate pastry) or *Ostie farcite* (almond-honey wafers)
- Lunch in the Old Town (5–10 min walk, ~1.5 hr) - Head toward *Ristorante Monticelli Sapere e Sapori*, tucked into the medieval quarter. Cozy up with: *Cavatelli al ragù* (local pasta specialty) and *Pampanella* (spicy pork, a Molisan classic).

## Afternoon

Drive to Cisternino, departing Campobasso around 1:00 PM.

- Stop 1: Lucera (arrive 2:30 PM, 45-minute stop) — See the *Castello Svevo* (Drive up or walk briefly to admire Frederick II's Swabian fortress and panoramic views of the town.) and the *Piazza Duomo & Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta* (Quick exterior visit; step inside if time allows.) There is also a Roman amphitheater.

Arrive in Cisternino around 6:00 PM. Check-in, and relax in a trullo!

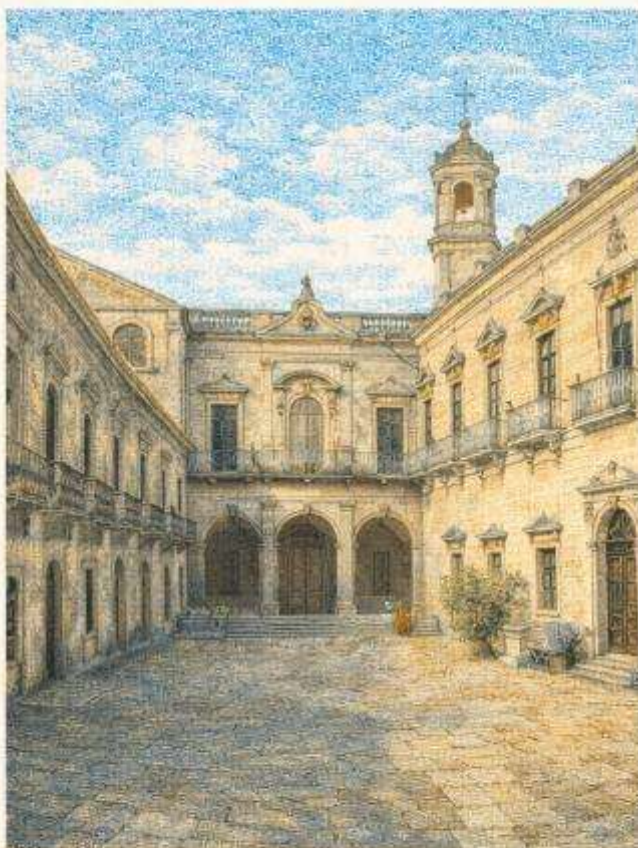


Centro Storico

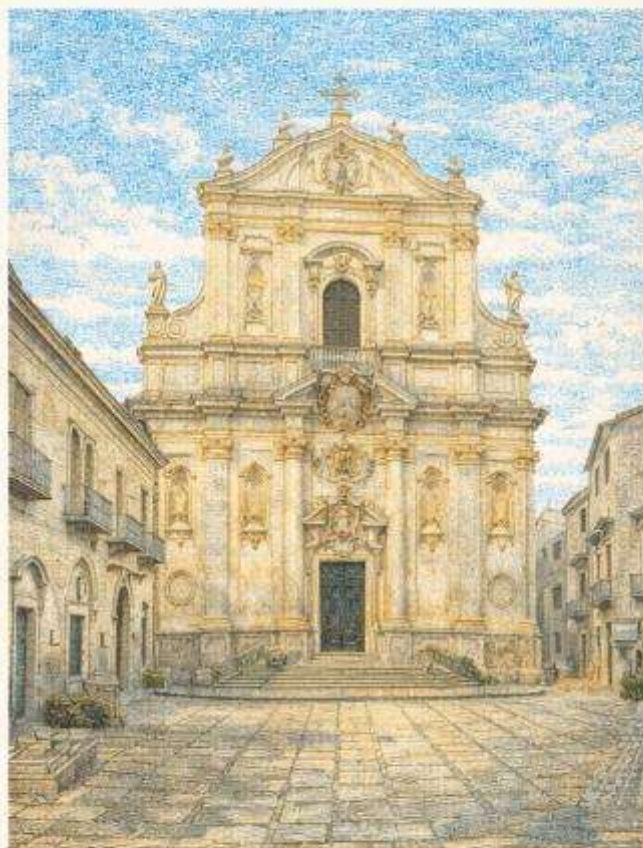


Lunch & Balconies

# MARTINA FRANCA



Palazzo Ducale



Basilica di San Martino

# Sunday, February 15, 2026

*Cisternino and Martina Franca*

Lodging:  
Trullo in Cisternino -  
Via Tanzarella, 1

## Morning

At 9:00 AM, explore the town where you are staying: Cisternino. Visit:

- *Centro Storico* – Beautiful alleys, arches, and whitewashed buildings
- *Piazza Vittorio Emanuele* – Clock tower & main square
- Church of San Nicola
- *Porta Grande* – Medieval entrance gate

At 11:30 – Drive to Martina Franca (about 20 minutes away). Arrival & park at *Parcheggio Piazza Plebiscito* – central and close to the main streets, to explore Martina Franca on foot. Alternatively, there is a e-bike shop in town and Martina Franca is a 40-minute bike ride.

## Afternoon

Noon - Stroll the *Centro Storico*. Start at *Piazza Plebiscito*, the elegant main square, and take in Baroque palaces. Walk along *Corso Vittorio Emanuele II*:

- Admire ornate Balconies and Baroque façades.
- Pop into artisan shops for ceramics, textiles, and local crafts.
- Explore smaller alleys like *Via Sant'Antonio* or *Via Roma* to see intimate piazzas, fountains, and residential trulli-style features.
- Stop occasionally for photos or window shopping.

## 1:00 Light Lunch

*Osteria del Borgo Antico* – small portions of local specialties like capocollo di Martina Franca, orecchiette pasta, or *bombette* (grilled meat rolls). Alternatively, a casual panino or focaccia at a bakery like *Panificio Strazzera*.

## 2:30 Key Architectural Visits

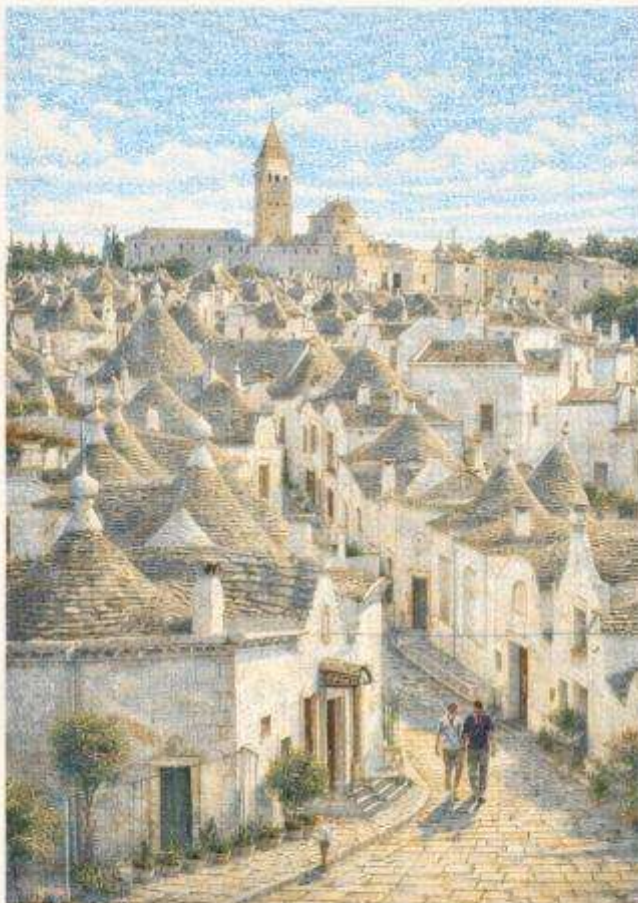
- *Palazzo Ducale* – the ducal palace is Martina Franca's architectural jewel. Marvel at its Baroque façades, columns, and inner courtyards.
- *Basilica di San Martino* – visit the interior to see altarpieces, frescoes, and ornate Baroque decoration.
- Optional (if open): *Chiesa di San Domenico* or *Chiesa di Sant'Antonio*, smaller Baroque churches with intricate details.

## 4:00 Explore Hidden Corners & Piazzas

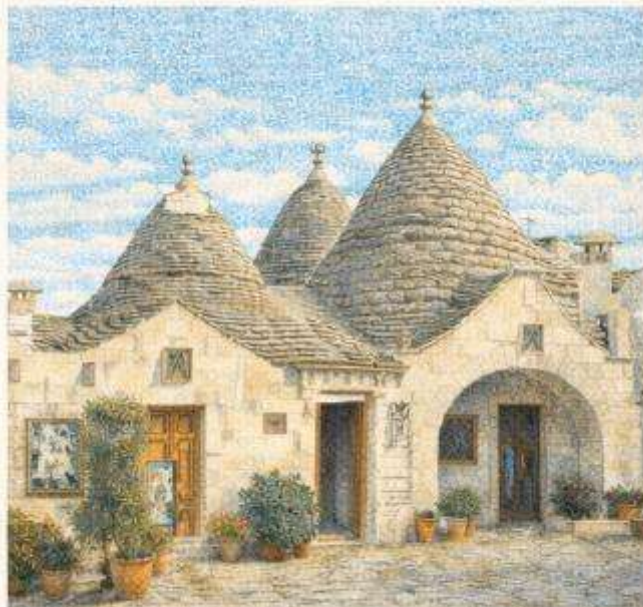
- Wander alleys and smaller squares like *Piazza XX Settembre* or *Piazza Maria Immacolata*.
- Admire residential Baroque architecture, flowered balconies, and local life.
- Stop for quick photo opportunities or browse a few artisanal boutiques.

## Evening

5:00 Drive (or bike) back to Cisternino for sunset over the *Valle D'Itria*. Dinner suggestions in Cisternino include *Osteria Porta Grande* (*bombette* and local pasta dishes) or *Masseria Il Frantoio* (countryside ambience with seasonal local cuisine).



