

THE SEA

PUGLIA



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PUGLIA

The sea

Fiery sunsets, endless views, iridescent colors, and slow rhythms. Discovering **Puglia** through its sea, along eight hundred kilometers of coastline from the **Adriatic to the Ionian**, is a source of non-stop thrills. Visitors can feel the breath of history, smell the scent of myrtle and mastic, and taste the flavor of the brine. Underwater excitement on the Tremiti Islands in **Gargano**, fishing and birdwatching at Lakes **Lesina** and **Varano**, excursions in the Foresta Umbra, plus towers and the old fishing machines known as “*Trabucchi*” from **Rodi Garganico** and **Peschici** to **Vieste**. Abbeys, castles, grottoes, and magical bays all the way to **Mattinata**, along a breathtaking coastal road. Pink flamingoes, white storks, and binoculars pointed to the sky in the **Manfredonia** and **Margherita di Savoia** wetlands. Age-old villages, cathedrals emerging from the water, lighthouses, small forts, and fishing vessels from **Barletta**, **Trani** and **Bisceglie** to the territory of Bari. Sailboats and colorful skiffs in **Molfetta**, **Giovinazzo**, and **Bari**, in the sea caves of **Polignano a Mare** and in Monopoli, amid secluded bays and VIP beaches. Sea urchins on the seashore and archaeological sites in **Savelletri**; secluded beaches in the Natural Parks and Marine Protected Areas between **Brindisi** and **Lecce**. From the coastal dunes between Torre Canne and Torre San Leonardo to Torre Guaceto, from the WWF Oasis Le Cesine to Parco Costa Otranto-Santa Maria di Leuca, from the Ugento to the Punta Pizzo shorelines, from Porto Selvaggio to Porto Cesareo and the Riserve del Litorale Tarantino Orientale nature reserves. **Salento** offers secluded corners, blue coves, *faraglioni*, marinas, and towers, like **San Foca**, **Roca Vecchia**, **Torre Sant’Andrea**. An embrace of wind and waves, perfect for kitesurfing at the Alimini Lakes. Castles, lighthouses, ponds, springs, and natural pools in Otranto, Porto Badisco, Santa Cesarea Terme, Castro, and **Marina Serra**. Diving in Ciolo and boat trips in **Leuca**. On the Ionian coast, from **Pescoluse** to **Campomarino di Maruggio** and further north to **Ginosa** and **Castellaneta Marina**, passing by way of the marinas of **Ugento**, **Gallipoli**, **Nardò** and **Porto Cesareo**, golden beaches invite the visitor for long swims and relaxation in the sun.

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BEACHES AND COVES

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TERRITORIAL AREAS

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| a GARGANO AND DAUNIA | d MAGNA GRECIA, MURGIA AND THE GRAVINE |
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Adriatic Sea

Ionian Sea

① Tremiti Islands - San Domino

Five brushstrokes of limestone and a myriad of blue hues. The tiny islands 12 miles off the coast are a corner of unspoiled Mediterranean: the Marine Protected Area and Parco Nazionale del Gargano. Wonder accompanies our every step in greener-than-green **San Domino**. Along the perimeter road, in the shade of Aleppo pines, we admire the coves - *Cala del Sale*, *Cala delle Roselle*, and *Cala delle Viole*, all the way to the *San Domino Lighthouse* and the *Hermit's Chapel*. Breathtaking vistas open before us over the *Pagliai*, white monoliths that appear starting from **Punta del Diamante**. There are boat rides and stops for swimming: at the *Cala dello Spido* cove and its turquoise water; *Cala Matano* so dear to Lucio Dalla; *Cala del Pigno* with its view of the **Island of San Nicola** and the Santa Maria a Mare abbey; *Cala del Sale* boasting a sea bottom abounding with fish; and on to **Grotta delle Viole** and **Grotta del Bue Marino** with their unique sunsets. There is night-time diving at **Grotta delle Rondinelle**, and at *Cala degli Inglesi* visitors can view a Garibaldian paddle steamer that was shipwrecked there in 1864.



② Tremiti Islands - Island of Capraia

We dock to the south in the turquoise water opposite **Punta dello Straccione**, and under water we can see a myriad of fish pass by; a short distance away, the large, bronze statue of **Padre Pio** stands on the sandy bottom. A circumnavigation of the island, inhabited only by wild rabbits and dotted with caper, juniper, and mastic plants, is a continuous discovery of evocative corners, like the *Cala della Madonna* and *Cala Grande* coves, the latter with **Architiello**, a natural arch in the rock from which one enters into a lake of crystal-clear water. It is a true paradise for divers: colorful corals and an infinity of snapper, seabream, amberjack, and grouper make their hiding places at **Punta Secca**; sea daisies, octopuses, and conger find a home in the many gorges of *Cala dei Turchi*. From there, we sail towards the island of **San Nicola**, admiring from the sea the Greco-Roman cemetery, the crags, the castle, and harbor fortifications.

