

MURGEOPARK



MURGEOPARK
ASPIRING UNESCO GEOPARK

GEO TOURIST GUIDE

GEOTOURIST ITINERARIES
IN THE TERRITORIES OF
THE ASPIRING GEOPARK

GEOTURST GUIDE

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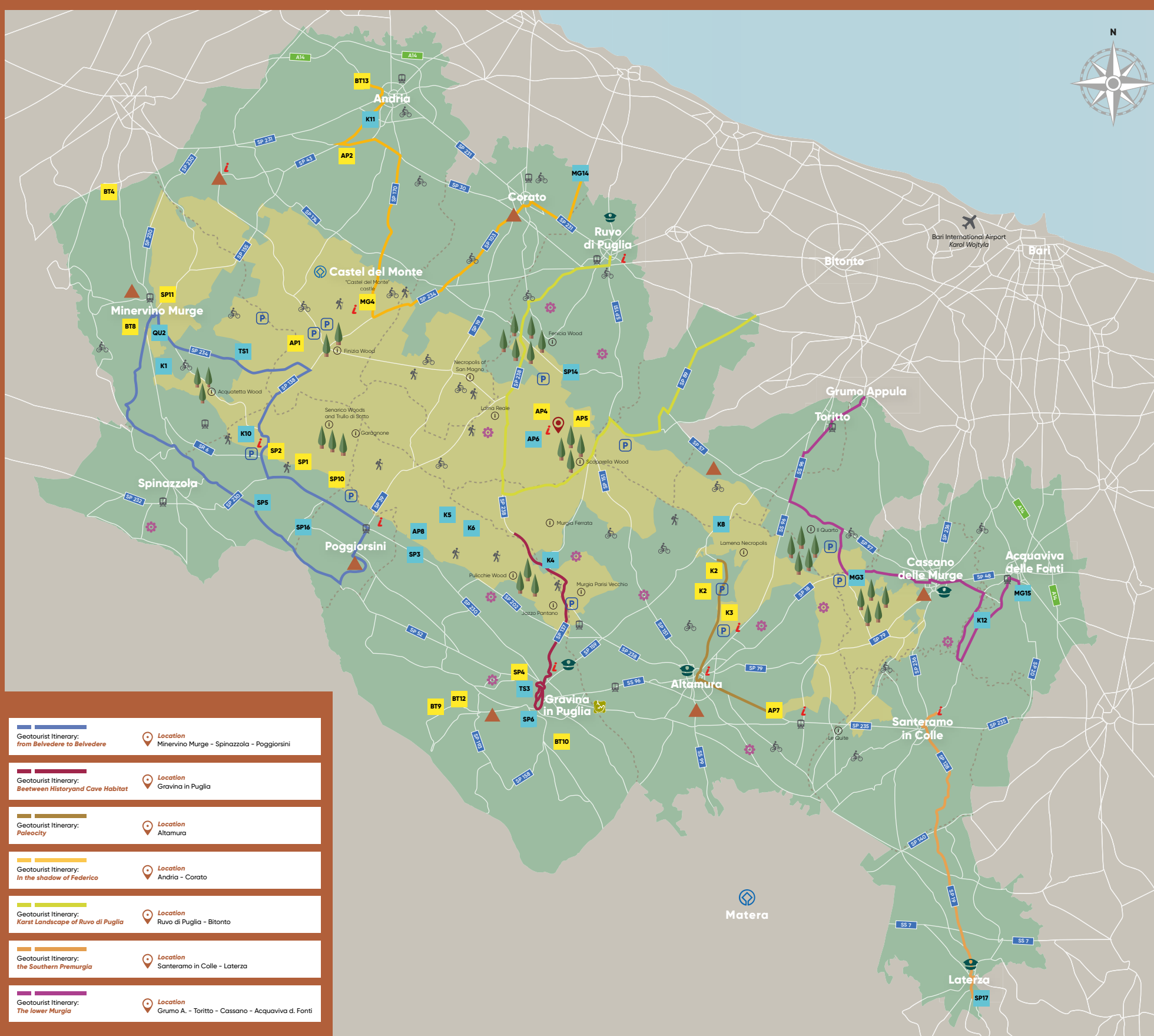
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Geotourist itinerary: <i>from Belvedere to Belvedere</i>	Location: Minervino Murge - Spinazzola - Poggiorsini
Geotourist itinerary: <i>Between History and Cave Habitat</i>	Location: Gravina in Puglia
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GENERAL INFORMATION

Location: The MurGEopark (aspiring Unesco Geopark) is located in Europe, in the eastern sector of southern Italy (Puglia), roughly between 40°37' and 41°16' N and between 15°58' and 16°52' E.

Surface Area (km²): ≈2,550 km² (≈255,000 ha)

Short physical and human geography characteristics:

The area basically corresponds with the northwestern Alta Murgia and the Premurge area of Puglia. The whole area is mainly hilly, with altitudes up to about 680 m.

The Alta Murgia area is characterized by the occurrence of woods, karst caves, sinkholes, escarpments, peculiar streams, extensive pastures and architectural elements with towns related to agricultural activity and pastoralism.

The area includes the municipal territory of fifteen towns between the provinces of Bari, BAT, and Taranto. Total population reaches about 440,000 inhabitants.

HOW TO REACH THE ASPIRING GEOPARK

Hi, I'm Rico!
Welcome
to my Park!



By plane or train:

✈️ • From International Airport of Bari *Karol Wojtyła* you can reach the center of Bari by Ferrovie Bari-Nord (Ferrotramviaria S.p.a.).

🚆 • If you want to go from Bari to Gravina in Puglia, you can take one of the Ferrovie Appulo Lucane (FAL) trains that cross several towns of the Murgia.

• Alternatively, you can get to Gioia del Colle by train using the state railways (Trenitalia) and from there proceed to Santeramo, Altamura, Gravina in Puglia, Poggiorsini, Spinazzola or Minervino Murge.

• The Ferrovie Bari-Nord (Ferrotramviaria S.p.a.) railways take you to Bitonto, Ruvo, Corato and Andria.

By car:

🚗 • From the **A14 Bologna-Bari** highway it is necessary to exit at the tollbooths of Trani, Molfetta, Bitonto, Bari-north, Bari-south, Gioia del Colle and from there take the various routes to the towns of the Aspiring Geopark. From Basilicata and Calabria it can be accessed from state roads **96** and **99**.

INTRODUCTION

For the Alta Murgia National Park, entering the network of Geoparks is the most important goal ever, which has started a process aimed at making the most out of its territory's geodiversity, which is the last stretch of a lost continent called "Great Adria". The 177 UNESCO Global Geoparks, which are distributed in 46 nations, preserve the traces of an ancient past, rare evidence of how man has evolved through the centuries. The Alta Murgia Park aims to become the 12th Geopark in Italy, raising awareness among communities of the value of its geological heritage and giving it a holistic vision of protection, education and sustainable development.

Proof of the great value of this territory, five collector's stamps issued by the Ministry of Economic Development represent the most important geological treasures of the Park: the *Cava Pontrelli*, the "*Grotta di Lamalunga*" Cave, the Bauxite Mines, the *Pulo di Altamura* and the *Pulicchio di Gravina*. These five sites make the Alta Murgia a unique element of geodiversity worldwide, starting with Cava Pontrelli, on whose surface over 25,000 dinosaur tracks are engraved, still well preserved and visible today.

Visiting the Alta Murgia Park is a journey through Earth's history, where one can admire landscapes dotted with lamas, sinkholes and caves resulting from the karst phenomenon that has carved them over the millennia. This is a thousand-year-old place of wild charm, where the beauty of the geological sites is intertwined with the activity of the peasants who built fencing for sheep, ice houses, stone-made churches and majestic farmhouses that rise on the cattle-tracks where the transhumance took place. The Park Authority aims to protect, enhance and preserve this precious strip of land, where ancient civilizations left concrete traces of their passage.

Dreaming of the coveted recognition as a Geopark, I invite you all to visit the Alta Murgia and discover its treasures and prehistoric beauty that surprise and fascinate everyone. You will find sixty-eight thousand hectares in which ancient history, nature, knowledge, and flavours come together, to be savoured slowly.

Francesco Tarantini
President of the Alta Murgia National Park

1 from Belvedere to Belvedere



MINERVINO MURGE

POGGIORSINI

SPINAZZOLA

TOUR ONE

A tour of the most evocative panoramic views of the Alta Murgia Park: villages, rock churches, quarries, caves and woods.