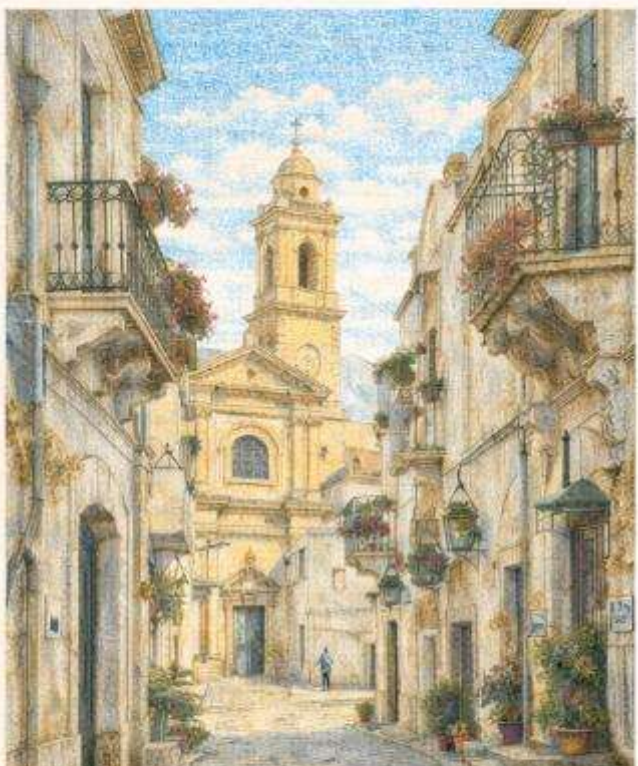
Alberobello Trulli



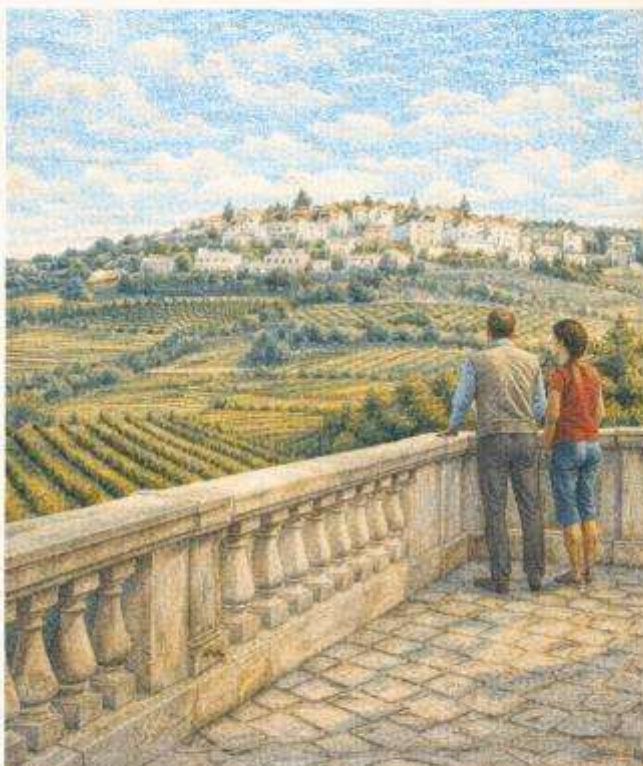
Trullo Sovrano



## ALBEROBELLO & LOCOROTONDO



Centro Storico



Vineyards & Belvedere

# Monday, February 16, 2026

*Alberobello and Locorotondo*

Lodging:  
Trullo in Cisternino -  
Via Tanzarella, 1

## Morning

Depart at 8:30, and drive to Alberobello, drive is approximately 30 minutes from Cisternino. Alternatively, it is an hour bike ride away.

9:00 AM, arrive at Alberobello and explore the town on foot. Visit:

- *Rione Monti* – Famous hill of trulli houses (UNESCO)
- *Rione Aia Piccola* – Quieter, residential trulli zone
- *Trullo Sovrano* – Only two-story trullo; now a museum
- *Church of Sant'Antonio* – Unique trullo-shaped church
- *Belvedere Santa Lucia* – Best panoramic view of the

Coffee break - Martinucci Laboratory – Great for a pastry and cappuccino with views

## Afternoon

Lunch in Alberobello (1:00–2:30). Recommended Restaurants: La Cantina (Cozy, rustic Apulian cuisine) or Trattoria Terra Madre (Farm-to-table in a charming garden setting).

2:30 PM, Drive to Locorotondo. (15 minutes away by car, 30 min by bike). Park and explore Locorotondo on foot. Visit:

- Centro Storico – Circular old town, whitewashed buildings
- Chiesa Madre San Giorgio
- Villa Comunale Belvedere – Views over Valle d'Itria
- Wander the alleys – Admire wrought iron balconies & flowers
- Optional Wine Tasting: - Cantina Sociale Locorotondo – Try Locorotondo DOC white wine

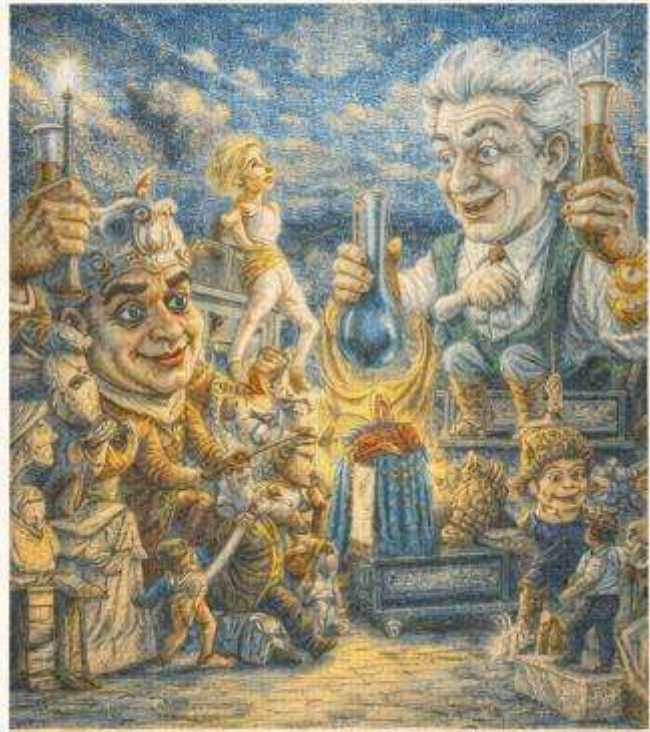
## Evening

Either drive back to Cisternino (15 min by car, 30 by bike) or stay in Locorotondo for dinner. Top dinner picks in Locorotondo include:

U' Curdunn (Great views and traditional food) or Casa Pinto (Refined, intimate Apulian cuisine).



Centro Storico



Float Workshops

# CARNEVALE PUTIGNANESE



Street Artists



The Grand Parade

# Tuesday, February 17, 2026

## *Carnevale in Putignano*

Lodging:  
Trullo in Cisternino -  
Via Tanzarella, 1

### Morning

9:30 AM, Depart for Putignano. Arrive in Putignano. Park outside the center (streets close later for the parade). Consider the lot near Piazza Enrico Berlinguer/Mercato Boario.

10:00 AM. Exploring Putignano:

- Stroll the historic centre:
- Piazza Plebiscito, San Pietro Apostolo church.
- Small artisan shops for masks, souvenirs, handmade crafts.
- Visit the Capannoni del Carnevale (float workshops) to see papier-mâché masterpieces before they roll into the parade.

### Afternoon

- Lunch at a local trattoria.
- Museo Civico Principe Guglielmo Romanazzi Carducci (local history & art) or continue exploring side alleys, churches, and bakeries.

4:00–5:30 PM, Pre-Parade Build-Up. The atmosphere warms up. Street artists, drummers, small parades of costumed groups. Wander food stalls — maybe grab sgaliozze (fried polenta squares) or sweet cartellate.

5:30 PM → Secure a spot along Corso Umberto I or the parade route. If you prefer, consider a grandstand seat (often ticketed; check when sales open).

### Evening

6:30 PM, The Grand Parade (Fourth Masked Floats Parade) - Enormous allegorical floats with lights. Masked groups, satirical characters, Farinella (the local jester), music & dance. Parade lasts ~1.5 hrs.

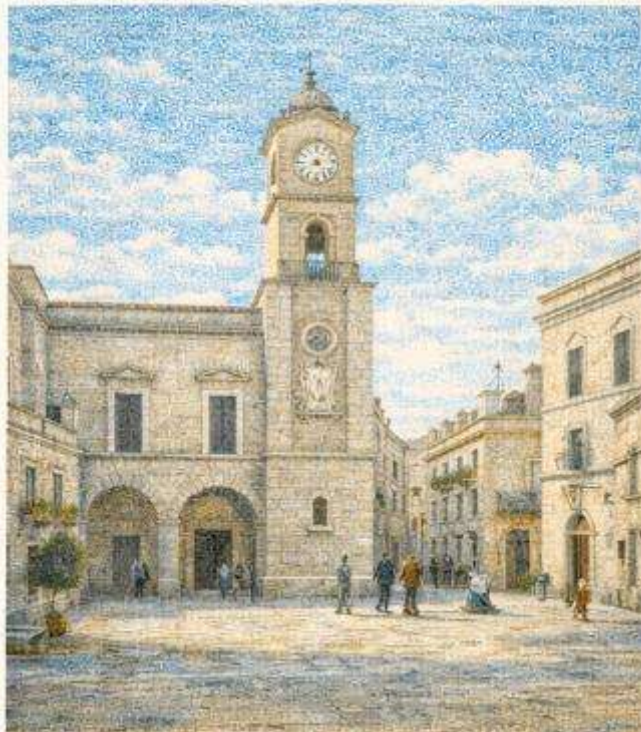
8:15–9:00 PM, The Closing Ritual. The tolling of the Campana dei Maccheroni bell, symbolizing the end of Carnevale. Symbolic “funeral of Carnival” — playful, theatrical ending.

9:00–10:30 PM, Street party continues: Food stalls, concerts, dancing, plenty of late-night atmosphere. If hungry, grab dinner from street vendors (panzerotti, panini, or pasta stalls).

10:00 PM, 9:30 Head back to Cisternino. Arrive home around 10:30.