3 Bosco Isola

This is a real surprise for nature lovers. For twelve kilometers, a narrow strip of land separates **Lake Lesina** from the sea. Ancient dunes are covered with forests of holm oak and pine, mixed with elm and hornbeam, as well as laurel, myrtle, rosemary, heather, juniper and, in the springtime, the incredible flowering of *Cistus clusii*, a very rare shrub with fragile white flowers. We walk in the greenery to find ourselves on a strip of the finest sand, the water fusing with the sky. On the typical vessel called a "*sandalo*", we reach the easternmost point, rich with fauna, or head towards the **Island of San Clemente**, an archaeological site that, underwater, conceals the remains of a Roman villa, and we pay a visit to the seaside village.

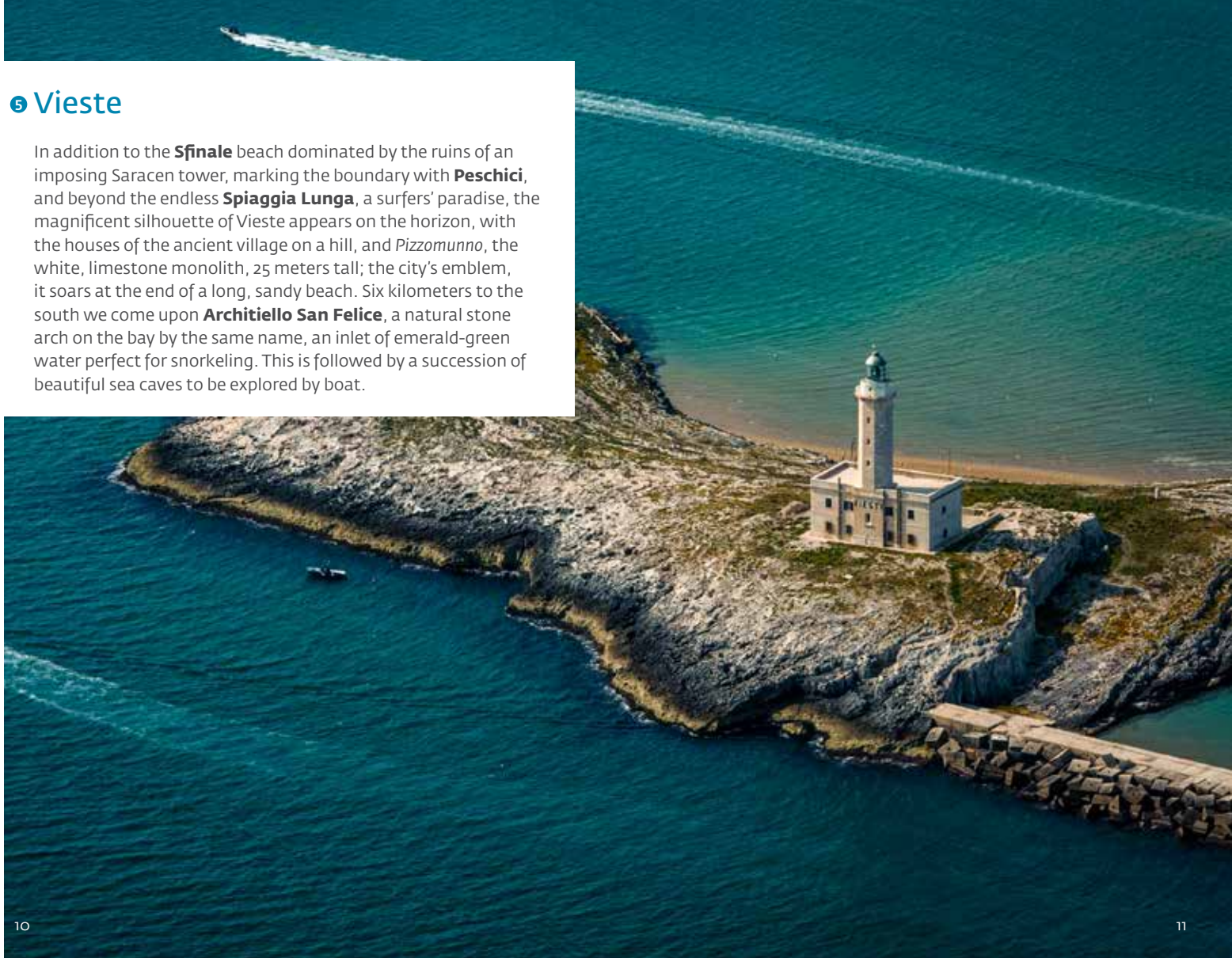
4 Peschici

Beautiful beaches and a fabulous sea between **Peschici** and **Vieste**. Those of us in better shape can try trekking on an evocative trail of three and a half hours, starting from **Punta San Nicola**, a cove with a *trabucco*, to the **Chianca** promontory. We pass by a succession of pine groves, beaches, and small promontories, with no demanding hills to climb; just be careful not to venture too far into the caves or grottoes encountered along the way. We go from **Baia di Zaiana**, a sandy cove stretching for 200 meters and frequented by youths, to the often windy **Baia di Manaccora**; from **Cala Lunga**, a cove ideal for riding the waves when the mistral, tramontane, or scirocco winds are blowing, to the small **Cala del Turco** cove.



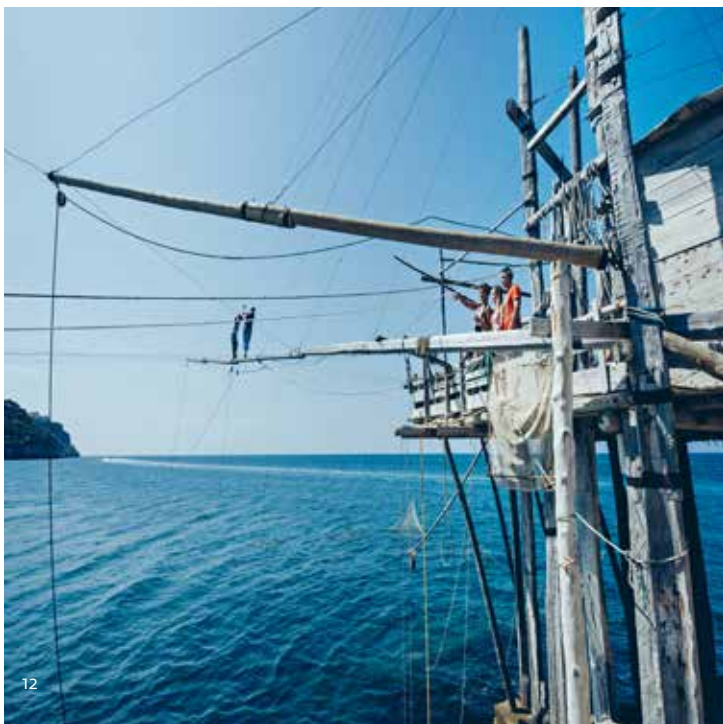
5 Vieste

In addition to the **Sfinale** beach dominated by the ruins of an imposing Saracen tower, marking the boundary with **Peschici**, and beyond the endless **Spiaggia Lunga**, a surfers' paradise, the magnificent silhouette of Vieste appears on the horizon, with the houses of the ancient village on a hill, and *Pizzomunno*, the white, limestone monolith, 25 meters