

The Culture of Food in Puglia

With Adam Roberts



Over the last twenty years of writing my blog, Italian food has loomed large. I not only enjoy sharing it with my readers, but it's probably the type of food I cook most often at home. So, the opportunity to share what I love about Italian cooking while actually traveling in Italy is beyond exciting. Want to come along?

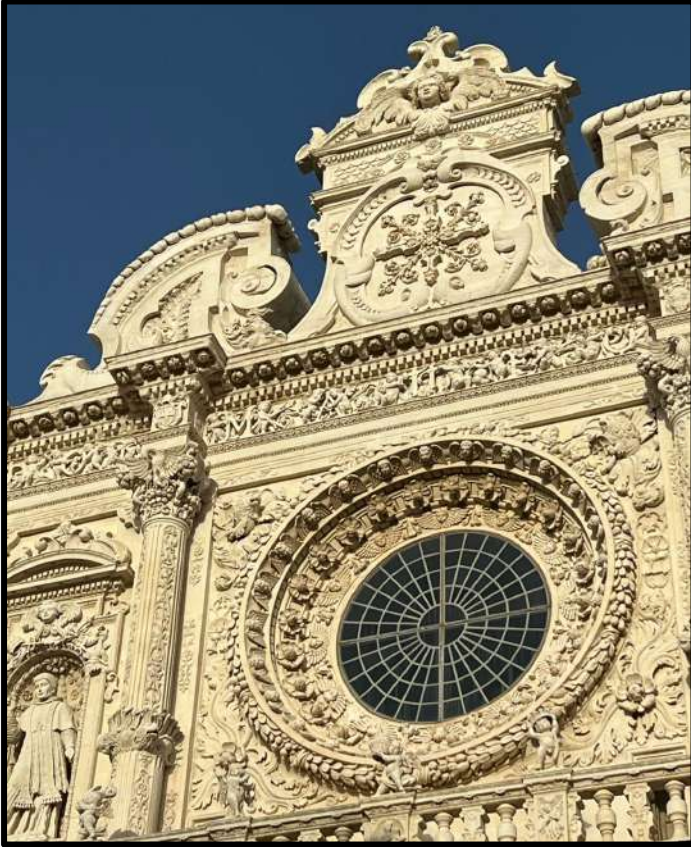
I am thrilled to invite you along on my upcoming trip to Puglia. I've teamed up with author and Italian food expert Elizabeth Minchilli who has curated the perfect week for us. During this 6-day tour, we'll have the time to truly explore Puglia, from a completely food-centric point of view, of course. We'll wander in small towns and through the countryside, tasting, drinking, eating, cooking, learning, and having fun.

We'll be based in Lecce and Monopoli, staying in two very different luxury hotels. The days will be full, with adventures both in the countryside and the cities, but don't worry, you'll also have some downtime to explore on your own.

When:	October 13-19, 2024
Where:	Lecce and Monopoli, Italy
Nearest airports:	Brindisi and Bari, Italy

Arrival & Introductions

Sunday



Arrival

We will begin our week in one of Puglia's most beautiful cities: Lecce. You will be staying in the Hotel Patria Palace, where you will have a chance to settle in before meeting everyone later that evening. You may check in anytime after 3 pm.

You'll find a copy of our schedule for the week, along with a bottle of water, fruit, and some snacks. You'll also have already received a copy of Elizabeth's book, *Eating My Way Through Italy*, and you'll find a branded canvas tote bag to carry goodies you pick up during the week. We will also leave a guide to Elizabeth's favorite places in Lecce and Monopoli to help you plan your free time.

Drinks and dinner

At 7 pm, we will meet for a glass of prosecco to start our week. If weather permits, we will be on the panoramic rooftop of the hotel. Otherwise, we will sit in the lovely salon downstairs. We'll introduce ourselves and go over what we'll be doing this week. You will also meet Angelo, our licensed tour leader for the week.