Centro Storico

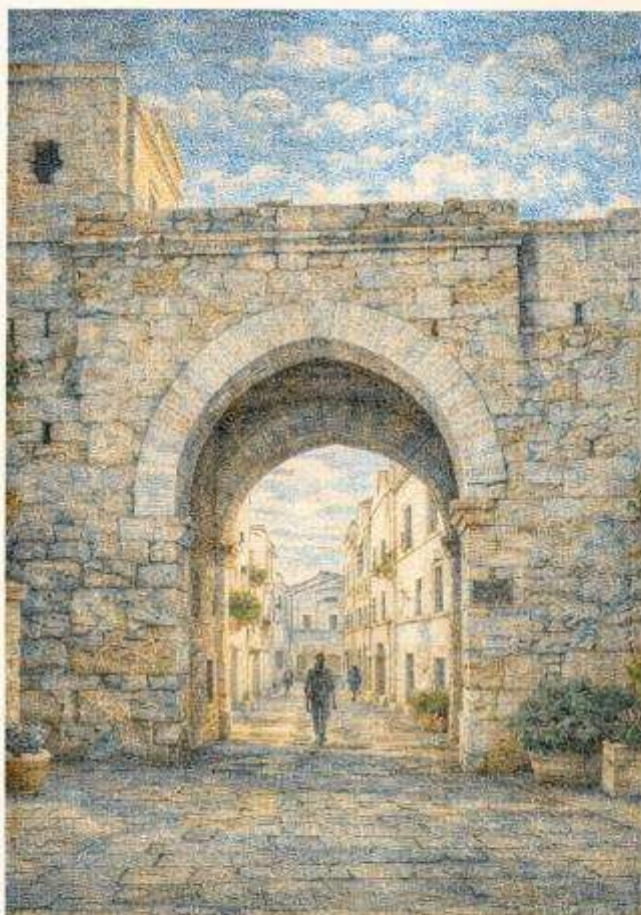


Piazza Vittorio Emanuele

# CISTERNINO



Church of San Nicola



Porta Grande

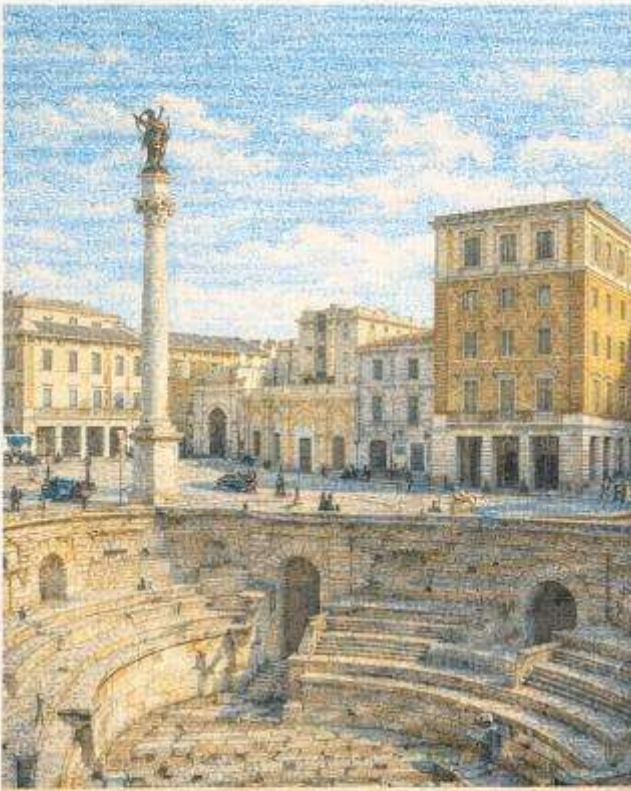
# Wednesday, February 18, 2026

*Free day in the Valle D'Itria*

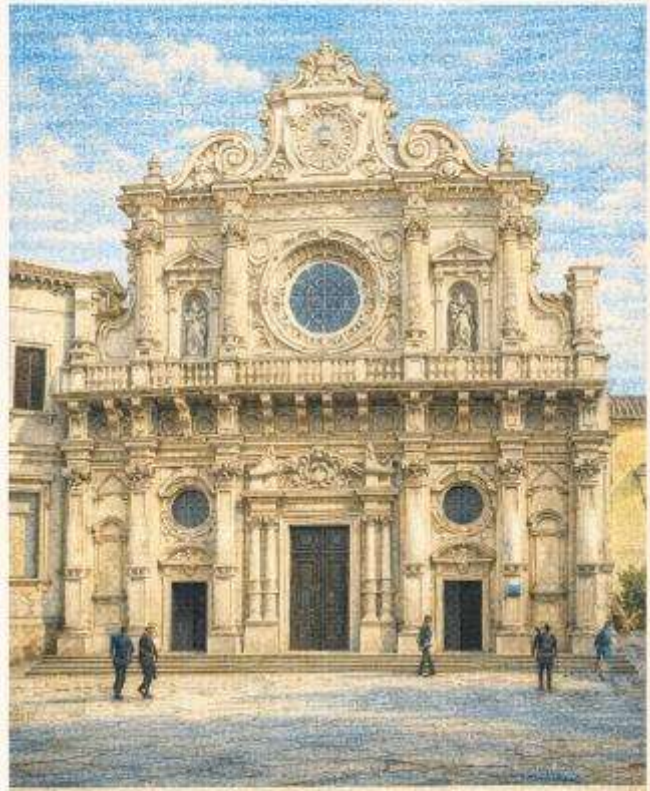
Lodging:

Trullo in Cisternino -  
Via Tanzarella, 1

Free day to rest, re-tool itinerary, or see new destinations. If past destinations in the Valle D'Itria were reached by car, consider renting a bike and exploring.

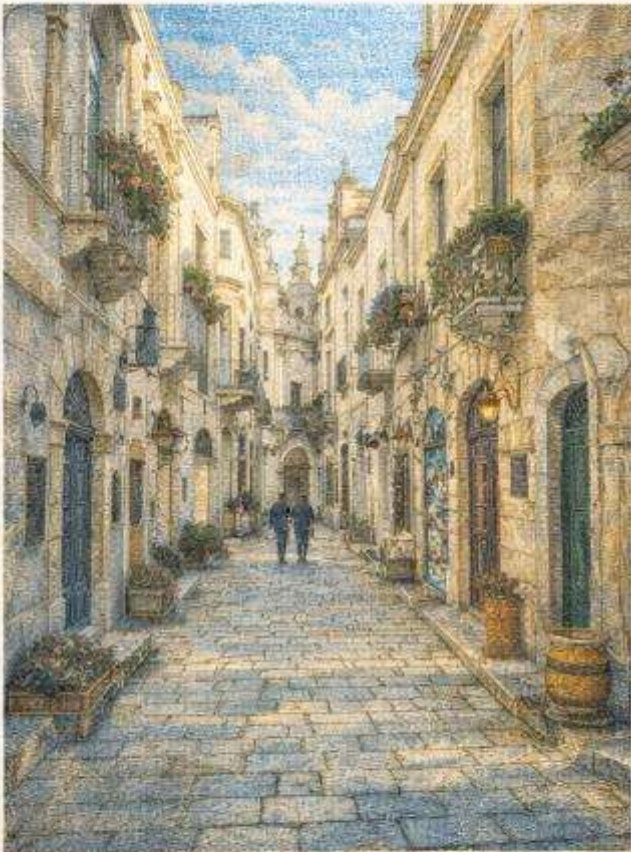


Piazza Sant'Oronzo

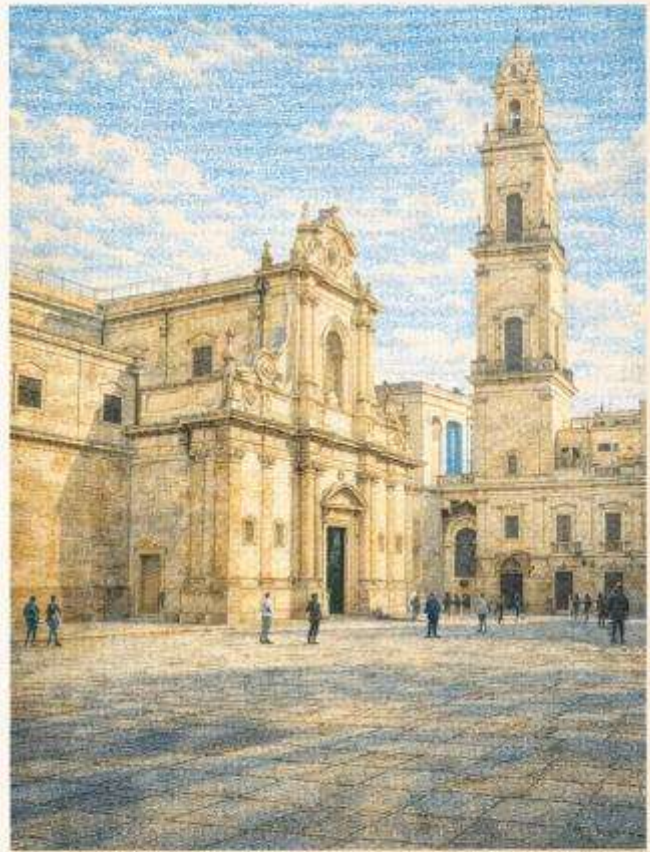


Basilica di Santa Croce

# LECCE



Via Vittorio Emanuele



Piazza Duomo

# Thursday, February 19, 2026

Lecce

Lodging:  
Mediterranee Suite in  
Lecce

## Morning

Departure Cisternino at 8:30 AM. The drive to Lecce is ~1 hour 40 minutes (~120 km). Take SP16 / SS16 through the Salento countryside. Enjoy rolling hills, olive groves, and limestone farmhouses along the way.

Arrival in Lecce: ~10:10 AM. Find street parking or park at the *Parcheeggio Via Trinchese* – convenient for visiting *Piazza Duomo* and *Basilica di Santa Croce*.

10:15 AM, Historic Center Walk. Sites include:

- *Piazza Sant'Oronzo* – main square featuring the Roman Amphitheater (partially uncovered), the Column of *Sant'Oronzo* and surrounding Baroque architecture
- Coffee Break / Light Snack - *Caffè Alvino* (*Piazza Sant'Oronzo*) or *Caffè Al Duomo*. Try a *pasticcotto leccese*, the local custard-filled pastry
- *Basilica di Santa Croce* – admire the intricate Baroque façade and detailed carvings
- *Via Vittorio Emanuele II & Via Giuseppe Libertini* – stroll through streets lined with artisan shops, cafés, and the soft *pietra leccese* stone architecture
- Church of Santa Chiara for more Baroque interior details

## Afternoon

1:00–2:00 PM, Lunch in Lecce. Traditional Salento cuisine at *Le Zie Trattoria* (handmade *orecchiette*, *ciceri e tria* - pasta with chickpeas, grilled meats) or *La Cucina di Mamma Elvira* (homestyle dishes in a cozy environment).

2:00–4:00 PM, Highlights & Hidden Gems:

- *Piazza Duomo* – Lecce Cathedral and Bishop's Palace
- Smaller Baroque churches, such as *Sant'Irene*
- Quaint alleys like *Via Templari* and *Via Palmieri* for photography and local shops
- Optional: *Museo Faggiano*, a fascinating archaeological site under a historic house

4:00 PM, Check into Lecce Hotel and rest until dinner.