Tour 1

A tour through the geological landscapes of the Alta Murgia Park, including woods, villages, hills, stone-made churches, quarries and caves. **Minervino Murge**, also known as the 'balcony of Puglia', was the birthplace of popes and scholars. The old town called 'sciesciola' has medieval and Arab origins, while the more modern part developed after the construction of the aqueduct with suspended arches in the Angevin period. The characteristic town and its traditions inspired Lina Wertmüller in the movie 'I Basilischi'. Minervino is one of the few towns in Italy not on the sea to boast a lighthouse, built during the fascist era. The view from the terrace of the Angevin Castle, now the Municipal Palace and Archaeological Museum, allows a 360-degree view of the Premurgian landscapes, enabling the geological evolution of the region to be framed in a single view. On its northern side, Minervino is embraced by **Lama Cipolla** and **Lama Matitani**, which dissect the Mesozoic limestones of the Murge dating back some 80 million years, which can be observed along a footpath leading to one of the most evocative man-made caves in Apulia: "Saint Michael's Grotto" built in a natural cave with prehistoric remains and enriched by

1 Panoramic point of Poggiorsini, BA

2 Panoramic point of Minervino Murge, BA



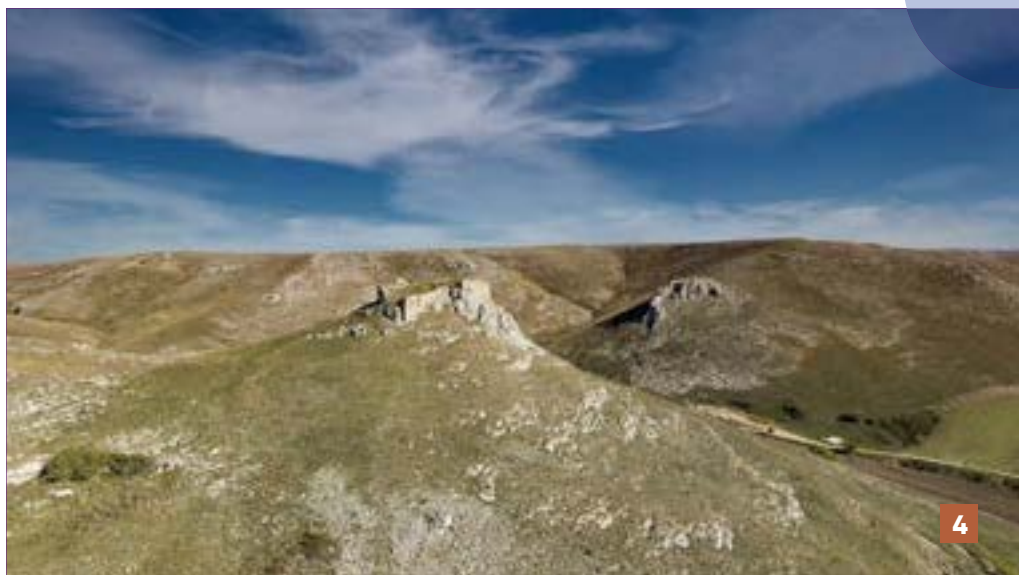
medieval and 17th-century architectural elements made of local stone. The Murgian ridge south of Minervino is characterised by breathtaking landscapes, both natural and man-made, easily accessible to hikers via CAI (*Club Alpino Italiano*, Italian alpine association) trails. Just to the west one can see the Murgian slopes delineated by two reliefs, **Monte Monacelle** and **Monte Scorzone**, one of the largest mining districts in Apulia with limestones deriving from polychrome stratifications. In addition to the man-made landscape of the quarries, there is a unique karstic landscape with remarkable caves, including the caves of Monte Scorzone and Monte Monacelle. In the direction of **Spinazzola**, one can admire the fascinating 90-metre-deep **Cavone sinkhole**, which leads to an underground world embellished with speleothems.

continued on page 4 >

In the same area, the red hues of the **Bauxite Mines** can be seen in the Murgetta Rossa district and in the lush Bosco di Acquatetta (wood), one of the largest woods in Apulia, where a panoramic view can be enjoyed from the Lama Cupa lookout. From the depths of the earth, we return 'to the top' of the Murgian Highlands, reaching the ruins of **Garagnone Castle**, an ancient Norman fortress at 590 m above sea level, destroyed by an earthquake in the Middle Ages. At the foot of the castle is Masseria Melodia, an imposing 17th century building that stands out in the barren landscape, a film set for western movies. To the south of the fortress is the village of **Poggiorsini**, dating back to the 17th century but with deep roots tied to the Palaeolithic period due to the presence of water springs. The city's vantage point is the red-brick belvedere from which the view can sweep from the ridge of the Murge, to the terraced landscapes of Premurgia, to the gentle scenery of the Bradanic Trough, observing the southern Apennines in the background. In



3



4



the countryside of Spinazzola there is a geosite called **Lama Grottelline**, a rock site of exceptional historical value, dated between 8000 years ago and the Middle Ages. The limestones of Lama Grottelline show peculiar sedimentary structures related to river delta environments, dune or emerged when the Bradanic Trough area was submerged by sea water. The last leg of the journey leads to the **Bridge with 21 arches** ('*Ponte dei Ventuno Archi*' in Italian), where the historic 'Gioia del Colle - Rocchetta Sant'Antonio' railway line, with its beautiful landscape, is located.



5

3 Saint Michael's Grotto, Minervino Murge, BT

4 The Garagnone castle, Spinazzola, BT

5 Bauxite mines in the Murgetta Rossa district, Spinazzola, BT

Highlights ¹



6



MINERVINO MURGE

- Old Scesciola district, **Villa Faro** and **Minervino Murge Castle**
- Geological walk at **Lama Cipolla** and **Lama Matitani**
- **Saint Michael's Grotto**
- South-eastern **Murgian slope** with **Mount Scorzone** and **Mount Monacelle**

6 Faro Votivo of Minervino Murge, BT

7 Bridge with 21 arches ('*Ponte dei Ventuno Archi*' in Italian), Spinazzola, BT

8 Old Town of Poggiorsini, BA



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SPINAZZOLA

- **Bosco di Acquatetta** (Wood) and **Cavone sinkhole**
- **Bauxite mines** in the **Murgetta Rossa** district
- **The Garagnone castle** and **fortress**
- **Grottelline lama** and rock settlement geological site
- **Ponte Ventuno Archi** (Bridge with 21 arches)



8



POGGIORSINI

- Old town with panoramic point of Poggiorsini on the **Bradanic Trough**

Focus ¹



Minervino Murge

Geosites List

I SP11
BT4 BT8

N QU2
K1
TS1

Minervino Murge is the only urban centre located in the mighty limestone heart of the Alta Murgia. It stands on the northern edge of the plateau, halfway up an ancient arm connecting the road routes of the Appian Way and Trajan Way. The area is home to many of the most interesting karst phenomena in Apulia, such as lamas, caves, ravines, dolines and limestone step outcrops, most of which are still well preserved. In the southeastern belt lies the **Bosco di Acquatteta** (Wood), where expanses of conifers dominate the surface and evolving oak species dominate the undergrowth. The masserie are made of white Minervino stone and include several areas for animal housing, as well as warehouses and farmers' dwellings. Notable among them are masseria Coleti Piccola, masseria Lambrenghi, masseria Posta Corsi and masseria San Giorgio. Minervino's countryside stretches north along the Ofanto valley and the immense plains of Capitanata, while to the west it rejoins valleys covered with vegetable gardens, olive groves, vines and wheat, whose bright colours spread to the foothills of **Vulture**. The area is home to the **Locone dam**, among the largest earthen dams in Europe, which contains the waters of the stream of the same name. Furthermore, **St. Michael's Grotto** is an important geosite at the foot of the village, where faith and mystery merge in the limestone rock. The main entrance is marked by a neoclassical chapel topped by an old hermitage. Ninety stone steps lead to the centre of the cave where the altar of St. Michael and a tombstone testifying to his worship in the early Christian era are located.



9 Saint Michael's Grotto (Minervino Murge, BT)

Focus ¹



Spinazzola



The territory of **Spinazzola** rises on the top of a hill, along the cultivated valleys of the Bradanic Trough and reaching as far as the Murgian Ridge, lapping the **Rocca del Garagnone fortress** and the limestone uplands of **Torre Disperata**. The landscape is the result of a process of geological stratification and a complex web of relationships between man and the environment. From a geomorphological point of view, Spinazzola lies on a ridge bounded by two deep valleys: the **Locone** valley and the **Ulmata** valley. That summit also marks the boundary between two different geologic areas: the first, to the northeast, is represented by the large limestone clod of the Alta Murgia, a complex of carbonate rocks formed about 130 million years ago; the second, to the southwest, is characterized by clay and alluvial deposits that descend toward the Bradanic Trough. Among the most scenic places in the countryside there are the Murgetta Rossa **Bauxite Mines**, a mining deposit discovered in 1935 and active between the 1950s and 1980s to extract aluminium. Here, one's gaze is lost among the red of the earth, the blue of the sky and the lush green of the vegetation. This site represents a special form of man-made landscape, a heritage of industrial archaeology that attracts many visitors for the vivid hues of the red earth deposits.



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Focus ¹



Poggiorsini



With about 1,400 inhabitants, **Poggiorsini** is the smallest municipality in the Alta Murgia National Park. Nevertheless, in this area there are rural complexes of ancient origins and highly evocative places, such as the **Garagnone Castle** on the border with Spinazzola and the **masseria Grottelline**, in which the signs of human presence through the centuries are clear. Along with the masseria and natural caves, the **Tufara delle Grottelline** is also worth a visit, while sheep shelters (called "jazzi" in Italian) and fortified farms are arranged between the Murgian Ridge and the Bradanic Trough. Some of the most remarkable masserie are: masseria Lorusso, masseria Filieri, masseria di Cri-

sto, masseria Medicichchio, masseria Fornasiello, masseria San Cataldo, masseria Scoto, jazzo Monte Grosso and masseria Lamione del Verro.