We will then head out to dinner, walking a few blocks through the historic town center to one of our favorite restaurants. Family-run, this private space feels more like a home than a restaurant. We'll start our week enjoying specialties like burrata and orecchiette and begin learning about the local wines.

Cooking & History

Monday

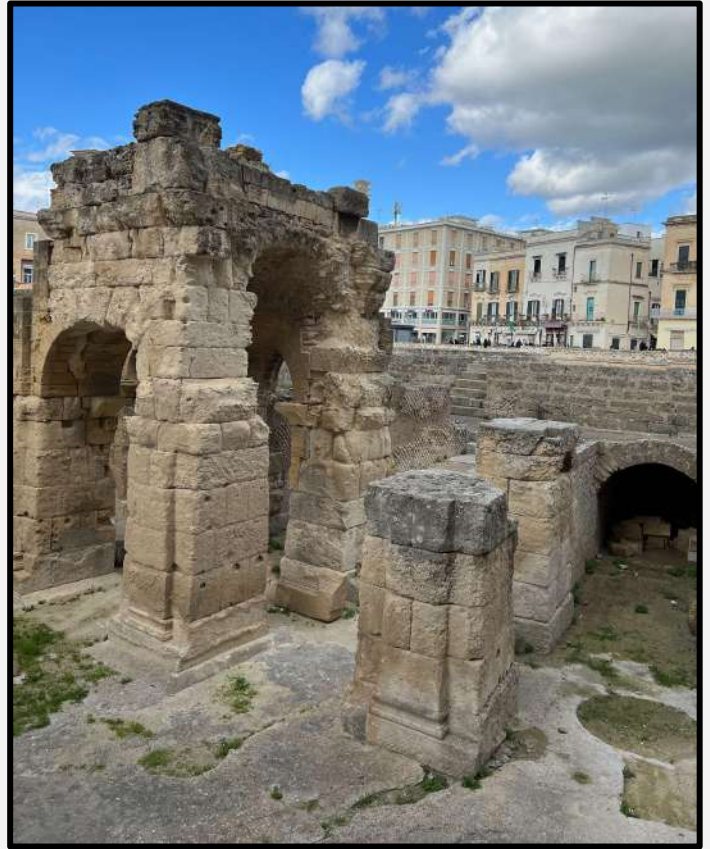


Market and cooking

After breakfast at the hotel, we'll meet our friend Gianna for a market walk and cooking lesson. Gianna has one of the oldest cooking schools in Lecce. We'll stroll through the town center, stopping for a coffee before heading to the market. Then we'll go to her palazzo to prepare a traditional menu, from appetizers to desserts. Finally, we'll gather around the table to enjoy our lunch, paired with local wines.

Afternoon

A bit of rest after our big lunch.



Lecce

In the early evening, we'll meet for a walk through town with Angelo as our guide. Lecce has a long history and is one of Italy's most important baroque towns. Often called the Florence of the south, we'll learn about the fascinating architecture which dates back to Roman times. This walk will also help orient you for the rest of your time here.

Aperitivo

We will end our day together with an aperitivo at a little bar nearby. The large array of nibbles may be enough for you to call it dinner

Galatina & Gallipoli

Tuesday



Galatina

After breakfast, we head to Galatina to wander the streets and visit the Basilica di Santa Caterina d'Alessandria, constructed in the 14th century. The unique fresco cycle, which covers the entire interior, is one of the most important medieval spectacles in Italy.

Just as important (!), we will have a mid-morning snack: a *pasticciotto*. It was at this pastry shop, in the 18th century, that the first *pasticciotto* was baked. These cream-filled pastries are made all over Salento these days, but the bakeries in Galatina still produce the best ones.



Gallipoli

We hop back on our bus and head to the coast to the ancient port town of Gallipoli. We'll wander through town as Angelo explains the history. You'll also have some free time to visit the shops or walk along the sea. Then we'll have lunch at one of our favorite seaside restaurants. Located right on the port, we'll enjoy lunch made with a specialty of the area: shrimp.