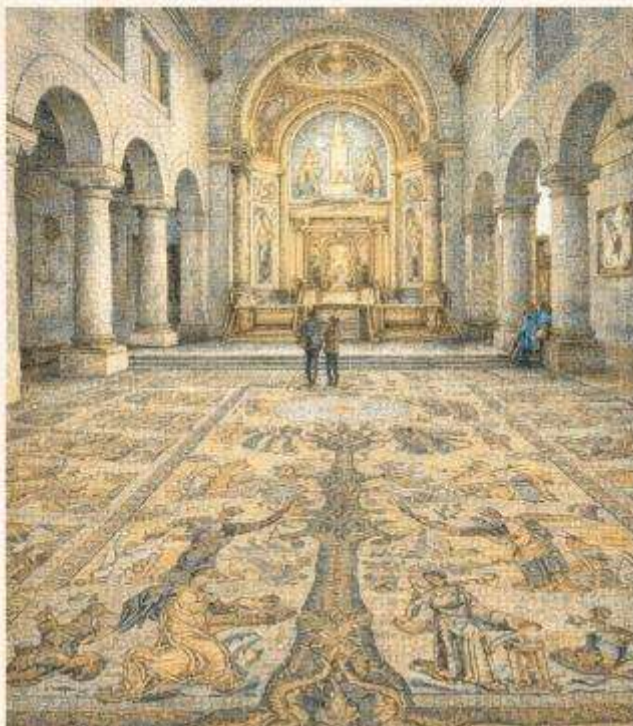
## Evening

6:00–7:30 PM, Aperitivo at *Caffè Alvino* or Ginger Cocktail Bar, small bites, local wine or spritz

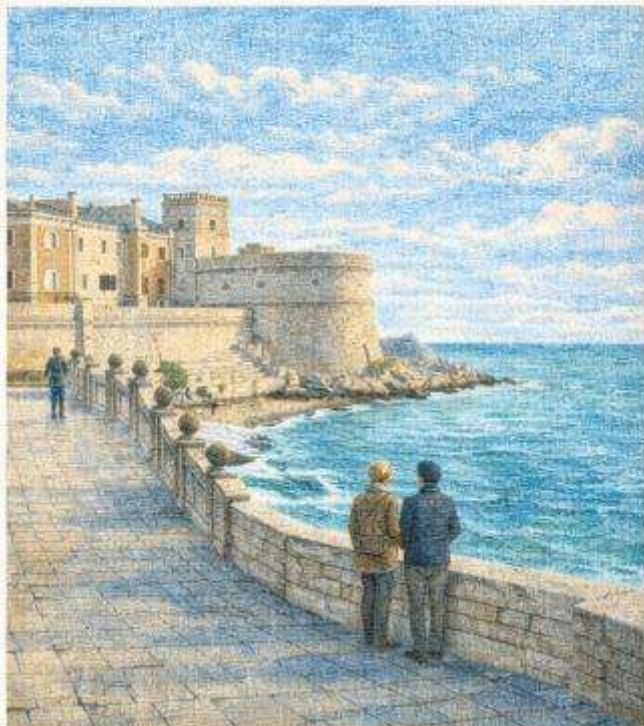
7:30–9:00 PM, Dinner at *Osteria degli Spiriti* (refined Salento cuisine, seafood, *orecchiette*, seasonal vegetables) or *Trattoria Nonna Tetti* (casual homestyle dishes).

9:00–10:00 PM, Night stroll through the *Piazza Sant'Oronzo* and *Piazza Duomo* beautifully illuminated.

Head back to Lecce Hotel for the night.

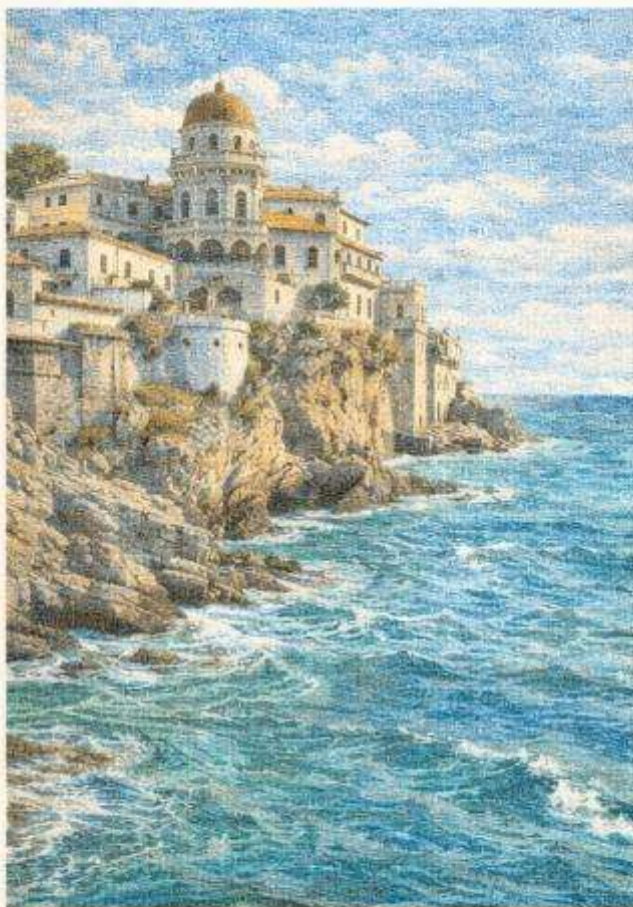


Otranto Cathedral Mosaic

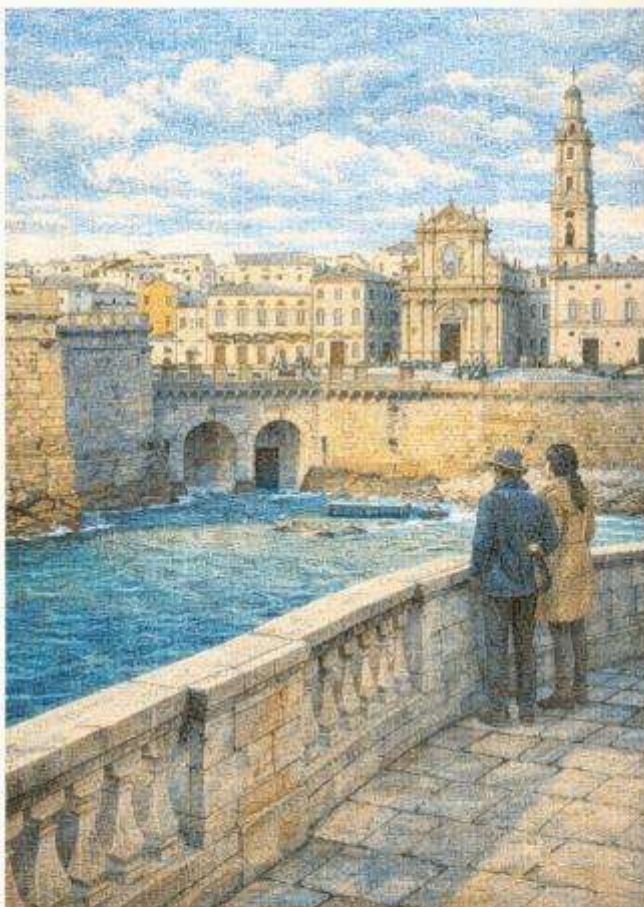


Adriatic Seaside

## OTRANTO AND GALLIPOLI



Santa Cesarea Terme



Gallipoli Old Town

# Friday, February 20, 2026

Road Trip: South Puglia – Otranto & Gallipoli

Lodging:  
Trullo in Cisternino -  
Via Tanzarella, 1

08:30 – Depart Lecce to Otranto (~45 min drive, 45 km).

## 09:15 - Otranto

- Walk the historic center: stroll through the fortified old town, cobblestone streets, and seaside views.
- Otranto Cathedral (Duomo): admire the stunning 12th-century mosaic floor and the Chapel of the Martyrs.
- Aragonese Castle (outside view if pressed for time): imposing fortress by the port.
- Seaside walk: quick stroll along the Lungomare to see the turquoise Adriatic (even in winter it's striking).

*11:30 Depart Otranto for Santa Cesarea Terme (~25 min drive, 20 km)*

## 12:00 Santa Cesarea Terme (30m stop)

A short panoramic stop. Even in February, its Moorish-style *Villa Sticchi* overlooking the sea is worth a look. Park briefly, take photos of the dramatic cliffs and sea views.

12:30 – Depart Santa Cesarea Terme for Gallipoli (1h drive, ~50 km)

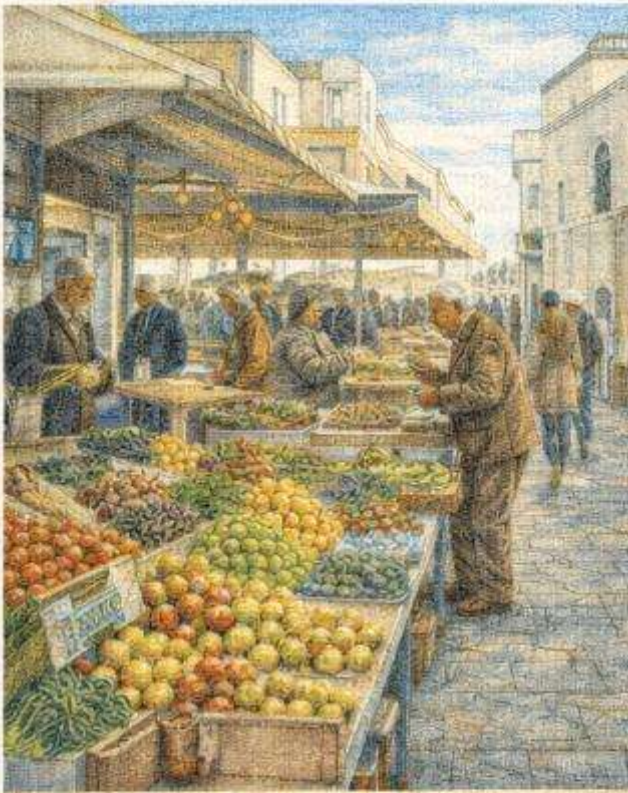
Drive toward Gallipoli along the coast (SS275 / SS274). Optional quick scenic stop at Castro along the way if time permits.

