

Olive Oil Harvest and FarmStay in Puglia

with Michele Iadarola

As we travelers know, exploring with a local is as good as it gets. So on our journey into Puglia, the “heel” of the boot of Italy, native Michele Iadarola accompanies us to share his perspective and love of his homeland. Currently living in New York, Michele is the founder of Especially Puglia whose mission is to introduce the rich culinary traditions of his native Puglia to fellow food enthusiasts.



Especially Puglia connects American eaters with small producers in the northern part of the region. You can adopt an olive tree and receive to your home the finest extra virgin olive oils from independent organic farms or subscribe to farm shares of unique artisanal food products, all of which directly support family-run farms and independent artisans.



A multisensory immersion into the local culture, your journey allows you to savor an exquisite array of authentic Pugliese dishes, highlighting the freshest seasonal vegetables and fruits, local fish and meat, cheeses, homemade pasta, and all the staple elements of the revered Mediterranean diet. Indeed, the cuisine of Puglia is a quintessential expression of the Mediterranean diet, now listed as a UNESCO World Intangible Cultural Heritage site, specifically in its Italian, Spanish, Greek and Moroccan expressions.

Non-edible tour highlights include the masserie (old fortified farms offering accommodation and food), intimate learning sessions with local cheese, wine and olive oil makers, and rich understanding of the culture of low Food, a non-profit organization founded in 1986 in Piedmont, Italy that promotes “good, clean and fair food”. Tranquil strolls and drives through the countryside give way to the quaint towns of Lucera, Trani, Vieste and the UNESCO Site of Matera in the neighboring region of Basilicata.



Be swept away in the Mediterranean magic and warm atmosphere: *Benvenuti in Puglia and Basilicata!*

Day 1 Bari Airport to Lucera area | We begin with a group transfer from Bari Airport to our *masseria* (a local organic farm offering elegant accommodation and food) set into the tranquil countryside and surrounded by the Dauni Mountains. After our introductory chat, we set off on foot to explore the area. Later, the owner of our *masseria* takes us on a visit of the farm, including tastes of his locally-made wines before a delectable dinner in a castle prepared with Pugliese recipes in Pietramontecorvino, uno dei *Borghi piú Belli d'Italia* (one of *the Most Beautiful Villages of Italy* in English), that we'll discover after a walk in town.



Day 2 Around Lucera | Today we have the extraordinary opportunity to be a part of an olive harvest. During a visit with one of the Especially Puglia local producers and tasting of their organic olive oils, we participate in the timeless magic of the harvest. Over a delicious lunch with the producer's family, we learn how this magnificent product is made and share the stories of Pugliese recipes and traditions.

Other highlights of the day include: a visit to the local mill for a tasting of the oil from just-picked olives; a mozzarella demonstration and tasting; and a hands -on cooking class and dinner at our *masseria* featuring zero-miles Pugliesi ingredients.

Day 3 Gargano National Park | Today we visit the seaside town of Peschici and a *Trabucco*, for an aperitif in a traditional fishing rock-anchored wooden platform. We are in the Gargano National Park that we'll enjoy on a stroll after lunch in an *agriturismo*. (*Agriturismi* are a unique type of accommodation in Italy, featuring room and board in a farmhouse. In Puglia they are called *masseria* when the original structure was a fortified farm.) This place features also a Slow Food Presidium (Slow Food Presidia are worldwide initiatives to support quality production methods that are at risk of extinction) of the Gargano Podolica cow, which has been bred here for centuries and that we'll discover on an informative visit during lunch. After a visit to the



quaint town of Lucera and its castle, dinner tonight is on your own. Please ask us for suggestions.



Day 4 Troia | We start our day meeting another Especially Puglia food artisan, a producer of tapenade and preserved veggies to learn the secrets behind tomato sauce and canning in this area of Puglia, that we'll savor tonight at dinner. Then we transfer to the small village of Troia for a walk and visit to its Romanesque cathedral, followed by lunch on own. Our last dinner is at our masseria and it features the local orecchiette (hand-made short pasta shaped like small ears) made by Michele's mamma and aunt during a cooking demo, in addition to focaccia and other typical foodstuffs to complete the delicious menu. How could we top this off? Why not with some local folk music for a fun night of dancing and listening to a local band? Welcome to Puglia



Day 5 Trani and the Murge Plateau | We say “arrivederci” to the northern part of Puglia and head south into the Murge Plateau, a rugged landscape not often visited by tourists that offers extensive views of farmlands. Before we reach our *masseria* (elegant and eco-friendly countryside accommodation) for the night, we stop by Trani for a nice amble through this quaint sea town.

After lunch on your own we visit the UNESCO site of Castel del Monte, a 13th-century castle built by Frederick II, originally used as an hunting lodge and now one of the most fascinating castles built by the Swabian emperor. On reaching our *masseria*, the owner gladly shows us around and explains what sustainability means for them in this organic farm before we enjoy an exquisite dinner of traditional recipes, washed down with locally-made wines.



Day 6 Matera | Our final full day begins with a border crossing into Basilicata and visit to the UNESCO site of Matera. Originally founded by the Romans in the 3rd century BC, this area is suspected to be one of the first pre-historic settlements in Italy. Our local guide curates our learning experience around this enchanting city famous for “I Sassi” (houses dug into the calcareous rock). You may recall this unique setting as it was chosen as the backdrop for Mel Gibson’s “The Passion of Christ.”

Lunch is on your own today. Discover the local cuisine and unique delicacies of Basilicata (we are happy to make suggestions!) before we return to Puglia. Stopping by Altamura, we visit an Especially Puglia pasta maker and a bread maker. Altamura boasts the only bread D.O.P. (Denomination of Protected Origin) in all of Italy, which makes this product distinctive in quality and specific characteristics that you can only find here. It is also a Slow Food Presidia, protecting food at risk of extinction.



Day 7 Bari Airport | A group shuttle returns us to Bari Airport. Or, extend your stay in the area. We are happy to help. *Arrivederci!* (Goodbye in Italian) and we hope to see you again soon!

ABOUT YOUR TOUR LEADER AND HOST

Michele Iadarola grew up in the small medieval town of Pietramontecorvino in Puglia. As a child, he handpicked olives with his grandfather and thrived on his mamma's local, from-scratch cooking. After moving to New York in 2010, Michele founded Especially Puglia out of his desire to share the unique culinary traditions of his homeland with the world. His Adopt an Olive Tree, FarmShare, and FarmStay programs are all focused on supporting small-scale farmers and meaningfully connecting Americans with the foods of Puglia.



This itinerary has been meticulously custom designed based on Michele's unforgettable past experiences and favorite flavors of his native region. Every single establishment you will visit has been personally vetted, tested and enjoyed by Michele and other local guides. In some cases we'll take you to places you could not find by yourself or in a guidebook