

Day 1 VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Warm-up ride to Savelletri / Welcome reception and dinner

VBT highly recommends flying to Italy at least one day before the tour begins. This will allow you to rest and recover from jet lag before you begin sightseeing and cycling.

Meet your VBT trip leaders in the lobby of the first masseria. Readily identifiable VBT trip leaders will be in the main lobby beginning at 2:00 p.m. to answer any questions, provide assistance, and collect pedals you brought from home.

Masseria is the local name for large farms, which were fortified around the 16th century to ward off attacks by pirates and brigands. Masserie feature high boundary walls, angular towers, drawbridges, and watchtowers. Families worked and lived inside these walls with their own church, oil mill, and oven for baking bread. These farms also housed cisterns for water, storage rooms for tools and hay, stables, and everything else needed for day-to-day life. These days they are elegant country resorts, most of which grow produce and bottle their own olive oil.

This afternoon, take a short warm-up ride along quiet country roads, past 800-year-old olive groves to the fishing village of Savelletri.

Later, enjoy a welcome cocktail reception on the elegant hotel patio. Dinner is at the hotel restaurant and is prepared with local products and herbs produced on the farm.

Important note: For those tours beginning June 11, June 14, and June 18, 2024, an alternate itinerary will be offered because the 2024 G7 summit is taking place in the region. For more information, contact us ([vbt.com/contact-us/](http://vbt.com/contact-us/)).

Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up Coccaro — 13 km (8 miles)

What to Expect:

Cycle a loop in the countryside on totally flat and paved terrain through the fishing village of Savelletri.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14.5 km (9 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

Day 2 Olive oil tasting / Lunch at Il Frantoio farm

This morning, you will ride along the sea for a few miles, before looping inland to Masseria Il Frantoio, another award-winning country hotel famous for the quality of its food. The estate extends over 150 acres (61 hectares) and includes a "secret garden" planted with orange and lemon trees, as well as a well-preserved underground olive oil mill. Your hosts, Armando and Rosalba, have collected many interesting odds and ends over the years, from ancient dresses and hats to precious books and a gramophone. Each piece has its own story.

Your lunch at Il Frantoio is prepared using produce grown on the farm and is truly an experience for all of your senses. You'll also have the opportunity to try a sampling of five different extra-virgin oils that Rosalba uses to flavor her focaccia, pickles, preserves, and delicious laganari pasta.

Later, you can opt to relax or continue cycling to the hotel along the ancient Traian road. An additional moderate ride option takes you up to the whitewashed city of Ostuni. End your day with a shuttle to the nearby small city of Savelletri on the sea. You are free to traverse the cozy pedestrian area to choose a restaurant for your dinner.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Il Frantoio — 32 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Il Frantoio to Hotel — 27 km (17 miles) OR Il Frantoio to Hotel PLUS (moderate) — 36 km (22 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Ride partly along the coast and then in a rural setting, passing through charming, small villages. An optional moderate ride will take you up to the hill of Ostuni and down toward the ocean again, before joining the Traian road back to the hotel. The regular afternoon ride avoids the hill and takes you through the countryside on the quiet, historical Traian road to the hotel.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 27 – 68 km (17 – 42 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

#### Day 3 Cycle to Egnatia and Monopoli

After breakfast, you'll cycle along the coast on quiet roads, completely surrounded by ancient olive trees. Puglia ranks first in Italy in the production of olive oil, wine, and hazelnuts, and second for almonds. You'll stop on the way to explore the archaeological site of Egnatia, an ancient Messapian (and later Roman) coastal town of great economic and military importance in the 10th century. The museum on the grounds includes precious finds such as sculptures, jewels, funeral equipment, and gnathia, which is the distinctive local pottery that usually features figurative painting on the upper half and ornamental designs on the lower portion.

Later, continue to Monopoli, where you'll have the chance to visit the beautiful cathedral and old harbor. You'll have free time to stroll and eat lunch on your own. Walk the maze of pedestrian streets in Monopoli's old city center and see how they make the city so intimate.

Shuttle or ride back along the sea to your masseria and enjoy the amenities. Dinner is included at the Masseria restaurant.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Monopoli — 27 km (17 miles)

Afternoon: Monopoli to Hotel — 14 km (9 miles) OR Monopoli to Hotel PLUS (moderate) — 29 km (18 miles)

What to Expect:

The coastal terrain is flat. An additional ride option provides a moderate trek inland from Monopoli on a beautiful, long, and gradual uphill, followed by a rolling, hilly road and a very scenic downhill to our masseria. To explore Monopoli, you can follow a walk created by your trip leaders and recorded in RWGPS.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 56 km (9 – 35 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

#### Day 4 Acaya / Cycle along the coast of Salento

Leave Savelletri and take a morning shuttle farther south to embark on another day of your stunning Puglia bike ride toward Salento. You'll begin at the walled city of Acaya and ride through the ancient city's archway on country roads that are free from traffic and marked as bike paths. You'll finish your morning ride at the rugged coast, where you will enjoy the spectacular view of Torre dell'Orso village, rising steeply from the sea and sandy bay. The village is a good spot to buy some lunch before either hitting the road again or taking a shuttle to the hotel.

