

Puglia

Puglia has been minding its own business for generations, illuminated for English speakers only occasionally by its more adventurous writers.

This is changing. People have noticed, and travel magazines are falling over themselves to tell everyone to go there soon, before mass market tourism changes everything.

We're within a unique window of opportunity. Visitor infrastructure is sufficient to enable a reasonably comfortable accessible tour, yet the area retains much of its original character.

This is what Lonely Planet has to say –
"Puglia can surely now take its place in the first rank of Italy's famous regions.

Clearly, everything the Italophile craves is there in abundance: ancient towns heavy with the tangible past; extravagant churches dreamt up by Europe's finest architects; the footprints of an endless procession of conquerors and cultures, stamped in stone, gold and marble; seas of olives; olive-green seas; and food the equal of any in Italy. Travellers bored or worn down by the crowds of Campania and Tuscany can find release in the baroque splendour of Lecce, 'Florence of the South', or one of many lesser (but no less beautiful) Pugliese towns."



We have booked into Lecce's Hilton Garden Hotel. You can understand why we're excited. Dates are **20-30 May** and **3-13 June**, though we could consider a 7 night stay. (10 nights would be £2400 pp, 7 would be £1900 pp, based on 2 sharing)

Destination airports can be Bari or Brindisi. Direct flights are in shorter supply than for more established destinations, and as yet mostly from London, though some reasonably timed & priced 1 stop options exist from regional airports, for example with Lufthansa from Manchester.

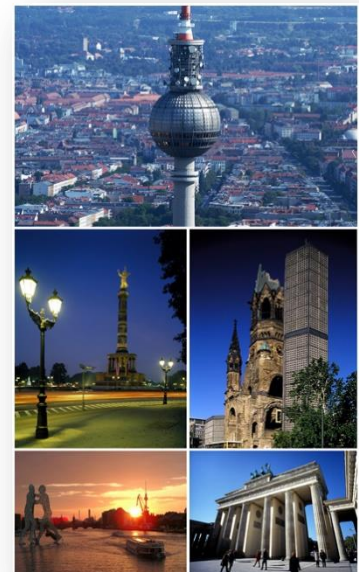
Berlin We're going to revisit our favourite capital!

The vibrant, arty, free spirited "small town" that just happens to be the gargantuan capital city of contemporary mainland Europe's (arguably) most influential country. Full of contradictions and fascination, its cultural cup runneth over, while retaining a surprisingly cosy & laid back feel.

We're planning a 7 night tour, **25 June-2 July** (£1950 pp sharing)

The large scale must-see attractions include the Brandenburg Gate, once representing the division but now at the very centre again. Nearby is Norman Foster's masterpiece crystal dome of the Reichstag. There's the UNESCO listed Museum Island, on which you can see Queen Nefertiti, ancient temples, and Nebuchadnezzar's entire Gate of Babylon. Then we have the Sanssouci Palace at Potsdam...

We'll take you round as much of Berlin as we can squeeze into a week, and on our tour, as is our style, we'll not only take you to the famous sights, but also introduce you to quirky idiosyncracies that make life in Berlin so special.



Bilbao to Santiago de Compostela Roadtrip

This is an ambitious tour, mirroring the road trip we previously offered across Northern Spain, traversing regions close to my heart, with historic and sometimes other worldly landscapes that span



an astonishing diversity of culture & climate as the story unfolds.

Our plan is to start in the Basque Country, on the Bay of Biscay, visit the high mountains known as the Picos de Europa, drop south to memorable landscapes around Ponferrada, finally ending in verdant Galicia. We'll stay in Santiago, the climax of a pilgrimage so famous that it is often known as simply 'El Camino' (The Way), which we will have loosely followed on our own journey. We'll also extend our tour to take in Europe's most westerly point, the wild Cape Finisterre.

The exact dates have yet to be finalised, as we are in the complex process of pinning down multiple hotels with adequate accessible rooms along the line of the route.

We plan to stay in at least 4 different locations so that we can fully appreciate the changing lands, and anticipate a tour of around 10-12 nights duration, in **late August or September**.

(Price probably in the region of £2500 pp sharing)



Sorrento

We return to a classic destination, on the cliffs of the Bay of Naples, looking across to Vesuvius. We'll take in historic Pompei & Herculaneum, the magical Isle of Capri, and the dramatic "Amalfi Drive" among a full week of excursions exploring this most beautiful corner of Italy.

We stay at the Hilton Sorrento Palace Hotel, one of the very grandest in a town whose popularity is going stratospheric; hence this tour has to be more expensive than usual.



Dates will be **5-12 May** (£2450 pp based on 2 sharing)