Looking toward the slopes of the Roviniero creek, one can also see the large masseria Capo Posta on the border with Lucania. The land reaches the foot of **Monteserico Castle** and laps at **Lake Basentello**, where shepherds let their sheep soak before shearing them during the transhumance period. Because of its particular location, Poggiorsini exhibits a rich and layered landscape: on one side the more compact limestone of the Murgian Ridge, on the other the undulating reliefs of the valleys along the Roviniero stream.

12 Murgian Ridge, Poggiorsini, BA

13 Lake of Serra del Corvo, Basentello District, Poggiorsini, BA

2 *between* History *and* Cave Habitat



1

TOUR TWO

Its origins can be traced in history and rocks, admiring rock settlements in the archaeological area, from the Palaeolithic to the Bronze Age.



GRAVINA IN PUGLIA

Tour 2

Gravina in Puglia is called the 'City of Water and Stone' because of the outcropping rock and the characteristic river incision from which it takes its name. The land was shaped by water in previous geological eras, which today no longer flows on the surface but underground. Gravina's origins are strictly tied to the history of its ravine, in whose archaeological area one can admire rock settlements dating from the Palaeolithic to the Neolithic to the Bronze Age.

The itinerary includes a visit to the cave habitat on the edge of the old town, overlooking the canyon crossed by the historic 18th-century **Aqueeduct Bridge**. Both the aqueduct and the lama with its hypogea are among the most important geosites for understanding the relationship between man and geology and that between the Cretaceous limestones at the base and the Quaternary calcarenites at the top.

Visiting the old town, one can see the peculiar use of calcarenite materials in architecture, as well as in the sewage systems that wall natural lamas, underground cellars and courtyards called Cavati. Along the **Gravina di Gravina Canyon** one can admire some of the many rock-hewn churches: the crypt of San Vito Vecchio whose medieval frescoes can be visited in the **Pomarici Santomasì Museum**, the sanctuary of

1 Aqueeduct Bridge and Gravina in Puglia, Gravina in Puglia, BA

2 Former Monastery of Santa Sofia, Gravina in Puglia, BA

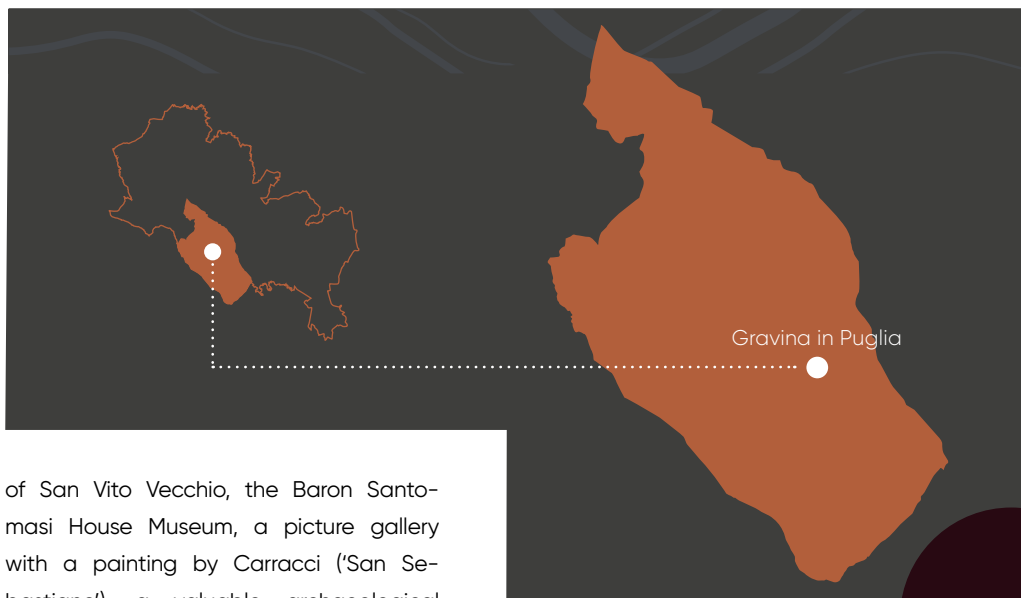


2

the Madonna della Stella, and the churches of San Michele delle Grotte, Saint Basil, St Mary of the Angels, the Padreterno. The Co-Cathedral of Gravina also features inlays of local stone and the use of polychrome rocks in the mosaics inspired by the Neapolitan art. Gravina was also the birthplace of the illustrious geologist **Arcangelo Scacchi** (19th century), whose book collection is kept in the Finia Library, which is also rich in papal edicts (Gravina boasts one of the two Apulian popes in history, Pope Benedict XIII).

It is precisely to the famous geologist that the **GeoMuseum of the Alta Murgia National Park** has been dedicated, a multimedia space for the enhancement and promotion of the geological heritage, built inside the **former Monastery of Santa Sofia**.

Other important artefacts by Arcangelo Scacchi are kept at the Ettore Pomarici Santomasì Foundation, which houses the Crypt



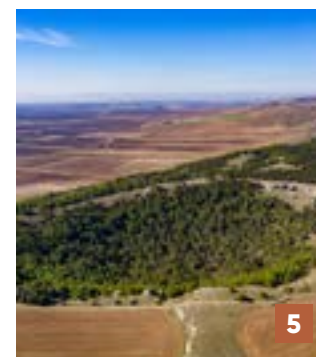
of San Vito Vecchio, the Baron Santomasi House Museum, a picture gallery with a painting by Carracci ('San Sebastiano'), a valuable archaeological collection, majolica pottery, vintage clothing, a library and a collection of coins. South of the town, one's gaze is lost in the **Bosco Difesa Grande** (Wood), a SCI (Site of Community Importance) area of great extension and value, where geosites representative of the Gravina Calcarenes emerge, showing the different fluctuations of the sea that occurred 2 million years ago and the sediments that filled the Bradanic Trough. To the north of the wood, one reaches the area of **Masseria and Jazzo Pantano**, a typical rural structure used in the past for sheltering shepherds and flocks, which seems to blend into the landscape due to the presence of dry stone walls. In this area, the karst area of Tre Paduli, the Pulicchio di Gravina and the Gurlamanna sinkhole are worth a visit. They are karstic forms first described in 1800 by the geologist Carmelo Colamonico as examples of karst of international significance.



Highlights ²



GRAVINA IN PUGLIA



- Old town of **Gravina** and **Co-Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption**
- **Finia Library, Ettore Pomarici Santomasi Foundation Museum, Arcangelo Scacchi GeoMuseum**
- Gravina Geological Site with **Aqueduct Bridge** (Ponte Acquedotto Fontana della Stella) and **rock-hewn churches**
- **Bosco Difesa Grande (wood)**
- **Pantano Wood with Jazzo Pantano**
- **Tre Paduli karst sinkhole complex, Pulicchio di Gravina sinkhole and Gurlamanna sinkhole**

3 Jazzo Pantano, Gravina in Puglia, BA

4 Co-Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption , Gravina in Puglia, BA

5 Pulicchio di Gravina sinkhole, Gravina in Puglia, BA

Focus

2



Gravina in Puglia

Geosites List

I BT9, BT10, BT12, SP4 N SP3, AP8, K5, K6, TS3, SP6

The municipality of **Gravina in Puglia** is located in the heart of the Murgian Highlands bordering Lucania. With its approximately 40,000 hectares of extension it is one of the largest in the Alta Murgia, an area among the most significant for the great value of both natural and anthropic ecosystems. The town rises nearly 400 meters above sea level amidst expanses of olive groves and lush green hills. The area is marked by an extraordinary ravine, the presence of which reveals the settlement history of the city and characterizes the morphology of the territory between the Bradanic Trough and soft uplands such as the Murgian Ridge. The **Pulicchio** is the second-largest collapse doline in the Murgian Highlands. It is a highly scenic karst phenomenon embellished with extensive pine and coniferous vegetation. Moreover, it is among the largest cavities in Puglia with a diameter measuring about 500 meters and reaching a depth of

110 meters. The Pulicchio is a valuable environmental niche where species such as long-eared owls, buzzards, kestrels, common ravens and numerous other wildlife species nest. In the Franchini Murgia, on the other hand, lies one of the most striking sinkholes in southern Italy: **the Faraualla Cave**, which reaches a depth of 260 meters. The pride of the Municipality of Gravina is the **Aqueduct Bridge**, a 37-meter-high and 90-meter-long arched structure that has often become a movie set for several films. This ancient construction connects the two banks of the Gravina stream; it was built to enable the believers to cross it and reach the little church of Madonna della Stella. Collapsed in 1722 due to an earthquake, the bridge was rebuilt around the middle of the century at the behest of the Orsini family of Rome, which gave it the function of an aqueduct to enable the transfer of water from the springs of Sant'Angelo and San Giacomo to the territory of Gravina.



6

Aerial view of the Gravina di Gravina canyon, Gravina in Puglia, BA

3 Paleocity

From Dinosaurs to Neanderthals to The Cold War



1

TOUR THREE

Dinosaur stories, one of the largest dinosaur footprints site in the world, Neanderthal stories and unique underground and epigeal karst sites.