The afternoon offers more fun cycling on quiet country roads and along the small Alimini Lakes as you head to your next masseria.

After settling into your cozy accommodations, enjoy the hotel amenities or simply relax with a good book. Dinner is at a nearby masseria tonight.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Acaya to Torre dell'Orso — 20 km (12 miles)

Afternoon: Torre dell'Orso to Hotel — 26 km (16 miles)

What to Expect:

Take a beautiful bike ride into the countryside, mostly on marked bike roads, to Torre dell'Orso on the sea, where you'll break for lunch. In the afternoon you'll have a choice of a shuttle to the hotel or cycling more lovely country roads with some easy rolling hills by the Alimini Lakes, followed by a final flat stretch to our masseria.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 20 – 46 km (12 – 28 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## Day 5 Cycle to Otranto / Picnic by an organic farm / Discover Otranto

Bike from your hotel on country roads through sleepy villages, where a stop in a colorful local bar for an Italian coffee can be a wonderful diversion. Your route is shaded by big olive trees and towering oaks as you head toward the coast. By lunch, you'll reach an organic farm near the sea, where the friendly owners, Antonio and Marina, will open their private garden to host a picnic lunch prepared by your trip leaders.

After lunch, discover Otranto, a picturesque town on the Italian coast. Founded by the Greeks, Otranto is surrounded by great ramparts and walls. Starting in late spring, its atmosphere is enlivened by local craft studios selling clay whistles, baskets, hand-dyed fabric, and ceramics. The city's highlight is Otranto Cathedral's enormous, 8,611-square-foot (800-square-meter) floor mosaic representing the Tree of Life, which was created by a monk in 1163. A visit to Otranto is also your opportunity to switch sports and take a dip in the sea.

Today's ride ends on flat country roads, where you'll catch sight of menhirs and dolmens—ancient monoliths and tombs—before returning to your hotel. This evening, you can dine on your own at the hotel or shuttle to Otranto for dinner at one of the many outdoor cafés or restaurants.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Picnic Spot — 34 km (21 miles)

Afternoon: Picnic Spot to Otranto — 7 km (4 miles) | Otranto to Hotel — 9 km (6 miles)

### What to Expect:

Most of today's riding is in the morning to give you time in the afternoon to explore the historical capital of Salento, the city of Otranto, and possibly go for a swim. The ride takes you inland from your masseria on paved country roads free from car traffic. The afternoon ride is a short and flat route through olive groves to your next masseria. An optional additional ride is an easy-to-moderate loop with undulating terrain starting from Otranto.

Cumulative Distance Range: 7 – 50 km (4 – 31 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## Day 6 Discover the eastern tip of Italy

After breakfast, you'll set out on one of the best rides in all of Italy. Starting in the interior of Salento, you'll follow gentle, rural pathways through little villages to the coastal town of Castro Marina. From there, you'll continue to Santa Cesarea, a quiet town set on the edge of the Adriatic Sea, where you can enjoy lunch on your own in one of the many cozy cafés.

Fortified, you'll follow the cliffs to the town of Porto Badisco, famous for its azure waters and prehistoric Cervi Grottoes, before continuing to Cape Otranto, the easternmost tip of Italy. You'll cycle back to the

hotel in time to freshen up before an extraordinary farewell dinner with Puglia wines and specialties at your masseria restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Hotel to Santa Cesarea Terme — 25 km (15 miles)

Afternoon: Santa Cesarea Terme to Hotel — 14 km (9 miles) OR Santa Cesarea Terme to Hotel PLUS (moderate) — 18 km (11 miles)

What to Expect:

This mostly coastal ride is probably the most panoramic bike ride of the week. There is one major uphill after lunch, which can be skipped with a short support vehicle shuttle. The longer afternoon ride has more coastal riding along a road with a bit more traffic and is rated as moderate.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 14 – 43 km (9 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 7 VBT Bicycling Vacation ends

After an included breakfast, travel by private motorcoach to Lecce, arriving at approximately 10:30 a.m. at Hotel Patria Palace. From here you can take a taxi to the Lecce railway station or airport. The nearest airport is in Brindisi.

Included Meals: Breakfast