## 13:30 - Gallipoli

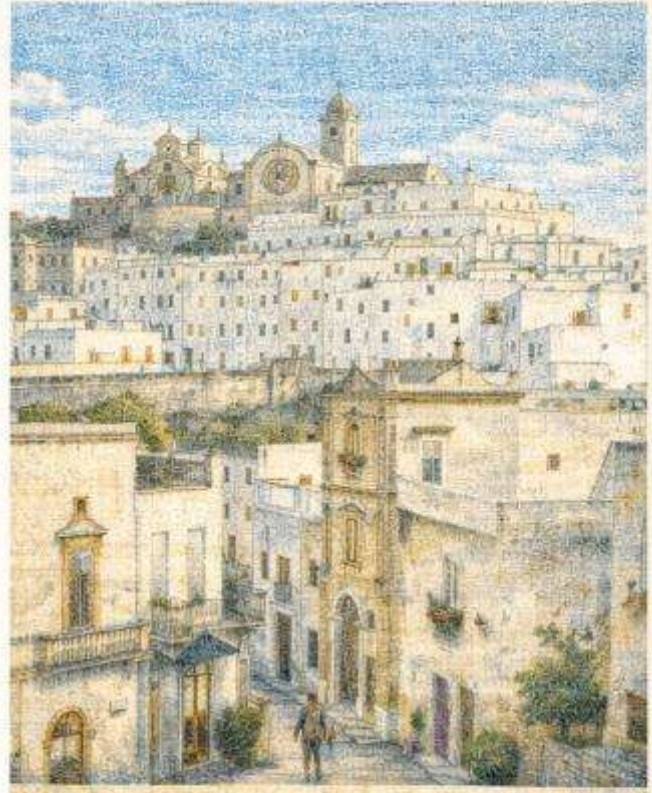
- Choose a trattoria in the old town. Suggested dish: *ciceri e tria* (a local chickpea and pasta specialty).
- Gallipoli Vecchia (old town): walk across the bridge to the island old town. Highlights:
  - Cathedral of Sant'Agata – Baroque interior.
  - Greek Fountain – just before the bridge.
  - Seafront bastions – winter light over the Ionian Sea makes for great photos.
- Enjoy a short *passeggiata* around the walls.

17:00 - Drive to Cisternino (2h, 130 km)

19:00 - Arrive in Cisternino.

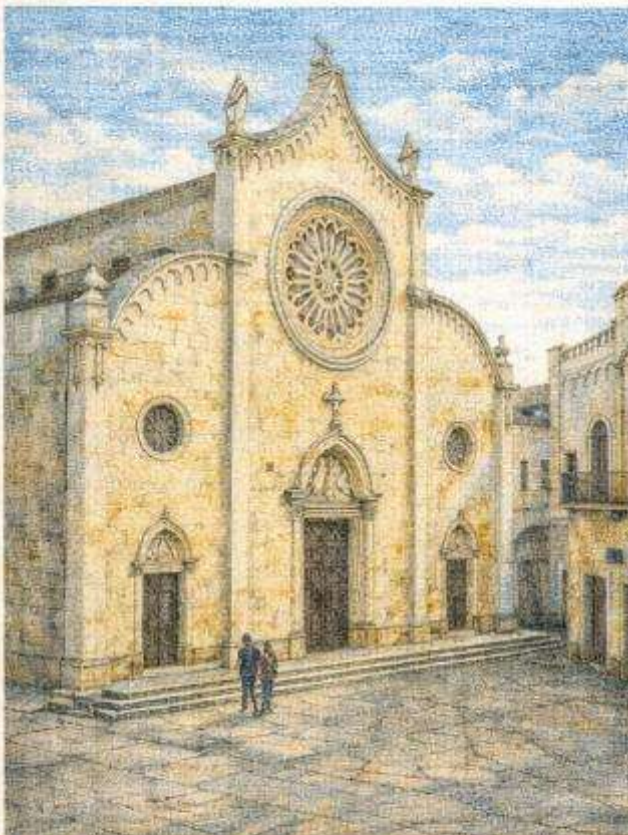


Saturday Market

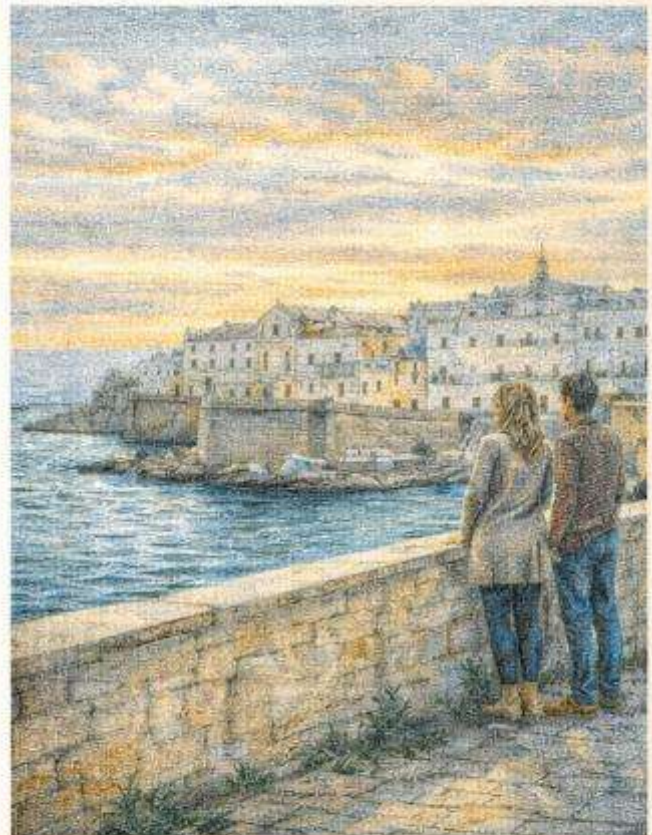


Centro Storico

# OSTUNI



Concattedrale di  
Santa Maria Assunta



Viewpoint & Sunset

# Saturday, February 21, 2026

*Ostuni*

Lodging:  
Trullo in Cisternino -  
Via Tanzarella, 1

## Morning

8:30 AM, Depart Cisternino to Ostuni (~25 min by car, 45 by bicycle, 14 km). Park near Via Nino Sansone (weekly market area).

9:00 AM, Explore the Saturday Market, which features fresh fruit, vegetables, cheeses, cured meats, local crafts, clothing, and home goods. Arrive early to beat crowds and get best produce.

10:30 AM, Coffee break nearby — try a local pastry like cartellate (if available).

11:00 AM, Walk up into the Centro Storico, visiting:

- Concattedrale di Santa Maria Assunta (the 15th-century cathedral).
- Wander the winding alleys, steps, and whitewashed walls.
- Look out for viewpoints toward the Adriatic and olive groves.

## Afternoon

Lunch in or near the old town.

2:00 PM, Visit the Museo di Civiltà Preclassiche della Murgia Meridionale (archaeology, prehistory, the famous “Ostuni pregnant woman” find).

3:30 PM, Stroll shops in the centro or new town: ceramics, textiles, and local olive oil make great souvenirs.

4:30 PM, Relax with a gelato, aperitivo, or coffee in Piazza della Libertà — people-watch in the heart of Ostuni.

## Evening

5:30 PM, Wander for sunset views in terraces along the city walls, and the Piazzetta Martiri delle Foibe viewpoint. The white town glows beautifully as the sky shifts.

If staying for dinner, reservations are strongly recommended on Saturdays, even in February. Options include:

- Osteria del Tempo Perso (iconic, cave-like rooms carved into the rock, refined Apulian cuisine).
- Osteria Piazzetta Cattedrale (local classics with a cozy vibe, right by the cathedral).
- Il Posto Affianco (modern twist on Pugliese dishes).

After dinner, return back to Cisternino, to pack and prep for tomorrow’s travels.



Valletta Skyline

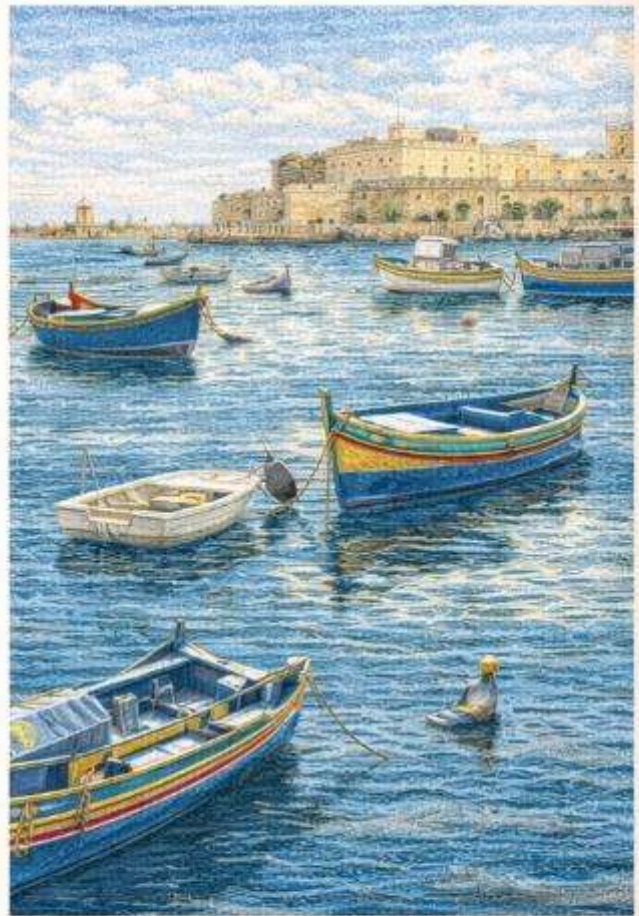


Mdina's Silent Streets

# MALTA



Traditional Balconies



Grand Harbor Boats

# Sunday, February 22, 2026

*Off to Malta!*

Lodging:

Apartment in Valletta,  
26 Old Hospital Street

## Morning

9:00 AM - Check out of apartment and drive to Bari airport. The drive is about 2 hours, so arrive at the rental car terminal at 11:15. Returning the rental car will take around 30-45 minutes.

## Afternoon

Arrive at airport no later than noon.

Depart Bari at 2:00 PM for Malta.

Ryanair Flight 7107 operated by Malta Air.

Reservation code ESK7UZ. Coach Class. Seat 14F.