Tour 3

Altamura was founded in the Middle Ages with the edict of Frederick II of Swabia, due to the fertility of the land and its many pastures. The name derives from the megalithic walls surrounding the city and refers to the term *Altum*, which in medieval Latin meant 'ancient', hence 'ancient walls'.

The city is surrounded by urban archaeological excavations that link its history to the use of stone. The area is still devoted to cereal agriculture and intensive quarrying and production of building materials.

In 1993, archaeologists discovered some remains - among the most complete in the world - of a Neanderthal specimen that lived between 130,000 and 190,000 years ago, found in a karstic cave in the **Lamalunga district**, where there is also a visitor centre dedicated to the hominid with educational trails for children.

To the north-west of the town is the imposing karstic sinkhole of **Pulo di Altamura**, about 700 metres in diameter and 90 metres deep, originating from the collapse of caves and inhabited in ancient times by hominids.

A short distance away are other immense chasms known as **Faraualla** and **Preveticelli**, among the most impressive karst sinkholes in the region. In the Contrada Pontrelli district



2

there is one of the great quarries of Altamura, recognised today as one of the largest dinosaur footprint sites in the world. Discovered in 1999, **Cava Pontrelli** contains more than 25,000 footprints dating back some 85 million years, attributable to dinosaurs belonging to two small to medium-sized families, the Hadrosaurs and Nodosaurus.

Continuing along the route, in the Casal Sabini district, one can see one of the **Jupiter thermonuclear missile fields**, active in the 1960s during the Cold War.

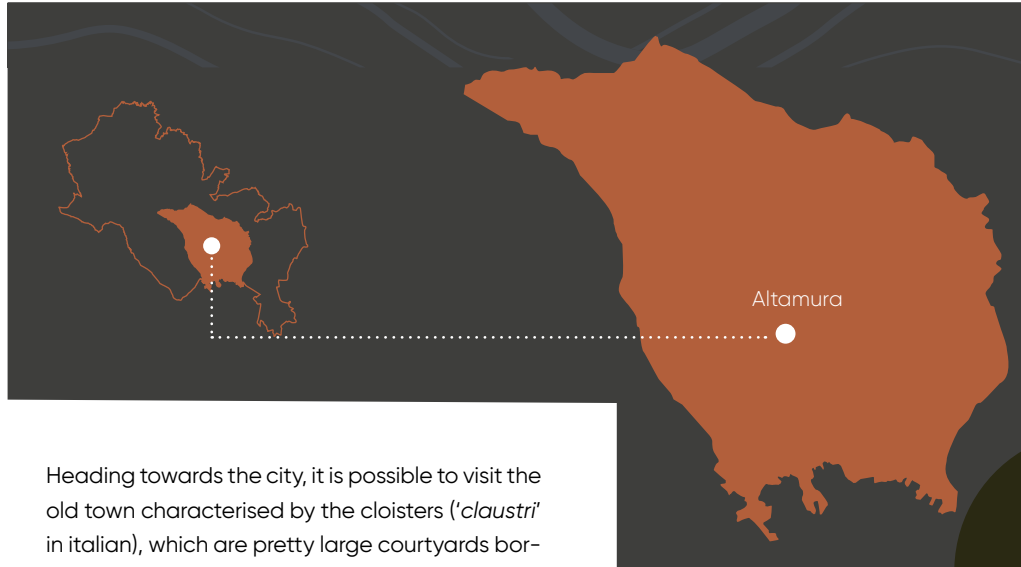
continued on page 22

1 Pulo di Altamura sinkhole, Altamura, BA

2 Dinosaurs tracks of Cava Pontrelli, Altamura, BA



ALTAMURA



Heading towards the city, it is possible to visit the old town characterised by the cloisters (*'claustri'* in Italian), which are pretty large courtyards bordered by their dwellings where daily life activities took place in the time of Frederick II.

The **Cathedral** dedicated to **St Mary of the Assumption**, with its majestic Gothic portal and the **MuDiMa** (Museum of matronea) are worth a visit. The itinerary also includes a visit to the **National Archaeological Museum**, which, as part of the city's 'Paleocity' museum network, tells the history of the area in a sustainable way, as well as the **Baldassarre Palace Museum**.

Altamura is also famous for its PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) bread, an excellence known throughout Italy and to be enjoyed in one of the city's oldest medieval bakeries, now also the **Forte Bread Museum**.



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4



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3 Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption, Altamura, BA

4 Altamura National Archaeological Museum, Altamura, BA

5 Pulo di Altamura sinkhole, Altamura, BA

Highlights ³



ALTAMURA

- Old town, **Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption**, **Claustri**
- **Forte Bread Museum**
- **National Archaeological Museum**
- **Baldassarre Palace**
- **Pulo di Altamura sinkhole**
- **Lamalunga Cave** and Visitor Centre
- **Cava Pontrelli** (Pontrelly Quarry)
- **Campo Jupiter** of Casal Sabini

Focus³



Altamura

Geosites List

I AP7, K2, K3 N K4

With its 43,000 hectares, the territory of **Altamura** is the largest in the province of Bari. It is the outcome of a long process of geomorphological stratification and a complex web of relationships between man and the environment. Beginning in the Norman-Swabian-Angevin period, the territory was structured into farmhouses organized around masserie and fencing for sheep, unique settlements that preserve the signs of an ingenious rural culture. The Altamura countryside is home to an important Murgian woods system: the **Bosco della Mena** (wood) where badgers and porcupines dwell and where almost all the varieties of oak in the area are preserved. The **Pulo di Altamura** is among the most impressive karst phenomena found there, with a diameter of about 700 meters and a depth of 90 meters. It is riddled by vertical walls full of caves and was inhabited by hominids between the Palaeolithic and Bronze Age. This large doline appears as a silent, archaic

amphitheatre and, like the other dolines that embellish the area, is the result of long erosion by groundwater, which, excavating over millennia, resulted in the collapse of the roof. In addition to the Pulo, Altamura is home to one of the most valuable geological treasures of the Alta Murgia: **Cava Pontrelli**, a deposit with more than 25,000 dinosaur footprints of great scientific significance, well preserved and discovered by accident in 1999. The different tracks of footprints make it possible to reconstruct gaits, sizes, behaviours, and even the appearance of the remote giants of Earth. It is a journey through the millennia that continues in the **Lamalunga Cave**, where the skeleton of the **Altamura Man**, among the oldest specimens of Neanderthal Man, was discovered in 1993. Studies on a bone fragment suggest that it dates back to between 130,000 and 190,000 years ago. The find is embedded in the limestone concretions of an underground tunnel.



6 Altamura Man, Lamalunga Cave, Altamura, BA

4 *in the* Shadow *of* Federico



Tour 4

Castel del Monte in Andria is a unique example of medieval architecture. The octagonal fortress has been a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** since 1996 and is one of the most famous castles in the world, both for the shape of its walls and for the inspiration of its founder, **Frederick II of Swabia**, an emperor and lover of Apulia referred to as 'Puer Apuliae'.

The cliff on which the castle stands is of great geological and landscape importance - a residual relief that overlooks both the Adriatic and the Murgian area. Fundamental to its construction was the use of precious stone materials, limestone and pebbles from Apulian quarries, which are still prized all over the world. After a stop in the old town of Andria and its castle, one can tour the areas on the northern border of the Alta Murgia Park.

In the Andria area, one can admire the **Gurgo** geosite, one of the largest karst sinkholes in Apulia characterised by an ephemeral lake that rapidly disappears (*gurgo*, in fact, means 'whirlpool', 'vortex'). The sinkhole has a radius of about 800 metres and contains nine caves of varying sizes that were inhabited in prehistoric times. To the north of Gurgo one can visit Lama di Santa Margherita, a palaeontological site with the typical morphology of the ephemeral watercourses of the northern Murgia. Next to it stands the Basilica Shrine of St. Mary of the Mi-



racles, a medieval structure of fine workmanship and history.

The itinerary continues to Corato where, heading south, one can walk along a stretch of the Appian Way and Trajan Way and admire the karst landscapes of the Murge, as well as olive and almond trees.

At the **archaeological area of San Magno**, one can visit a necropolis and a charming church that also served as an icehouse, which revealed the need for the inhabitants to preserve water.

continued on page 28 >



ANDRIA

CORATO

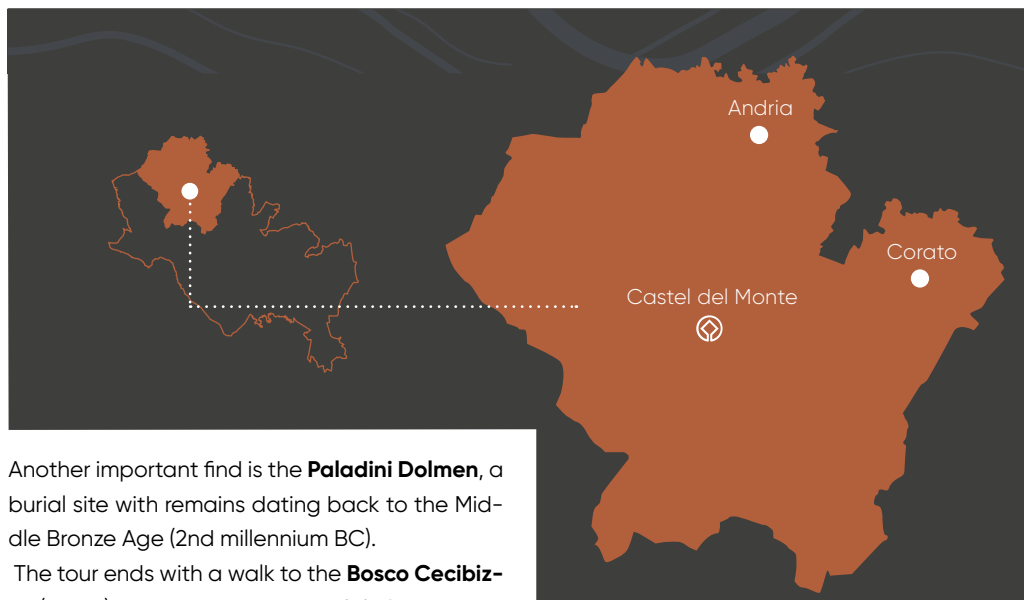
CASTEL DEL MONTE

TOUR FOUR

The memory of Frederick II of Swabia is present everywhere on this territory and through this itinerary it will be possible to experience its scents.

