

The Culture of Food in Puglia & Basilicata

With Sophie Minchilli



Sophie Minchilli has been spending time in Puglia since before she was even born. Her father, Domenico, is from the capital, Bari, and his family home there has been her base to explore the entire region. She has since built a career there, sharing her passion for the region through social media, tours, and her book, *The Sweetness of Doing Nothing*.

Join Sophie, and her friend and colleague Angelo, on this 5-day tour to explore all they love about Puglia, from a completely food-centric point of view, of course. You'll visit some of their favorite places and meet friends — in small towns, through the countryside, and by the sea— tasting, drinking, eating, learning, and having fun.

You'll be based in Bari, in a luxury hotel overlooking the sea. The days will be full of adventures, but don't worry, you'll have downtime as well to head off on your own to explore.

When: May 27-June 1, 2024
September 30-October 5, 2024

Where: Bari, Italy

Nearest airport: Bari, Italy

Monday

Arrival & Introductions



Welcome to Bari

We will spend the week in Puglia's capital: Bari. You will be staying in the Grande Albergo delle Nazioni, situated on the Lungomare (seafront), and your post-modern decorated room overlooks the sea. You'll have a chance to settle in before meeting up later that evening.

In your room, you'll find a copy of your schedule for the week, along with a bottle of wine, water, and some snacks. You'll also have already received a copy of Sophie's book *The Sweetness of Doing Nothing*, and you'll find a branded canvas tote bag to carry goodies you pick up during the week. We will also leave a personal guide to Bari with Sophie's favorite places to eat and shop to help you plan your free time.



Drinks & Dinner

We will meet for drinks to start our week on the hotel's rooftop terrace, which overlooks the Adriatic Sea.

Then we head out to dinner, walking along the sea and into the ancient heart of Bari to one of our favorite fish restaurants. We will start our week by sharing an array of small plates of antipasti, including vegetables, cheeses, and the seafood this town is famous for—dessert and after-dinner drinks to finish our first meal together.

Tuesday

Bari Vecchia



After breakfast in the rooftop dining room, we will head to Bari Vecchia, the old part of town.

Lungomare

Bari is Sophie's second home since Domenico (Sophie's father) was born and raised here. Sophie will lead you on a stroll along the sea, pointing out buildings built by her great-grandfather, including the family home. You'll stop by the fish market and the old port, where our friend Giorgio will join us.

Bari Vecchia

Giorgio will lead us into the winding alleys of the old part of town, Bari Vecchia. Life in Bari Vecchia is lived on the street. Ground-level homes open directly onto small alleys, and you can peek in to see families gathered around their tables.



Giorgio grew up here, and with him, we'll be able to enter into private courtyards and meet his friends. We'll also visit the women who make *orecchiette*, a traditional pasta they sell from little tables in the street.

We'll also explore street food along the way, and lunch will be a moveable feast of freshly made focaccia, panzerotti, biscotti, and gelato. And coffee too!

Afternoon

Some free time to explore and shop on your own.

Dinner

Tonight we will have dinner at a fantastic restaurant nearby. Here we'll have one of the most famous dishes of Puglia, *orecchiette con broccoletti*.