Dinner

After a long day of eating, tonight you are on your own in Lecce for dinner. We can suggest some wine bars or nibbles or else a regular restaurant or pizzeria if you are hungry after our big lunch!

Olive Oil & Ostuni

Wednesday



Lecce > Monopoli

After breakfast, we will be packing our bags to change hotels. But before we get to our new destination, we have quite a full day.

Olive oil

Puglia is one of the largest producers of olive oil in Italy. Today we will visit a very special farm that produces olive oil from some of the oldest olive trees in the world. There is one tree that is 3000 years old! We will also visit the ancient underground olive mill before sitting down for a private olive oil tasting.

Lunch in Ostuni

We drive through olive groves to the nearby, blindingly white town of Ostuni for lunch. After a walk through the winding streets made of stone,

we will sit down in a restaurant carved into millenary rock.

Afternoon

After lunch, we check into our new hotel, Dimora Don Ferrante, in the beautiful seaside village of Monopoli. The hotel is carved into the ancient walls surrounding the town and into the sea. Each room is unique, and each one special.

Late afternoon

A walk through town with Angelo so you can get oriented and learn the history of this port town.

Dinner

On your own. We are happy to help you make plans.

Valle d'Itria

Thursday



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 tour of the estate, we will settle into our first workshop. A master cheesemaker will teach us how to braid mozzarella and stuff burrata.

Then we will visit their farmhouse bakery, where we'll learn how to make typical Apulian cookies and crackers, like taralli, and try our hands at making the fiddly orecchiette.

Finally, we'll sit down for lunch and taste the cheeses, cured meats, bread, focaccia, and pasta, all made on the farm. 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. We are happy to help you with plans.

Bari & Farewell Dinner

Friday



Bari

After breakfast, we will head to Bari for the day. We will meet Giorgio who will share some of his favorite spots, eating our way along the lungomare to the fish market and continuing to explore amid the winding alleys of Bari Vecchia.

Life in Bari Vecchia is lived on the street. Street-level homes open directly onto small alleys, and you can look in to see families gathered around their tables. With Giorgio as our guide, we'll visit private homes and courtyards, including the famous orecchiette ladies. Along the way, we'll make street food our lunch, trying the best focaccia, panzerotti, and biscotti.



Monopoli

You have the afternoon free to wander around Monopoli or stroll along the coast.

Farewell dinner

This evening we will meet for our last dinner together. We'll be heading to our favorite restaurant for a final fishy feast.

Departure

Saturday



Check-out

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

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, meat, pasta and cheese. If you are lactose intolerant or GF 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, location, and cost



When: October 13-19, 2024

Where: Puglia, Italy

Nearest airports: Brindisi and Bari, Italy

Price: €5200 per person (double occupancy)
€6000 per person (single occupancy)

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.

Each tour is limited to 12 participants

The fee includes:

- 3 nights at Patria Palace Hotel
- 3 nights at Dimora Don Ferrante
- Buffet breakfast in hotels
- All of the meals, activities and transportation outlined above
- A branded tote bag
- Copy of *Eating My Way Through Italy* by Elizabeth Minchilli

Not included:

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

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

About Us

Your guides for the week

Adam Roberts

Adam started his food blog [The Amateur Gourmet](#) in January 2004 and currently shares his recipes on his [Substack newsletter](#). He's authored three books — including *Secrets of the Best Chefs* and *Give My Swiss Chards to Broadway* — and written for *The LA Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Food52*, and *Serious Eats*. He currently lives in Brooklyn with his husband, filmmaker Craig Johnson, and their dog, Winston.

Elizabeth Minchilli

Although not joining the tour, Elizabeth has carefully curated this week. She has been writing about the joys of Italian life for the last 30 years and is the author of 9 [books](#) on Italy. Her popular [blog](#) and [newsletter](#) is where she shares her passion for Italian food, writing about recipes, meals and restaurants. She has been creating food tours since 2011 and today runs her [business](#) along with her two daughters, Sophie and Emma.

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.