1 Castel del Monte, Andria, BT

2 Archaeological area of San Magno, Corato, BA



Another important find is the **Paladini Dolmen**, a burial site with remains dating back to the Middle Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC).
The tour ends with a walk to the **Bosco Cecibizzo** (wood) and the **Jazzo Tarantini**. Cecibizzo is a young (mid-20th century) wood that responds to the geological need to mitigate the energy of water during heavy rainfalls. It is home to birds of prey and hosts plant species such as conifers and downy oaks. The architecture and the ancient stone-made '**vagno**' (a facility used in the past for washing sheep before shearing them) of Jazzo Tarantini are still clearly visible.



3 Bosco Cecibizzo (wood), Corato, BA

Highlights 4



ANDRIA

- Old town of **Andria**
- **Gurgo di Andria** (sinkhole)
- **Lama di Santa Maria** and **Basilica Shrine of St. Mary of the Miracles**
- **Castel del Monte**



CORATO

- Archaeological Area of **San Magno**
- **Paladini Dolmen**
- Karst landscape of the **northern Murge** with a viewpoint of the **Appian Way** and **Trajan Way**
- **Bosco Cecibizzo** (wood) and **Jazzo Tarantini**

Focus ⁴



Andria



Geosites List

I BT13, AP2,
MG4, AP1

N K11

Andria lies nestled on the lower slope of the Murgian Highlands and stretches between the lower hills and the coast. Expanses of olive trees surround the town, which looks on one side to the nearby Adriatic coast and on the other to the heart of the Alta Murgia. The vegetation alternates between the wild species of the pseudo-Mediterranean steppe and typical local crops, as well as woods and oak groves. Caves, lamas and sinkholes characterize this vast, limestone premurgian area. Since the city's inception, caves have been a refuge for the people who inhabited it, as indicated by the archaeological sites of **Monte Faraone** and **Santa Barbara** with finds dating back to the 5th century BC. In the **Lama di Corvo** district is the "**Grotta del Tacchino**" Cave rich in stalactites and stalagmites, which stretches over 80 meters and is the subject of speleological exploration. Among the most important sinkholes, on the other hand, the **Gurgo** is noteworthy, a karst depression about 30 meters deep and characterized by caves and a significant variety of flora. Andria is home to the **village of Montegrosso**, which arose in the 1930s as settlement intensified

around the numerous fencing for sheep and masserie that played an essential role in the transhumance of the time. Andria and the surrounding countryside are dominated from above by **Castel del Monte**, the octagonal fortress ordered by Frederick II of Swabia. The information on the construction is limited to the only existing document, the imperial decree of January 28, 1240, with which Frederick II ordered to prepare the materials for the construction of the castle dedicated to Santa Maria del Monte. During the period of Manfred's reign with the Angevins and the Spanish it was used as a prison. The long period of "misuse" and the state of abandon condemned the fortress to a slow and inexorable degradation. Despite these events, Castel del Monte continues to exert an invincible charm, fueling legends about the original architecture and confirming the extraordinary interest it has always aroused. From its windows one can admire the great coastal plains of Apulia and the lonely expanses of the Murgian Highlands. Symbol of genius and power, the Murge octagon helped to define that *Puer Apuliae* "wonder of the world".



4 Rural landscape near Castel del Monte, Andria, BT

Focus ⁴



Corato



The suburban area of **Corato** is dominated by the typical Murgian landscape, once consisting mainly of downy oaks, shrubs, mosses and lichens and today largely of millet, barley and wheat crops - the outcome of the intense agricultural activity that characterizes the area. Among the oldest farms in Corato is the fortified **Torre Palomba** near the Barletta-Grumo sheep-track: an ancient building dated 1586 and distinguished by a quadrangular tower, remains of a boundary wall and several rooms with barrel vaults. The Coratine area holds important dolmens and necropolises, expressions of its megalithic culture and cult of the dead that represented an important stage in man's journey to civilization. The **Corato dolmen** has four corridor slabs and four cell slabs, a megalithic tomb inside

which a fragment of a miniature jar was found as the only find that allows the monument to be dated around the Bronze Age. Its imposing size struck the imagination of the peasants who nicknamed the building "*Chianca dei Paladini*".

Another highlight of the area is the **Necropolis of San Magno**, among the most important on the Alta Murgia. It covers an area of about two kilometers southeast of a sinkhole where the "*Pescara degli Antichi*", a large cistern for collecting water, is located. The important archaeological area preserves about eighty tombs made of limestone boulders, where iron objects, pottery, fibulae, ceramic remains, and bracelets were found. The grave goods are kept at the City and Territory Museum of Corato.



5 6 Rural landscape near Corato, BA

5 Karst landscape of Ruvo di Puglia



1

TOUR FIVE

A journey through large farms and *jazzi* where legends and ancient traditions intertwine linked to pastoralism and rural activities.



RUVO DI PUGLIA

BITONTO

Tour 5

The itinerary winds mainly in the **Ruvo di Puglia** countryside, between the ancient village and the surrounding Murgian territory. The **Jatta National Museum** is an important cultural centre, which houses the artefacts of the most famous potters and painters of the Magna Graecia and Apulian periods. Here one can visit the **Co-Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption**, an expression of the Apulian Romanesque style with the use of local stone.

Like other Apulian towns, Ruvo has based its economy on limestone extraction and its mining district is testimony to this. The territory is characterised by oak woods and coniferous reforestations. It houses the **Torre dei Guardiani** visitor centre, immersed in the karst landscape described by geologist Vito Carmelo Colamonico, one of the first who scientifically defined the karst phenomenon in the world.

The geological scenery of this area is of great significance due to the presence of the two main rock formations in the region: Bari limestone and Altamura limestone. In these quarries there are particular fossils of bivalves (now extinct), rudists and inoceramids, and a **Mesozoic reptile** was also found, which is kept in the Museum of Earth Sciences in Bari. The area is full of masserie and sheep shelters (called '*jazzi*' in Italian) where traditions and legends linked to sheep farming and rural activities are intertwined: among them,



2

Masseria Ferratella, Masseria Notarvincenzo and the suggestive **Jazzo del Demonio**.

Moving eastwards, one reaches the lower part of the municipality of Bitonto where the landscape is dominated by olive groves and, in particular, almond tree cultures. In this area one can find the **Jazzo Pietre Tagliate**, a jewel of rural architecture and water-capturing techniques, with perimeter walls, the farmhouse, paralupi stones and the milking machine still clearly visible.

continued on page 36 >

1

Torre dei guardiani Visitor Centre, Ruvo di Puglia, BA

2

Pietre Tagliate district, Bitonto, BA



The reforestation surrounding the sheep shelter interspersed with Murgian pastures provides shade on hot summer days and is a refuge for numerous wild animals. One can also visit the 20th-century Bosco di Bitonto (wood), a barrier against seasonal flooding and soil runoff.

Near the town of Bitonto, the waters flow into the Tifris stream, known as Lama Balice, home to one of the largest regional parks in Italy and the main naturalistic corridor between the Alta Murgia Park and the Adriatic Area.



3 Jazzo Pietre Tagliate, Bitonto, BA

4 Lama with Trullo, Ruvo di Puglia, BA

Highlights 5



RUVO DI PUGLIA

- Co-Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption
- Torre dei guardiani Visitor Centre
- Quarries around the Visitor Centre
- Masseria Ferratella, Masseria Notravincenzo, Jazzo del Demonio and Bosco Scoparella (wood).