tall; the city's emblem, it soars at the end of a long, sandy beach. Six kilometers to the south we come upon **Architiello San Felice**, a natural stone arch on the bay by the same name, an inlet of emerald-green water perfect for snorkeling. This is followed by a succession of beautiful sea caves to be explored by boat.



6 | Trabucchi

Enormous devices protruding over the sea are encountered along the entire **Vieste-Peschici** coastline. These are ancient fishing systems with broad platforms anchored to the rocks, equipped with long, wooden beams, ropes, and pulleys. Visitors can enjoy hearing about their history and listening to the anecdotes recounted by the Association *La Rinascita dei Trabucchi Storici*, tour the trabucchi of **San Lorenzo**, **Punta Lunga** and **Molinella**, and perhaps witness a fishing demonstration. Some have become excellent restaurants over the water, for an evocative sunset aperitif.



7 | Mattinata

The coastline between **Vieste** and **Mattinata** casts an irresistible spell: 40 kilometers of white crags soaring over the sea, carpeted with Aleppo pines and dotted with bays of polished pebbles. After the dense vegetation of **Baia di Campi**, the dramatic **Pugnochiuso** complex appears, with turquoise water lapping the spectacular coast, and then **Baia Vignanotica**, reachable by sea or via a tortuous path, where sand makes way for pebbles, with grottoes, white limestone *faraglioni*, and seagulls. Immediately after **Baia delle Zagare** or **Baia dei Mergoli** is one of the most photographed natural beauties, with two beaches divided by a high crag and the famed Arco di Diomede and *Finestrella dei Sogni*. Aside from its fabulous water, it has great naturalistic value, protected by the **Riserva Biogenetica di Monte Barone**, and in the autumn and spring the place is redolent with the fantastic scent of orange blossoms. Also of great beauty is the long, pebbly beach of **Mattinata**, perfect for relaxing days in the sun.