Wednesday

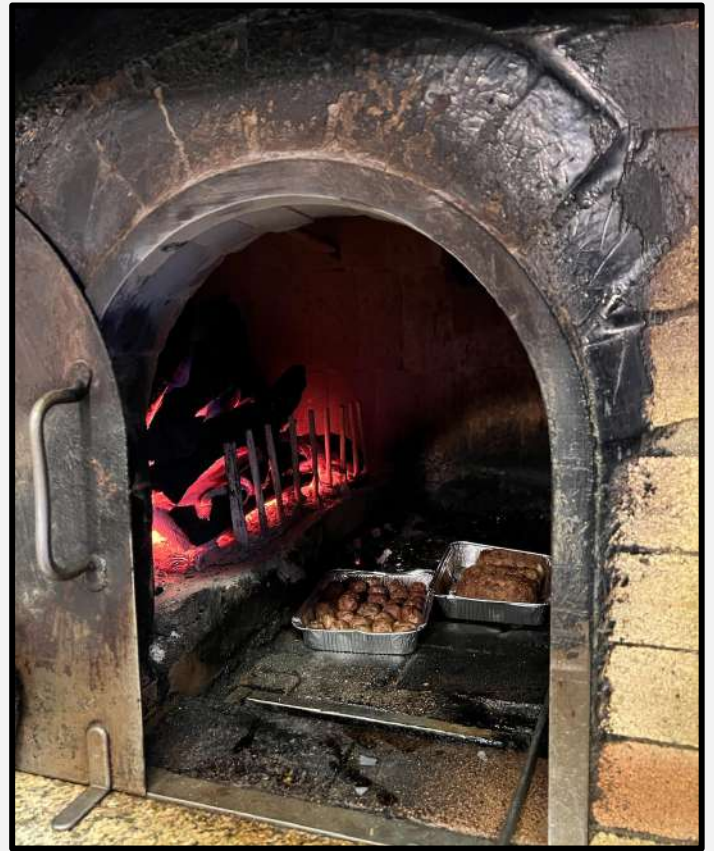
Monopoli & Cisternino



Monopoli

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll head down the coast. Puglia is a long, narrow peninsula, and the sea greatly influences it. We will visit one of the most charming seaside towns on the Eastern coast, Monopoli.

The ancient fortified town is located just down the coast from Bari. The oldest part of town is still surrounded by walls that run right into the sea, surrounding this charming village. You'll visit the main square, stopping for a coffee. This is where retired fishermen gather, as well as the port, where small boats come in every evening with the catch of the day. It is one of the most beautiful fortified ports in Puglia and is still active and a part of daily life.



Cisternino

We then hop back on the bus for the short drive to the village of Cisternino. This small town is one of the most beautiful in Puglia, and we'll walk around the white-washed alleys while Angelo tells you about his hometown. Cisternino is home to a traditional type of restaurant called *fornello*. These are small butcher shops where you can pick out your meat to be cooked in traditional wood-burning grills. You'll enjoy a hearty lunch of specialties from the area.

Dinner

On your own tonight. Sophie is happy to give you advice and make reservations.

Thursday

Valle d'Itria & Alberobello



After breakfast at the hotel, we are off to an early start to visit the gorgeous Valle d'Itria.

Masseria

After breakfast at the hotel, we are off to an early start to visit a typical Apulian masseria. For three generations, this farm has been run with love, tradition, and innovation. The family will be sharing their stories with us, as well as opening their home.

After a visit to the estate, to see the cows, pigs, and fields, we will settle into our two workshops. First, we will be learning how to make cheese. A master cheese maker will be teaching us to braid mozzarella and burrata.

We will then visit their farmhouse bakery, learn how to make typical Apulian cookies and crackers, like taralli, and try our hand at orecchiette.

Finally, we'll sit down for lunch. We will, of course, be tasting all the cheeses and cured meats from the farm. Homemade bread, focaccia, and pasta too. A feast!

Alberobello

If you've only seen one photograph of Puglia, chances are it's one of Alberobello. This fantastical little village is made up of structures that are called Trulli. These round, cone-topped stone buildings date back centuries. Their origins remain a mystery. Angelo will explain how these structures came to be as we wander around this Unesco-protected town, popping in and out of Trulli. Also? We'll be walking off lunch!

Dinner

On your own tonight. Let Sophie know if you need help deciding what to do.

Friday

Basilicata & Farewell Dinner



Matera

After breakfast, we will hop on our bus and drive to Matera. The village of Matera, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is completely unique. Located amid the ravines of this wild corner of the Basilicata region, the town comprises hundreds of caves that have been transformed into dwellings.

Angelo will lead us on a tour of this magical town. You will probably recognize some of the views. Since it hasn't changed in thousands of years, it's often used to film historical movies. (the most famous is *The Passion of the Christ*). You will walk into town, visiting the main monuments and a few caves that have been transformed into hotels or homes.



Lunch

We have arranged lunch at a very special hotel, which is famous for its gorgeous setting and historic preservation. A buffet of local specialties will be served in their unique and theatrical cave dining room.

Afternoon

You'll have some free time to shop and explore in Bari.

Dinner

Our final dinner is at one of the oldest restaurants in Bari, where the Minchilli family has been going for decades. We'll be sharing some of their famous raw and fried antipasti and trying their signature dish: Spaghetti all'Assassina.

Saturday

Departure



Check-out

Our tour is officially over, and after one last breakfast, you will be checking out of the hotel. Let us know where you will be headed, and we can arrange transfers to the airport or train station in Bari.

About This Tour

Important information: please read



The Culture of Food

All of our tours are about exploring places through the culture of food. This means that almost all of our activities are food related. You can expect big meals and often snacks in between. If you do not have a big appetite, have food intolerances, are squeamish, or are a picky eater, this is not the tour for you.

Food Intolerances

Since we are in southern Italy, the cuisine is focused on the Mediterranean Diet, so there will be plenty of vegetables. That said, many of our group meals revolve around local food traditions and may include fish or meat and almost always cheese. If you are a vegetarian or lactose intolerant, you will not go hungry, but you will also not be experiencing the full range of the food culture we will be exploring.