BITONTO

- Bosco di Bitonto (wood) e Jazzo Pietre Tagliate
- Lama Balice

Focus ⁵



Ruvo di Puglia



In the territory of **Ruvo di Puglia** there are important attractions both from a naturalistic and landscape point of view, as well as from a historical and architectural one. The landscape is dominated by vineyards, olive groves and large expanses of crops in the most fertile areas of the countryside, among forages and legumes. The landscape of olive groves then fades into that of almond groves, alternating with downy oaks particularly present in Ruvo's woods. Past the woods belt, one reaches the highest part of the Murgia, where bare rock outcrops are home to herbaceous, tree and shrub species. In the **Ferrata Jazzo Rosso** district there is the **Torre dei Guardiani**, among the most



important visitor centres in the Park, whose construction dates back to the late 19th century. The building was originally used as a barracks for the Municipal Horse Guards who supervised the territory. The garrites placed at the northeast and southwest corners of the building represented the defensive system of the barracks and bear witness to past conflicts. Moreover, the Ruvo countryside is furrowed by the **Tratturello Regio** sheep-track of Canosa-Ruvo that skirts the **Bosco di Patanella** (Wood), as well as by the Apulian Aqueduct canal and bridge that cross suggestive areas due to the presence of masserie and sheep shelters such as **Jazzo del Demonio**.

5 Torre dei Guardiani Visitor Centre, Ruvo di Puglia, BA

6 Detail of Co-Cathedral of St Mary of the Assumption of Ruvo di Puglia, BA

Focus ⁵



Bitonto



Bitonto stretches in a happy combination of natural and man-made landscape. The strip to the southwest is crossed by important lamas, home to Mediterranean flora and fauna species. The territory is an alternation of pastures and arable land, where the karst phenomenon and the winter temperatures have always made the area suitable for pastoral activities. On the northeastern slope there is a succession of plains and the coppice gives way to cultivated land; approaching the built-up area, on the other hand, one can admire almond groves and vineyards, and close to the strip near the sea the silvery green of olive groves. Bitonto is the land of olive trees, starting in the Middle Ages when large expanses of woodland were converted into olive groves and continuing in the 19th century when Pierre Ravanas revolutionized the oil production with the adoption of the hydraulic press. Today the territory holds the record for the oil production technique. This city's symbol is the "Cima di Bitonto" cultivar,

a self-sterile plant with pendulous fruiting twigs from which an extra virgin olive oil with almondy, fruity aroma is obtained. Just a stone's throw from the port of Bari and close to the Appian and Trajan roads, Bitonto is a transit land on the pilgrimage routes leading to the Gargano mountains, Santa Maria di Leuca, St. Nicholas of Bari and the Holy Land. The countryside is home to rest areas for pilgrims and numerous rural churches and chapels that often stand on Roman-era settlements. The entire area is characterized by the typical sloping soil of the Murgian landscape with the presence of lamas and sinkholes among the low rounded bumps. The **Jazzo Pietre Tagliate** is a jewel of Bitontine rural architecture with still clearly visible perimeter walls, farmhouse, paralupi stones and milking house. It gets its name from the erosion effect of the limestone rocks, which appear "cut" along the slope behind the structure.



7 Jazzo Pietre Tagliate, Bitonto, BA

6 *the* Southern Premurgia



1



SANTERAMO IN COLLE LATERZA

TOUR SIX

A tour dedicated to the multifaceted forms of karst rock and its passage through the southernmost area of the park from north to south towards the deposits of the Fossa Bradanica.

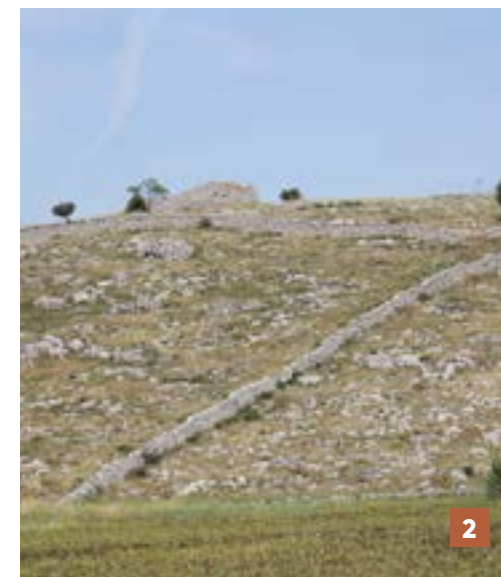
Tour 6

This tour is dedicated to the many forms of karst rock and the southern landscape towards the deposits of the Bradanic Trough, shaped by man and the action of water. An area dotted with ravines and deep cavities, as well as man-made piles of stones (called 'specchie' in Italian), trulli and dry-stone walls whose fundamental role was collecting and storing water. The landscape between **Santeramo in Colle** and **Laterza** is really unique, almost 'lunar' since it overlooks ravines and passes through progressive terraces separated by faults and flat terraced deposits. A geodiversity that is home to a valuable naturalistic, floristic and faunal heritage.

Not far from **Santeramo** there is a rural area where traditional crops are grown in the 'Quite', small plots of land whose name means 'quotas'. In the 19th century, this area was subdivided into regular plots of land destined for poor or destitute people. This now enables many families to self-produce agricultural products in a sustainable way. In the Santeramo area, it is possible to visit the **Saint Michael Michael Iazzo and cave**, a building with trulli and megalithic walls overlooking a natural cave rich in concretions. This cave has become an underground church with frescoes and ex voto graffiti from the Byzantine era. Of great naturalistic importance is the SCI (Site of Commu-

1 Gravina of Laterza, Laterza, TA

2 Le Quite, Sant'Angelo district, Santeramo in Colle, BA

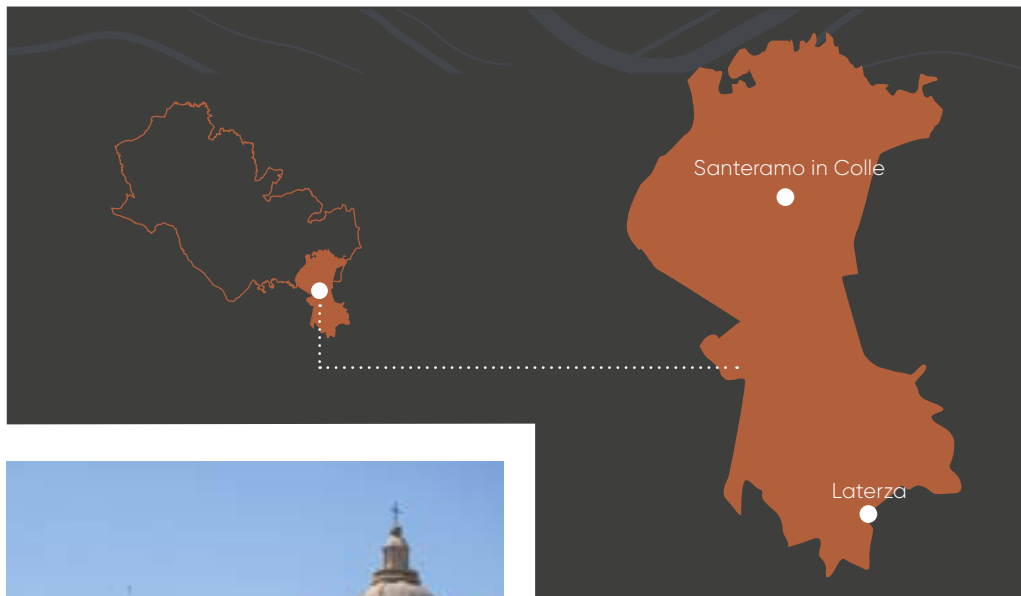


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nity Importance) area of **Bosco di Mesola (Wood)** on the road from Santeramo to Cassano, with an extension of about 3,000 hectares. This area is characterised by oaks and alternating primary woods and steppes, with the presence of birds of prey, orchids and herbaceous species.

The landscape is criss-crossed to the south by deep canyons including the 12-km-long **Gravina of Laterza**, with vertical walls over 230 m high, rich in biodiversity and endemisms. The old town is perched on its edge, with stone-paved houses and streets and the Mother Church of





San Lorenzo Martire with its wagon-wheel rose window, a candidate for the Unesco heritage site title promoted by the Apulia Region, along with other Apulian rose windows. The presence of calcarenitic substrate underneath the settlement led to the creation of hypogeal environments excavated in the lama.

Laterza is also famous for the production of ceramics of great value and fame. Laertine majolica pottery is housed in the **Museum of Majolica (MuMa)** in the Marchesale Palace, where one can admire ancient artefacts characterised by embroidery, plant motifs, chivalrous scenes, mythological characters and fairy-tale landscapes in turquoise monochrome (with a few exceptions for the use of yellow or green) on a white background.