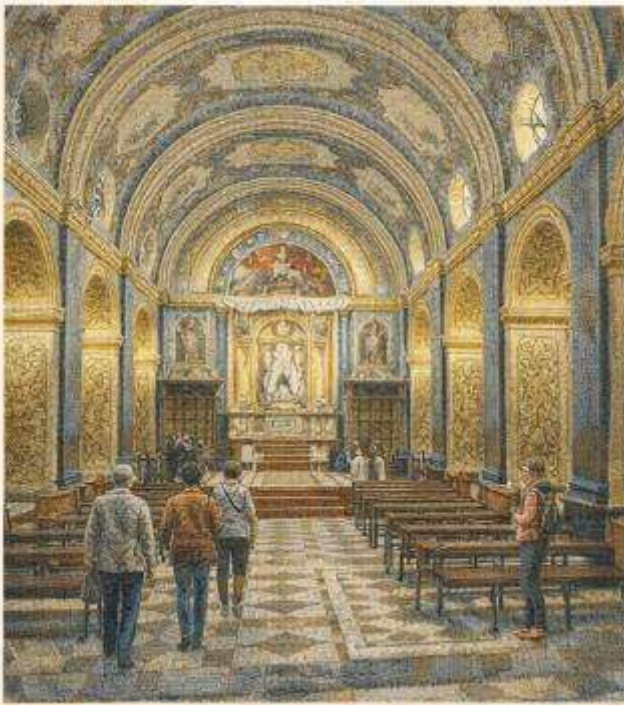
Arrive Malta at 3:20 PM.

Get an Uber or Taxi to Valetta, approximately a 20-minute ride. €17 (fixed-rate from airport)

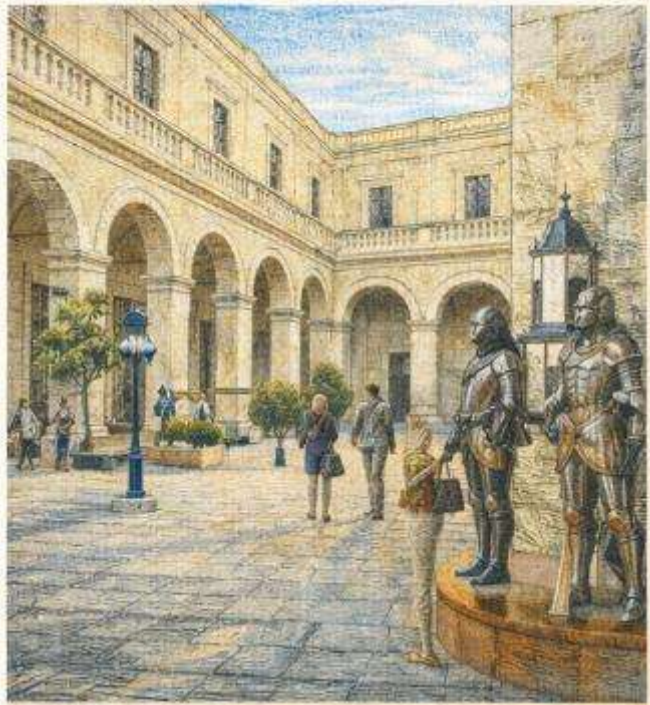
Check-in and rest.

## Evening

- Stroll Republic & Merchant Streets, St. George's Square, and Upper Barrakka Gardens.
- Dinner: *Rampila* (historic bastion dining) or *Leglign* (Maltese tasting menu).

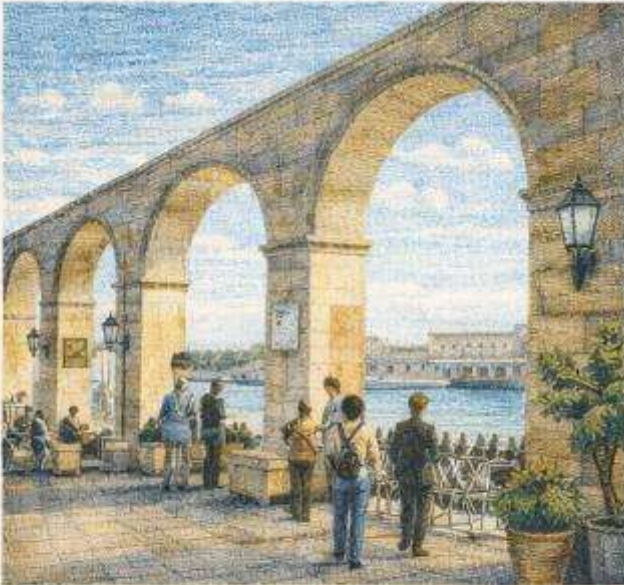


St. John's Co-Cathedral

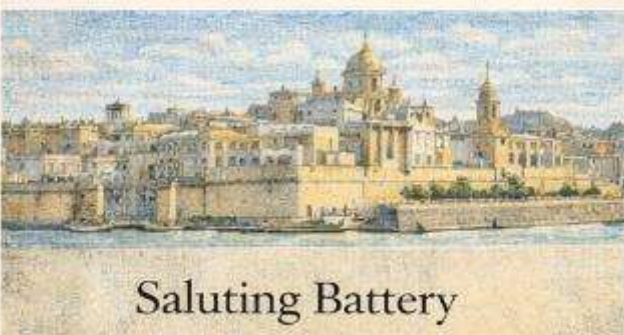


Grand Master's Palace & Armoury

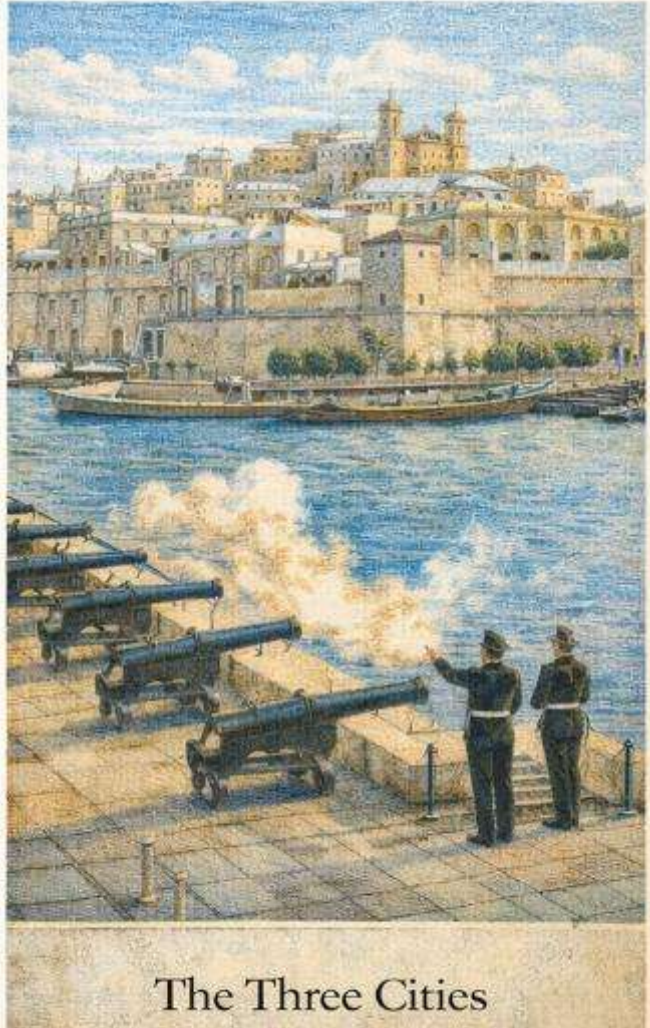
## VALLETTA AND THE THREE CITIES



Upper Barracka Gardens



Saluting Battery



The Three Cities

# Monday, February 23, 2026

*Malta: Valletta and the Three Cities*

Lodging:

Apartment in Valletta,  
26 Old Hospital Street

## Morning: Valletta

9:00 AM – St. John's Co-Cathedral.

10:30 AM – Grand Master's Palace & Armoury.

11:45 AM – Upper Barrakka Gardens.

12:00 PM – Saluting Battery cannon firing.

Lunch: Nenu the Artisan Baker (ftira).

## Afternoon: The Three Cities

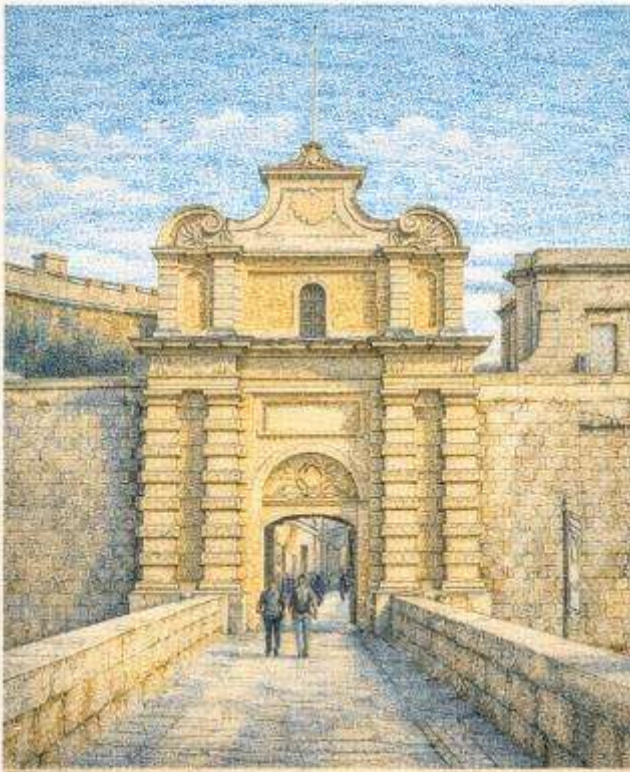
Walk to Valletta waterfront → ferry (10 min) to Vittoriosa.

Stroll Vittoriosa, Inquisitor's Palace, Senglea waterfront.

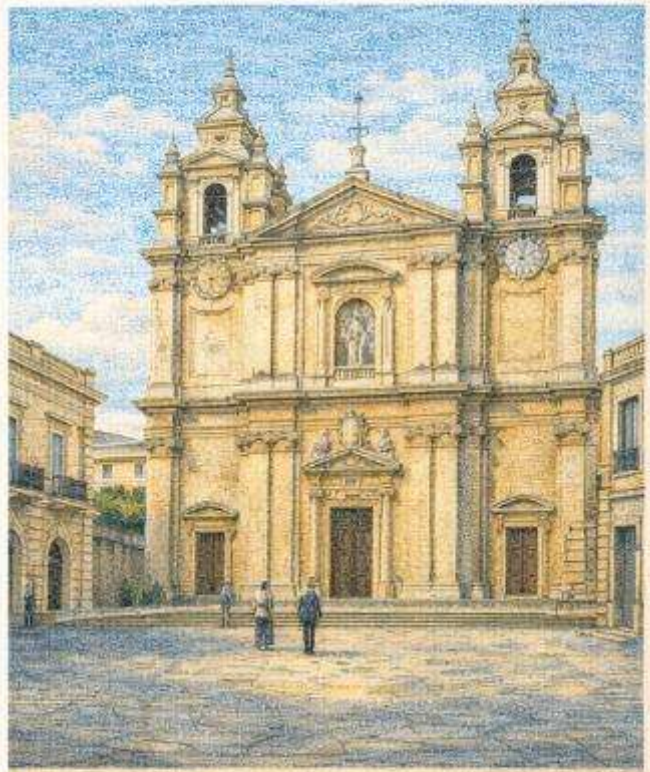
## Evening

Return ferry to Valletta.