Activity Level

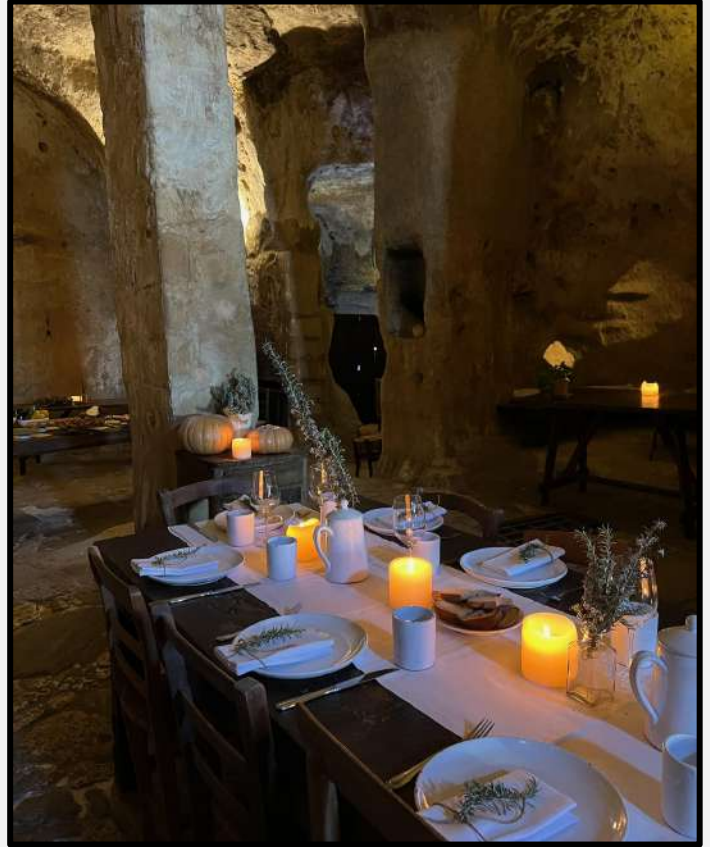
Each day we will be exploring a new town or village. Our days are often long and will involve walking up to an hour or more. While the level is never overly strenuous, you must be able to keep up with the rest of the group.

Travel Companions

Many of our clients find out about us through social media and know what to expect: days spent exploring the culture of food through visits to farms, markets, and more. If you are thinking about bringing along a traveling companion (friend, spouse, relative, partner), please make sure they are aware of the types of things we will be doing. If they are not interested in food, visiting farms, eating in rustic settings, etc., they won't enjoy this tour.

Details

Dates & Price



Dates:

May 27-June 1, 2024

September 30-October 5, 2024

Price:

Double occupancy (2 people in 1 room):

€5900 per person

Single occupancy (1 person in 1 room):

€6400 per person

Since our tours are based on small family-run businesses, we reserve the right to vary the specifics of the itinerary. We may switch days, add/change activities, or substitute locations. We send out an updated itinerary within 30 days prior to the start date.

The fee includes:

- 5 nights in Panorama room at Grande Albergo delle Nazioni
- Buffet breakfast in hotel
- All of the meals, activities and transportation outlined above
- A branded tote bag
- A copy of Sophie's book *The Sweetness of Doing Nothing*

Not included:

- Transportation to and from Italy
- Transportation to and from hotel

Each tour is limited to 12 participants

For more information and to book this tour please email minchillitours@gmail.com

About Us

Your guides for the week

Sophie Minchilli

Sophie, daughter of [Elizabeth](#), admits that her life revolves around food. She graduated from the London College of Communication, writing a dissertation on food in Italian cinema. Her first book, [The Sweetness of Doing Nothing: Living Life the Italian Way with Dolce Far Niente](#), was published by Harper Collins UK in 2021. Sophie lives in Rome and works with Elizabeth, organizing tours in her favorite city in the world, as well as [her own private tour company](#).

You can see Sophie on the Puglia episode of season 2 of “[Stanley Tucci: Searching for Italy](#)” which is available on [CNNgo](#) and [Discovery+](#).

Angelo Calianno

Angelo is a freelance journalist, photographer, and the best (in our opinion) historical and cultural guide in Puglia. He is from the small town of Cisternino and shares his passion for his home with guests through his work as a professional tour guide. While we love hearing about the histories of the towns we visit, we also love it when he shares stories of growing up in Puglia: making pasta with his grandmother, his grandfather taking care of the Trullo where they live, and running around the countryside of Cisternino.

When not exploring Puglia, Angelo travels the world, documenting his work through words and photography.