3 Old town of Laterza, TA

Highlights 6



SANTERAMO IN COLLE

- Saint Michael Michael lazzo and cave
- Karst landscape of the Murgia and Premurgia - Jazzo Sant'Angelo
- Le Quite
- Bosco Mesola (Wood)



LATERZA

- Gravina of Laterza
- Mother Church of San Lorenzo Martire and old town
- Marchesale Palace and MuMa (Museum of Majolica)

Focus ⁶



Santeramo in Colle

Santeramo in Colle has always been characterized by a great balance between man and the land. With its woods, colours and smells, it greets warmly those who enter this strip of Murgia. **The Bosco di Marazia (Wood)** along the old Gioia del Colle sheep-track and the **Bosco di Mesola (Wood)** bordering Acquaviva's territory consist of various types of oaks including the holm oak, Macedonian oak, Turkey oak and downy oak. This is an area of great value where one can admire rare wild peonies at short periods of the year. Well preserved in the southern part of Santeramo are the **Bosco di Parata (Wood)**, an important forest biotype for the presence of plant and animal species (it is one of the areas in the province characterized by the highest concentration of the lesser kestrel), and the Bosco di Gravinnella (Wood), which presents a unique setting, rising within a ravine and embellished with majestic holm oaks that have allowed the creation of an undergrowth composed of mosses, lichens, butcher's broom and hawthorns. The most distinctive feature of the area lies in its limestone rocks, which run through it from north to south starting from

the Serrone district and ending in Murgia Morsara, Guardiola district, Lamalunga and Sgolgore. On this alternation of hills, ravines, caves and lamas the vegetation consists mainly of ferulas, species of euphorbia, thistles, asphodels, thyme, sage and orchids. On Alessandriello Street there are the **Quite**, a unique form of "agricultural archaeology": the farmers' attempt to derive arable land from the rugged Murgia for their subsistence. This picturesque area has been the subject of agrarian parcelization since the second half of the 19th century, delineating itself as a geometric texture of dry stone walls, man-made piles of stones (called "specchie" in Italian), trulli, sheep-tracks, terraces, wells and water channels. In **Santeramo** there are also many masserie of great importance that dot it and have shaped its history. These farms are pieces of rural architecture in which peasants and shepherds lived, but also places of defence and outposts that people used to protect themselves from the various assaults of brigands coming from Matera and Altamura.



4 Sant'Angelo district, Santeramo in Colle, BA

Focus ⁶



Laterza

Laterza is a contiguous area of the Alta Murgia National Park. The area extends into the "Terra delle Gravine" regional park with a breathtaking panorama full of sheer cliffs, caves and grottoes that are home to birds of prey and enchanting flora. The all-white old town is a short walk from the ravine, with the impressive geometries of the Palazzo Marchesale, the rose window of St. Laurence's Church and the stone-made churches. The streets are pervaded by the smell of freshly baked bread and meat cooked on the stove. Ancient traditions are handed down in Laterza, such as the art of majolica to which a museum ("MuMa") has been dedicated that houses some of the most representative pieces produced by masters of the 17th century. The *majolica* is a special ceramic with blue, yellow-orange and copper-green hues with which plates, vases and other valuable artefacts were made. Furthermore, the **Gravina of Laterza** is a unique treasure in Italy, originating from rock erosion and continental uplift. It is a protected oasis about 12 km long, consisting of rock wal-

ls and smooth whitish limestone walls more than 200 meters high, dotted with cavities and ledges suspended in the void. It is home to several plant species including wild orchids and *Euphorbia dendroides*, along with animal species of great interest such as the Egyptian vulture, lesser kestrel and black stork, as well as mammals including porcupines, badgers, foxes and weasels. Man, who today can enjoy the unique scenery, inhabited this impervious place in the past, creating rock settlements equipped with paths, ladders, terracing, and rainwater collection and distribution systems.



5



6

5 Gravina of Laterza, Laterza, TA

6 MuMa - Museum of Majolica, Laterza, TA

7 *the* Lower Murgia

Tour 7



1

An itinerary through carbonate and stony landscapes affected by karst phenomena such as sinkholes, lamas and caves, some inhabited by man in prehistoric times.

The Lower Murgia area includes the reservoir that flows towards Bari (Conca di Bari) and holds rock sculptures of great visual impact, including important reforestation works to mitigate the force of the water in the rainy seasons. This tour reaches Grumo Appula and its lamas, Toritto with its olive and almond groves, Cassano delle Murge with the Foresta Mercadante (Forest) and Acquaviva delle Fonti with its underground wells. Between Grumo Appula and Toritto one can see agricultural landscapes dotted with swallow holes, karstic springs called 'votani' and karstic lakes.

The areas of greatest scenic value are the long lama that connects the two municipalities and the **Pulicchio di Toritto** geosite, a small sinkhole originating from the collapse of a cave's vault. In the Grumo countryside, one can also enjoy a peaceful walk in the **Monte Cucco** woods among pines and cypresses, an area similar to the **Foresta Mercadante (Forest)** towards **Cassano delle Murge**. The latter represents a green lung in the area, built in the last century to stem the frequent floods that struck Bari causing death and devastation. The Foresta Mercadante (Forest) is mainly planted with conifers, but

monumental oaks such as the two specimens of Mount Tabor oak can be seen in the original patches. The paths are interspersed with dry stone walls, old farmhouses and picnic areas. This area is a major tourist attraction, as evidenced by the numerous holiday farms, educational farms, trekking areas and the Forest Police control centre.

continued on page 52



2



GRUMO APPULA TORITTO CASSANO DELLE MURGE ACQUAVIVA DELLE FONTI

TOUR SEVEN

A carbonate landscape characterised by sinkholes and caves inhabited by man in prehistoric times.

1 Rural landscape near Cassano delle Murge, BA

2 Masseria near Pulicchio di Toritto, Toritto, BA

In the Contrada di Cristo district one can find the cave of the same name, which exhibits numerous concretions in its 300 m² extension. The Grotta di Cristo is among the first tourist caves in Apulia and is accessible even to children in total safety.

In Cassano, you can visit the medieval monastery of St Mary of the Angels with an underground area dedicated to worship, which also houses an important deposit of ossiferous rock.

In the old town, one can admire the Miani Perotti Marchesale Palace, a late Baroque building built on the initiative of the local patrician Miani in the second half of the 18th century.

In the area between Cassano delle Murge and Acquaviva delle Fonti **the Curtomartino Cave** stands out, a karstic cavity whose formation dates back to around 2 million years ago. Rich in stalactites and stalagmites, it is an easily accessible horizontal cave that has provided shelter to man since the Upper Palaeolithic.

Water in the depths of the earth not only shapes the landscape, but also gave its name to the municipality of **Acquaviva delle Fonti**, becoming an element of its strong identity. The city's ancient wells,



which quenched the thirst of the population for centuries, are scattered in the streets, squares and buildings of the old town, which can be visited on a tourist and geological tour organised by the municipality. In Acquaviva, you can admire the starry sky from the dome of the Municipal Astronomical Observatory, home to observational and educational activities.

The Archaeological Museum named after Austacio Busto is of great relevance, with exhibits finds from different eras from prehistoric to modern times – the result of archaeological research and random finds in the area. The collection of artefacts, the illustrative apparatus and a multimedia display tell the story of Acquaviva and its landscape, in a journey through time that starts in the prehistoric era and winds its way through the Peuceti age, the Roman era and the Middle Ages, finally reaching the present day. The museum is housed in the historic De Mari Palace.



3 Foresta Mercadante (forest), Cassano delle Murge, BA
4 Curtomartino cave, Acquaviva delle Fonti, BA

5 Sant'Eustachio Martire Co-cathedral, Rose Window, Acquaviva delle Fonti, BA

Highlights 7



GRUMO APPULA



TORITTO

- Lama landscape in Grumo – Toritto
- Monte Cucco

- Pulicchio di Toritto
- Quasano – Toritto Woods
- Masseria delle Mandorle



5



6



7



8



CASSANO DELLE MURGE

- Old town
- Foresta **Mercadante** (forest)
- Grotta di Cristo
- Monastery of St Mary of the Angels
- Miani Perotti Marchesale Palace



ACQUAVIVA DELLE FONTI

- Curtomartino Cave
- Underground water trail in the old town of **Acquaviva**
- Municipal Astronomical Observatory
- **Ama** – Acquaviva Archaeological Museum (in Palazzo De Mari)

5 Old town of Acquaviva delle Fonti, BA

6 Monte Cucco, Grumo Appula, BA

7 Monastery of St. Mary of Angel, Quasano-Toritto, BA

8 Old town of Cassano delle Murge, BA

Focus ⁷



Grumo Appula

Grumo Appula stretches over a flat, slightly wavy area toward Mellitto and the Murgia Suagna. Large expanses of oaks have historically marked the countryside, where today there is instead largely cultivated land. The **Murgia Suagna**, located between Mellitto and Lake Selvella, is a 402-meter limestone plateau that rises parallel to the coast. Olive groves overlook the sea side, and on the northern slope there is the Duke Park, a characteristic downy oak (*Quercus pubescens*) wood. The WWF oasis "Il Rifugio" was established in the **Masseria La Selvella** district in 1994, a treasure trove of biodiversity with plant species such as the Aleppo pine, cypress, downy oak, hawthorn, dog rose, terebinth, viburnum and wild orchids, while fauna includes the beech marten, hedgehog, fox, nocturnal and diurnal birds of prey, leopard snake, and amphibians living in artificial ponds including the crested newt, Italian newt, common toad, and European green toad.