Dinner: Guzé Bistro.

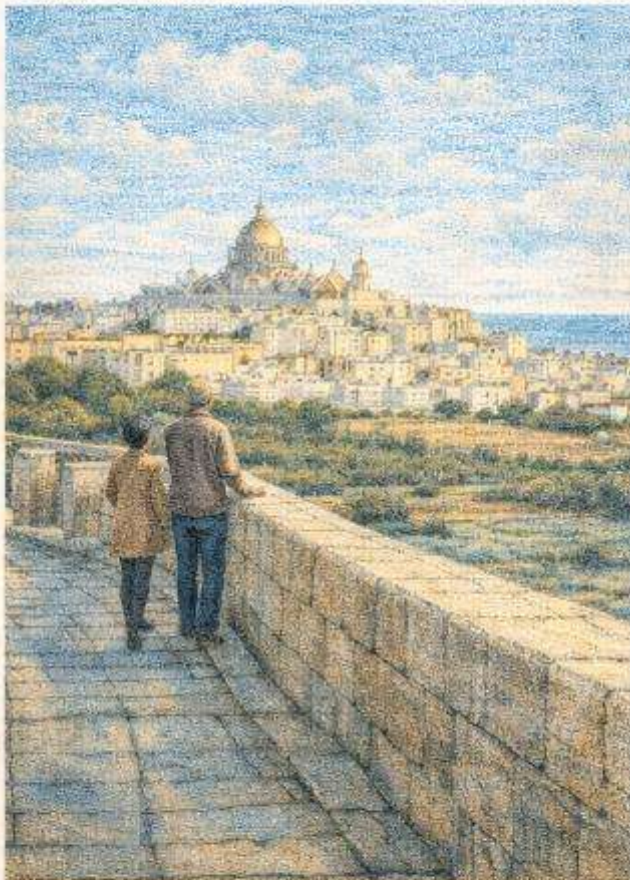


Mдина Gate

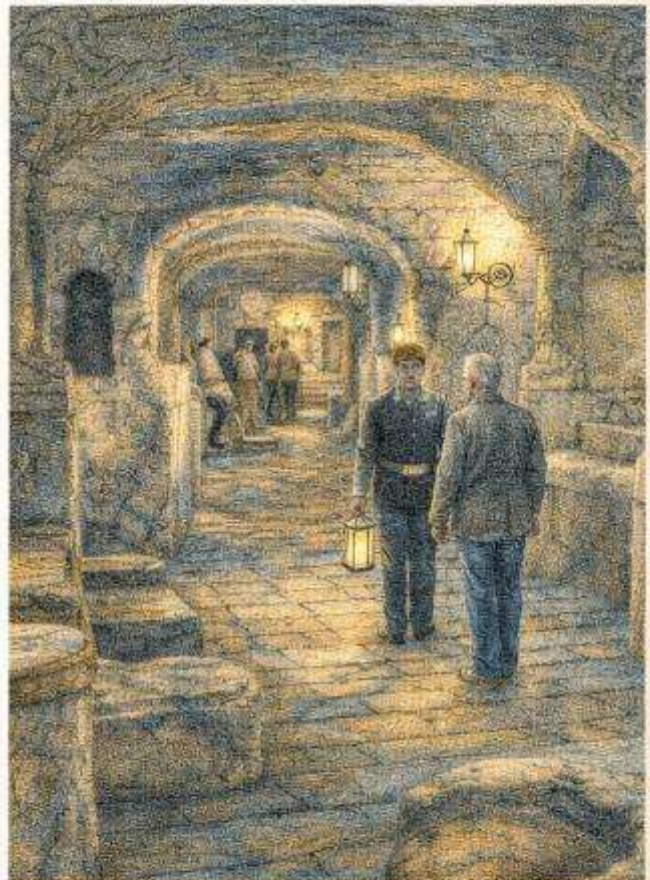


St. Paul's Cathedral

## MDINA AND RABAT



Bastion Walk



St. Paul's Catacombs

# Tuesday, February 24, 2026

*Malta: Mdina and Rabat*

Lodging:

Apartment in Valletta,  
26 Old Hospital Street

## Morning: Mdina

8:30 AM: Taxi Pickup from Valletta. Pre-book a taxi for the day. A full-day hire is best for flexibility.

Estimated travel time to Mdina: ~30–35 minutes.

9:00–11:00 AM: Explore Mdina. Mdina, the “Silent City,” is Malta’s medieval capital. Arrive early to enjoy the city without crowds. See:

- Mdina Gate – Iconic entrance to the city.
- St. Paul’s Cathedral – Visit the cathedral and museum; notable Baroque architecture and artwork.
- Bastion Walk – Stunning panoramic views of Malta from the city walls.
- Villegaignon & Palazzo Falson – Optionally visit Palazzo Falson Historic House Museum for medieval and renaissance artifacts.

Stop at Fontanella Tea Garden for pastries and one of the best views in Malta.

## Late Morning / Early Afternoon

11:00–11:15 AM: Walk to Rabat. Rabat is adjacent to Mdina (5–10 min walk) and can be explored on foot from Mdina.

11:15 AM–1:30 PM: Explore Rabat. See:

- St. Paul’s Catacombs – Roman-era underground burial site, fascinating and extensive.
- St. Paul’s Church – Built above the site where St. Paul is said to have stayed.
- Domus Romana – A Roman villa with mosaics, coins, and artifacts. A quieter alternative to crowded Mdina palaces.
- Lunch in Rabat: Crystal Palace Restaurant (Rabat) for classic Maltese dishes at a more casual pace.

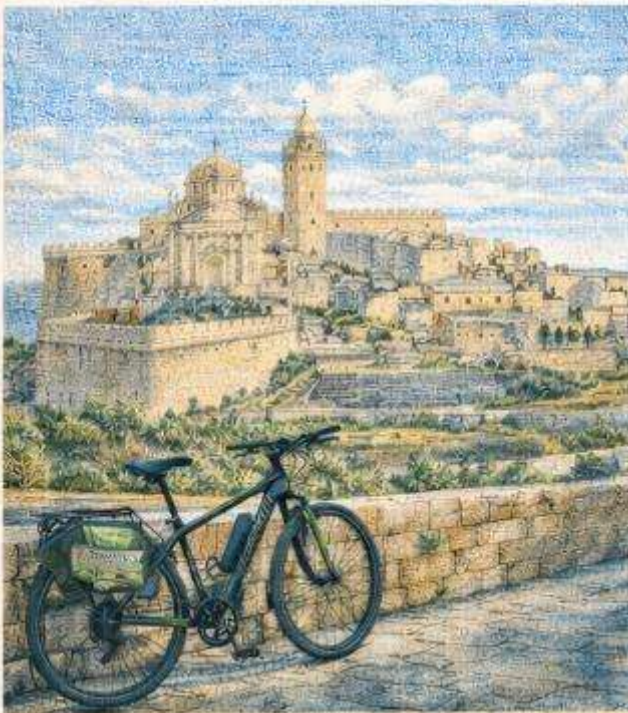
## Afternoon

2:30–4:30 PM: After lunch, revisit Mdina for any streets or museums you missed. Explore quiet alleyways, charming courtyards, and small artisan shops.

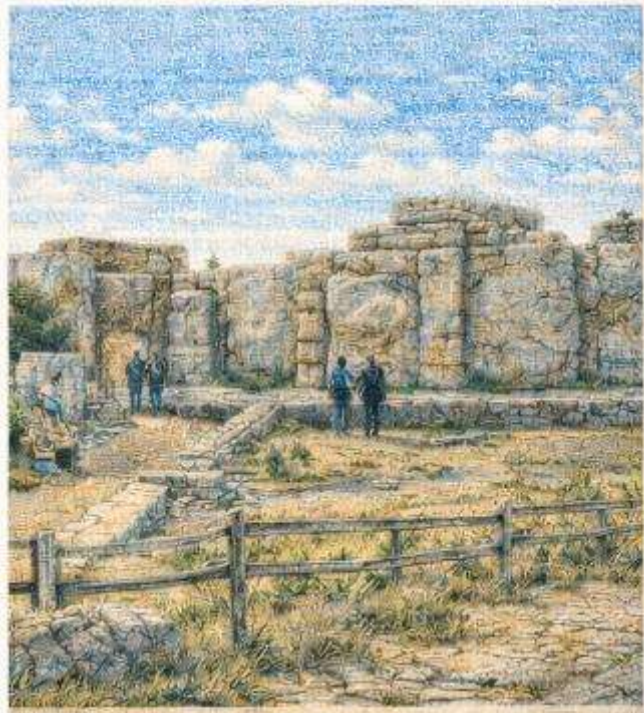
4:30 PM–5:15 PM: Return Taxi to Valletta

## Evening

Relax in hotel until dinner time. Explore more of Valletta at night.



Victoria Citadel



Ġgantija Temples

## GOZO BY E-BIKE



Dwejra Bay.



Inland Sea



# Wednesday, February 25, 2026

Malta: Gozo by E-bike

Lodging:

Apartment in Valletta,  
26 Old Hospital Street

## Morning: To Gozo

8:30 AM – Walk to Valletta fast ferry terminal (Grand Harbour, near Lascaris Wharf). About 15 minute walk.

9:00 AM – Gozo Fast Ferry to Mgarr (~45 min). Walk off ferry, pick up e-bike at Mgarr Harbour rental.

9:45–10:00 AM – Arrive Mgarr & Pick Up E-Bike at Ebike Malta

Quick check: battery full, helmet on, map ready.