8 Barletta

The sea, the port with its Napoleonic-era lighthouse, and the long coastline roads tell the story of a city, always welcoming and hospitable, stretching out along the Adriatic. From the **Litoranea di Ponente** road dedicated to *Pietro Paolo Mennea*, with tall palms lining the seaside thoroughfare, a succession of open beaches and new, equipped beachfronts offer true oases of relaxation and fine food. There, today's catch can be savored, and there is dancing in the evenings when these oases are transformed into open-air discos. With fine sand and sloping bottoms suited also for families with children, the beaches are frequented by surfers and kitesurfers.



9 Polignano a Mare

The grottoes and coves secluded along the coastline **south of Bari** are a wonder, like the white pebbly bay of **Cala Paura**, next to **Polignano**. Shortly before arriving there, we can breathe in mysticism and legend at **Cala San Vito**, the ancient *Apaneste* founded by Greek colonists. From the small beach, we admire the imposing Benedictine abbey overlooking the natural marina, and the boats with fishermen lowering their nets into the sea at sunset. Armed with our cameras, we are off to discover the most beautiful places in the city too, like the deep gorge called Lama **Monachile** in the town center, with its famous beach that turns pink at dusk. The very air sings to the strains of *Nel blu dipinto di blu*, or "*Volare*," by the town's illustrious native **Domenico Modugno**.

10 Monopoli

Unspoiled bays abound along the **Monopoli** coastline, starting from **Cala Porta Vecchia**, the beach in the southern area with transparent water and, in the background, fishermen's skiffs bearing trammel nets for coastal fishing. All the way to **Cala Verde** there are about twenty coves, mostly unoccupied: sandy strips alternate with rock walls and plunge into blue-green water, like **Porto Ghiacciolo** at the feet of the ancient Benedictine abbey of Santo Stefano frequented above all by young people, or **Cala Cerasa**, a minuscule sandy cove wedged between Porto Camicia and Lido Colonia. Then the fashionable area begins: **Capitolo**, the long beach rich with restaurants and exclusive beachfronts, to enjoy an aperitif or a DJ mix by the sea, for guaranteed fun.



11 Savalletri and Forcatella

Clear waters are perfect for diving, while sandy beaches alternate with small, rocky bays in one of **Puglia's** most popular tourist resorts, an agglomeration of **luxury masseria farmhouses** and elegant beachfronts. Visitors must not miss a **sea urchin**-based aperitif at the many kiosks on the rocks, for a somewhat Spartan yet genuine flavor.



Savalletri e Forcatella

12 Rosa Marina di Ostuni

Along the Ostuni coastline, **Pilone** is a gentle bay shaded by dense vegetation, overlooked by the ancient tower of **San Leonardo**; and, with its fine sand, high dunes behind it, crystal-clear water and frequently blowing wind, **Rosa Marina** is one of the most exclusive beaches and a preferred spot for those who enjoy kitesurfing. Slightly further along, **Quarto di Monte** and **Monticelli** are among the trendiest spots for a sunset aperitif to the rhythm of music.



13 Torre Guaceto

One does not chance upon **Punta Penna Grossa**, the beach of the Marine Protected Area of Torre Guaceto, with its soaring coastal tower, north of **Brindisi**. You have to want to go there, and it takes some getting to. From the parking lot, we board a small train, or walk for about a kilometer, immersed in the Mediterranean maquis, before diving into an unspoiled sea. The beach is part free and part equipped, also for the disabled, with a long wooden boardwalk bar kiosk and food service. **Caletta delle Conchiglie** is a beautiful cove: coarse, white sand shaded by tamarisk trees, with unbelievably transparent water.

14 San Foca

Fishing tourism expeditions and plenty of **sea urchins** to enjoy: this fishing village, which boasts a sixteenth-century tower on the coast of **Melendugno** and **Bandiera Blu** honors, is enlivened by trendy spots, and has a fully-equipped marina that divides the long strip of sand into two beaches - *Marangi* and *Fontanelle*. Pine groves, ultrafine white sand, and a turquoise sea are its characteristic features, also towards **Torre Specchia Ruggeri**.