Focus

7

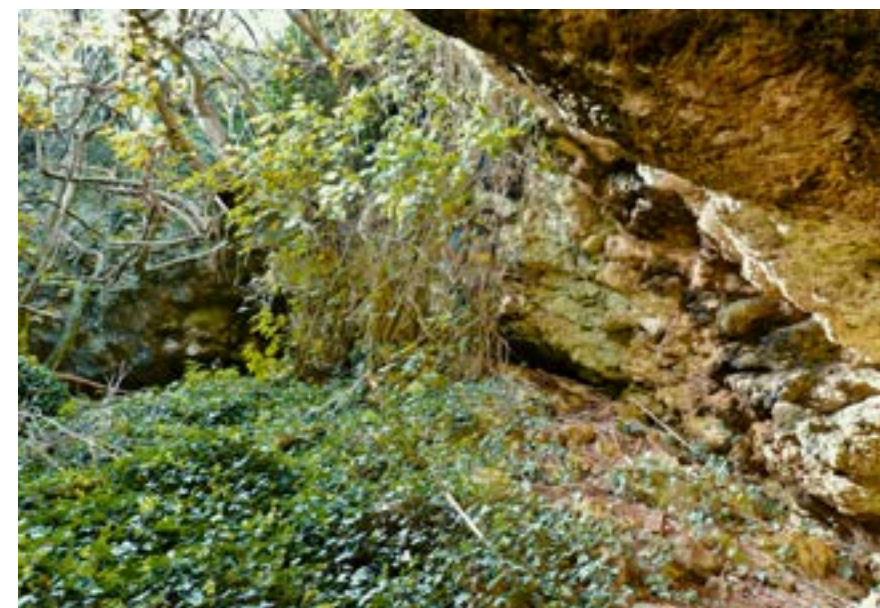


Toritto

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Toritto is par excellence the town of almonds, but the special microclimatic conditions make the soil around the town also suitable for thriving olive plantations. The almond tree, in particular, has found optimal growing conditions in the area, thus developing over vast areas and giving rise to valuable productions that have obtained the Slow Food Presidium recognition. In the 19th century, the important production of almonds enticed the spirit of initiative of some farmers to whom

we owe the creation of valuable native variants such as the "*Filippo Cea*" and "*Antonio De Vito*" varieties. In the Caselli di Cristo district one can see the **Pulicchio**, a small karst sinkhole formed by the collapse of a cave's vault. The municipality of Toritto is also known for the **Bosco di Quasano** (Wood), a native woodland complex in which remarkable ancient specimens stand out. The most common species are the downy oak, Turkey oak, and Hungarian oak.



9 Pulicchio di Toritto, Toritto, BA

Focus ⁷



Cassano delle Murge



Cassano delle Murge is the gateway to the Alta Murgia, the first access for those arriving from the Bari coast to reach the hinterland. The country seems to have been born on water: according to one estimate, until a few decades ago there were 311 wells in the old town alone. But the area is also a treasure trove of caves carved into the limestone by water and wind. There are about 30 of them, some of which can be visited, such as the **Grotta della Madonna degli Angeli** and the **Grotta di Cristo** in the Cristo Fasano district. Here, there are several agricultural-pastoral farms with dry stone walls and fences, most of which are equipped with ovens, warehouses, farmyards and stables. The highlight of Cassano is the Foresta Mercadante (Forest), a huge wooded area created to mitigate the hydrogeological imbalance that devastated the Bari area in the past, mitigating the force of waters that flowed down to the sea from the Murgia. Among the trees planted are pines, cypresses, downy oaks, oaks, Macedonian oaks, holm oaks, elms, ash trees, manna ash trees, and eucalyptus: a treasure trove of biodiversity that is home to species such as the scops owl, sparrow hawk, robin, common tortoise, Kotschy's gecko, viper, leopard snake, Italian newt, emerald toad, European tree frog, and green frog. The Fungipendola nursery, located within the forest, provides new plants to replace old ones and occupy new reforestation areas. The area is a green lung that attracts many visitors thanks to its exercise trails, mountain biking and Nordic-walking routes.



10 Foresta Mercadante (forest), Cassano delle Murge, BA

Focus

7



Acquaviva delle Fonti

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Acquaviva delle Fonti is a contiguous area of the Alta Murgia National Park, a town inhabited since ancient times as evidenced by the old Peuceti settlements identified. Here, the historical and anthropological evolution is intertwined with the lamas, to which the first traces of settlement are connected. The name Acquaviva probably derives from the large aquifer flowing underground, and the village settlement still retains traces of this past. Credited theories about its origins date the first settlements to the 4th-5th centuries near the Salentino hill, close to the present town. Excavations in 1976 revealed several dwellings and human skeletons, testifying to the presence of stable residential buildings. The imposing **Cathedral of St. Eustace**, one of the four palatine basilicas of Apulia, is definitely worth a visit. The territory of Acquaviva is part of the SCI (Site of Community Importance) areas "*Murgia Alta*" and "*Bosco di Mesola*," the latter with an extension of 3,028 hectares between the municipalities of Acquaviva, Cassano delle Murge and Santeramo in Colle. This area is home to important species of birds of prey such as the lesser kestrel, varieties of rare orchids, and protected oaks such as the downy oak and the Macedonian oak.



11 Sedile Palace, Acquaviva delle Fonti, BA

Discover all our itineraries



ITINERARY MAP

The rural history of the Alta Murgia National Park also describes its potential in terms of slow mobility. For centuries, these areas have been the scene of a flourishing pastoral activity, both sedentary and transhumant. These activities have left a considerable legacy of unpaved roads, cattle-tracks, cart tracks, inter-modal roads, sheep-shelters, and paths that create a significant level of interconnection extended to the entire park area. Public and private motorised accessibility also guarantees a good interconnection between the two systems.

Scan the QR codes
to discover the mobility network
of the Alta Murgia Park

THE "SLOW MOBILITY" NETWORK



INTERACTIVE MAP OF ALTA MURGIA PARK



Cover picture: Giuseppe Olivieri

1 from Belvedere to Belvedere

Photo 1 : StevanZZ – *EnvatoElements.com*
Photo 2 : Marcello Benevento
Photo 3 : Marcello Benevento
Photo 4 : Domenico Martinelli
Photo 5 : Mario Brambilla
Photo 6 : Marcello Benevento
Photo 7 : Pietro Amendolara – *Archivio del Comune di Spinazzola*
Photo 8 : Donato Porzia
Focus Minervino : Clodio – *EnvatoElements.com*
Photo 9 : Marcello Benevento
Focus Spinazzola : Archivio del Comune di Spinazzola
Photo 10 : Pietro Amendolara – Archivio del Comune di Spinazzola
Photo 11 : Domenico Martinelli
Focus Poggiorsini : Donato Porzia
Photo 12 : Mario Brambilla
Photo 13 : Giuseppe Olivieri

2 between History and Cave Habitat

Photo 1 : Marcello Benevento
Photo 2 : Francesco Tarantini – *Archivio Parco Nazionale dell'Alta Murgia*
Photo 3 : Domenico Martinelli
Photo 4 : Donato Porzia
Photo 5 : Domenico Martinelli
Focus Gravina : Marcello Benevento
Photo 6 : Domenico Martinelli e Mario Brambilla

3 Paleocity

Photo 1 : Domenico Martinelli
Photo 2 : Mario Brambilla
Photo 3 : Michela Amerato
Photo 4 : Archivio Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Altamura
Photo 5 : Filippo Natuzzi – *Archivio Pro Loco Santeramo*
Focus Altamura : Donato Porzia
Photo 6 : Giovanni Ragone

4 in the Shadow of Federico

Photo 1 : Clodio – *EnvatoElements.com*
Photo 2 : Pro Loco "Quadratum" di Corato
Photo 3 : Giuseppe Carlucci
Focus Andria : Paolo Liso
Photo 4 : Vincenzo Cantatore
Photo 5-6 : Vincenzo Cantatore

5 Karst Landscape of Ruvo di Puglia

Photo 1 : Marcello Benevento
Photo 2 : Pietro Amendolara
Photo 3 : Archivio Parco Nazionale dell'Alta Murgia
Photo 4 : Luciano Montemurro
Focus Ruvo : Clodio – *EnvatoElements.com*
Photo 5 : Marcello Benevento
Photo 6 : Clodio by *EnvatoElements.com*
Focus Bitonto : Joaquin Corbalan – *EnvatoElements.com*
Photo 7 : Vincenzo Cantatore

6 the Southern Premurgia

Photo 1 : Donato Porzia
Photo 2 : Filippo Natuzzi – *Archivio Pro Loco Santeramo*
Photo 3 : Donato Porzia
Focus Santeramo : Michele Petruzzelli – *Archivio Pro Loco Santeramo*
Photo 4 : Filippo Natuzzi – *Archivio Pro Loco Santeramo*
Focus Laterza : Donato Porzia
Photo 5-6 : Donato Porzia

7 the Lower Murgia

Photo 1 : Filippo Natuzzi – *Archivio Pro Loco Santeramo*
Photo 2 : Archivio Parco Nazionale dell'Alta Murgia
Photo 3 : Paolo Racano
Photo 4 : Pro Loco Curtomartino, Acquaviva delle Fonti
Photo 5 : Pro Loco Curtomartino, Acquaviva delle Fonti
Photo 6 : Pro Loco Curtomartino, Acquaviva delle Fonti
Photo 7 : Paolo Racano
Photo 8 : Pietro Amendolara
Photo 9 : Sabino M. Modesto
Focus Grumo Appula : Giuseppe Carlucci
Photo 10 : Vincenzo Cantatore
Focus Toritto : Pro Loco Toritto-Quasano
Photo 11 : Giuseppe Carlucci
Focus Cassano : Sabino M. Modesto
Photo 12 : Paolo Racano
Focus Acquaviva : Pro Loco Curtomartino, Acquaviva delle Fonti
Photo 13 : Francesco Mastrorocco

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