10:00–10:35 AM – Ride to Victoria (Citadel). Distance: ~10 km

Time: ~30–35 min (moderate pace, some uphill sections)

Enjoy Gozo countryside on the ride

10:35 AM–12:05 PM – Explore Victoria Citadel. Visit the Gozo Cathedral & museum, the Ramparts for panoramic views. Explore narrow streets with traditional architecture

Total time: ~1.5 hr (comfortable pace)

12:05–12:25 PM – Ride to Xagħra / Ġgantija Temples. Distance: ~6 km (~20 min e-bike ride) via scenic rural roads

12:25–1:15 PM – Ġgantija Temples. UNESCO World Heritage Site (~3600–3200 BC). Highlights include giant limestone blocks, solar alignments. Time includes walking around the site and taking photos

1:15–1:45 PM – Lunch in Xagħra. Options include Ta' Rikardu (traditional Gozitan food) or a local café for sandwiches/pastries if short on time

1:45–2:20 PM – Ride to Dwejra Bay / Inland Sea. Distance: ~10 km (~35 min ride). Bike by coastal cliffs & panoramic views, including the Inland Sea lagoon, and Fungus Rock, with quick photo stops along the way

2:20–3:10 PM – Explore Dwejra & Scenic Stops. Walk short trails along the cliffs. Take photos of the coast and geological formations.

3:10–4:00 PM – Return Ride to Mgarr Harbour. Distance: ~12 km (~40–45 min ride). Take a scenic route through countryside villages. Keep track of battery for e-bike return

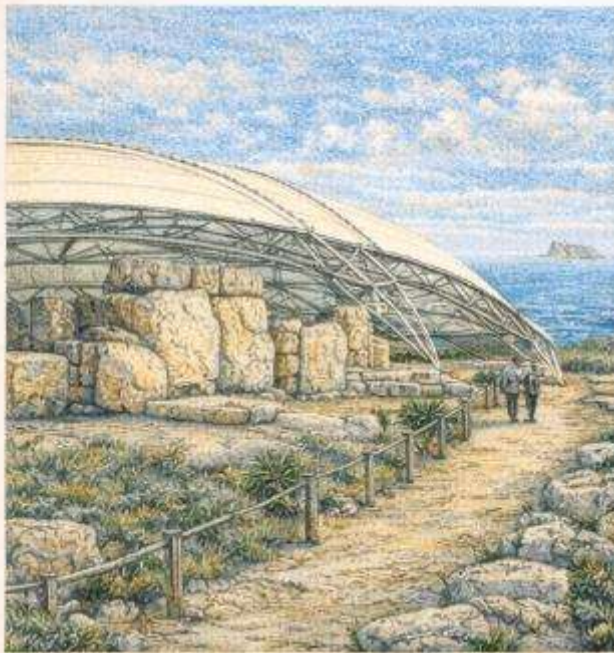
4:00–4:30 PM – Return E-Bike at Mgarr. Time buffer to drop off the bike, check the ferry schedule, and grab a coffee. Make sure to park and lock properly.

5:00 PM – Fast Ferry to Valletta. Arrival Valletta: ~5:45 PM

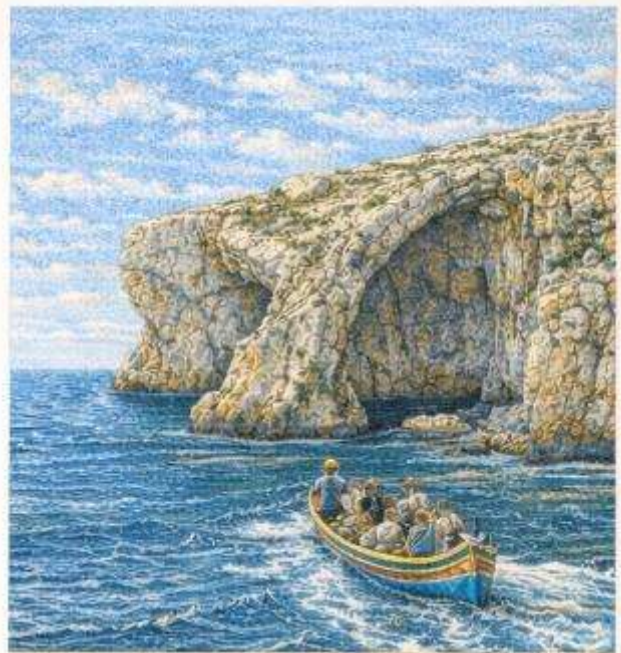
Taxi back to hotel, relax, or enjoy dinner in Valletta (Palazzo Preca or Trabuxu Wine Bar)

Show this QR code in-store for a faster pickup:





Haġar Qim & Mnajdra Temples

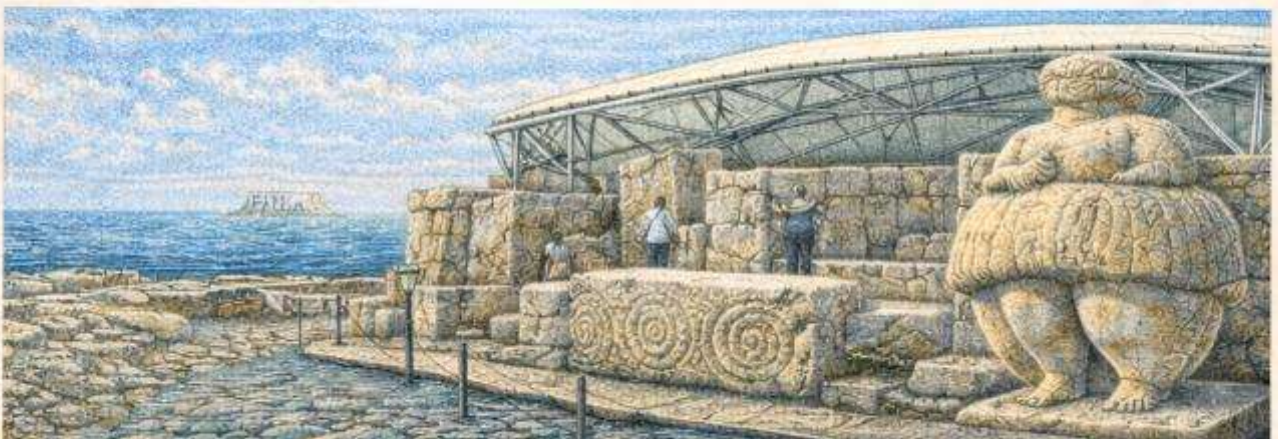


Blue Grotto

## MALTA TEMPLES & COAST



Marsaxlokk Fishing Village



Tarxien Temples

# Thursday, February 26, 2026

*Malta: The ancient temples.*

Lodging:

Apartment in Valletta,  
26 Old Hospital Street

## Morning

9:00 AM – Taxi from Valletta to Ғағар Qim Visitor Centre (~25 min, ~€25).

9:30–11:00 AM – Ғағар Qim & Mnajdra Temples:

- Start at the Visitor Centre: short film & museum.
- Walk (~10 min downhill) to Ғағар Qim: built ~3600 BC, massive limestone blocks.
- Continue down the path to Mnajdra: aligned with solstices and equinoxes (an ancient solar calendar).
- Enjoy the stunning views of Filfla islet offshore.

11:15 AM – Taxi to Blue Grotto viewpoint (~5 min, ~€8).

11:20–noon – Enjoy views of the sea caves and cliffs. If seas are calm, take a Blue Grotto boat ride (~25 min, €10 per person). Boats may not run in winter if weather is rough.

12:15 PM – Taxi to Marsaxlokk (~20 min, ~€20).

12:30–2:00 PM – Lunch by the waterfront.

Walk along the harbor lined with colorful luzzu fishing boats. Recommended restaurant: La Nostra Padrona (classic seaside dining). Try grilled lampuki (mahimahi, seasonal in autumn) or aljotta (Maltese fish soup).

## Afternoon

Tarxien Temples 2:15 PM – Taxi to Tarxien Temples (~15 min, ~€18). 2:30–3:30 PM

Explore Tarxien Temples Another UNESCO site, ~3150 BC. Famous for intricate spiral carvings and stone statues (including the “Fat Lady”). Indoor/covered sections make it comfortable even in February.

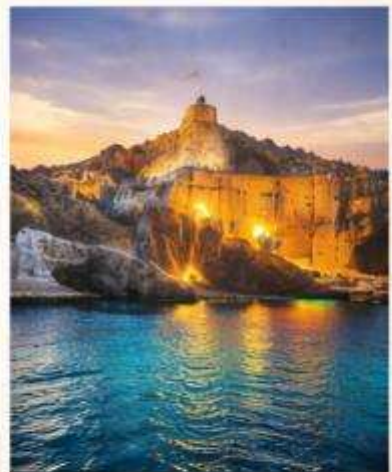
3:30 PM – Taxi back to Valletta (~20 min, ~€20).

4:00 PM – Arrive at hotel. Time to rest or enjoy coffee at Caffe Cordina.

## Evening

6:30 PM – Sunset walk at Upper Barrakka Gardens or Lower Barrakka Gardens.

7:30 PM – Dinner ideas: Palazzo Preca (elegant Maltese cuisine in an old townhouse) or Rubino (cozy, old-world restaurant with excellent rabbit stew and baked ricotta pie).



# Friday, February 27, 2026

*Back to Bari, for the beginning of the end.*

Lodging:  
JR Hotels Oriente  
Bari

## Morning

Free morning to pack-up and do any last minute, Valletta stuff.

## Afternoon

12:30 PM – Taxi to airport (~20 min).

For a 3:15 PM flight, this gives you ~3 hours buffer.

Depart Malta at 3:15 PM for Bari.

Ryanair Flight 9875 operated by Malta Air. Reservation code ESK7UZ.

Coach Class. Seat 14F.

Arrive in Bari at 4:35 PM.

Get an Uber or Taxi to Bari.

Check-in and rest. Hotel is JR Hotels Oriente Bari, Corso Cavour 32.

Confirmation #2268824598.

Expedia Itinerary 72065311968519.

## Evening

Dinner in Bari



# Saturday, February 28, 2026

*One last shot in Bari*

Lodging:  
JR Hotels Oriente  
Bari

Free day built in as a buffer, to do or see anything one last time.

# Sunday, March 1, 2026

*Arrivederci Puglia*

Lodging:  
JR Hotels Oriente  
Bari

Wake up early at check-out, leaving the hotel by 7:00 AM. Taxi to the airport, arriving by 7:30 AM.

Depart Bari at 9:35 PM for Istanbul.

Turkish Airlines flight TK1446.

Reservation code S6CFNQ.

Coach Class. Seat 11F.

Arrive in Istanbul at 1:45 PM.

Depart Istanbul at 4:05 PM for IAD.

Arrive in Dulles at 7:20 PM.

Take a taxi home.