15 Roca Vecchia

A high, jagged coast, a crystal-clear sea, and a romantic atmosphere. A fantastic, natural seawater pool, among the world's most evocative: this karst cavity dug by the sea enchants and tells age-old stories. **Grotta della Poesia** was a place of worship devoted to the god *Thator Andirahas*, frequented as early as the Bronze Age, with thousands of votive inscriptions in various languages. These are even more visible in the nearby, small **Grotta della Poesia Piccola** (not open to visitors), to which the larger sea cave is linked by an underwater tunnel.



Roca Vecchia

16 Torre dell'Orso

Clear water and a crescent of white sand, with Aleppo pines crowning the dunes. But the real spectacles are the bizarrely shaped *faraglioni*, like the **Due Sorelle**, and, a short distance away, the two columns isolated in the green-blue sea of **Torre Sant'Andrea**, an ancient fishing village.

17 Frassanito

The wind is a constant, making this a privileged destination for **surfers**. But it has always been a somewhat unconventional beach, frequented by campers and by visitors with music in their blood –above all *reggae*, *rap*, and *electronic*. A great many open-air parties are organized on the beach.



Torre dell'Orso

18 Alimini

Crystal-clear water, never too deep, and a beach of fine sand with dunes covered with sea lilies, shaded by an age-old pine grove and boasting two lakes originating from the marshes: **Alimini Piccolo** and **Alimini Grande**, whose waters flow into the sea via a small channel. It is about ten kilometers from **Frassanito** to the mythical **Baia dei Turchi** with facilities for all tastes.



19 Otranto

The sea is everywhere. You leave it behind you and you find it in front of you, as you stroll through Italy's easternmost city, its ancient village enclosed within city walls, offering a thousand years of history between the **Cathedral** and the **Castle**, as well as the city's convenient beaches. But it is surrounded by valleys, **Valle delle Memorie Valle dell'Idro**, with remnants of the rupestrian civilization; the towers on the rocks including **Torre del Serpe**, and wild, uncontaminated coves to the south, like **Baia delle Orte**, offering unforgettable vistas. A tiny, sandy beach opens among the rocks, on a cliffside redolent of Mediterranean maquis, and a sea bottom that is a treasure chest of biodiversity (great for diving).

20 Porto Badisco

In this narrow, deep natural bay immersed among prickly pears and myrtle, we are bathed in prehistory. Secluded here is **Grotta dei Cervi**, one of the world's most important cave painting sites (unfortunately not open to visitors); a delightful **marina** boasts a small sandy beach (too crowded in August), freshwater springs, fishing vessels, the deep blue outside of the bay, and rocks covered with maquis and broom. It is a tasty stop for savoring **sea urchins**.



21 Santa Cesarea Terme

The elegant **spa**, opened in long-ago **1899**, appears beneath a green hill, enchanting with its eclectic villas, like Villa Sticchi, along the seaside road, as well as numerous sulfur springs and grottoes along the coastline. The sulfur water fills an evocative pool dug into the cliff just beneath the **Thermal Baths**, casting turquoise reflections onto the sea in front of the village. The enchanting crags to the south – increasingly fragile due to erosion by the sea and human intervention – require continuous consolidation work and are often inaccessible. One example is **Porto Miggiano** in the shadow of the tower – a splendid natural pool with an emerald sea that, in spite of prohibitions, teems with beachgoers during the summer.

22 Castro

It appears like a Nativity scene on a hill soaring over the sea: the old city above, **Castro di sopra**, perched between the castle, towers, and the Romanesque cathedral, contrasts with the lower **Castro di sotto**, a balcony looking out over the port and over one of Puglia's most beautiful bays, its green water always cooled by the springs. This fishing village has age-old origins, as demonstrated by the ruins of the "**temple of Minerva**" and the **Romanelli** and **Zinzulusa** grottoes, already inhabited in prehistory.



Marina di Novaglie - Ciolo

23 Marina di Marittima - Diso

A high, jagged coastline rich with bays, grottoes, and fjords, opening onto a sea of unbelievable beauty, like the **Acquaviva** bay. Ice-cold water fed by **freshwater springs** and plunging, rocky walls covered with pine, eucalyptus, mulberry, myrtle, mastic, and oak. Upon descending a staircase, the beach is tiny; but just a few steps up the wall to the left and we can find a spot amid the rocks. It is best to arrive early in the morning to avoid being there when the scirocco is strong.

24 Marina di Novaglie - Ciolo

A harsh cliff sloping down into the blue, with unique bottoms for those who love snorkeling. From **Marina di Novaglie** with its marina, tiny coves and numerous grottoes, a great many paths originate, leading to the rocks that one can dive from. **Ciolo**, in the territory of **Gagliano del Capo**, is evocative, with the **Bridge** over the small bay and its beach opening into the rock. Two bits of advice: get there before the crowds, and don't forget to bring your mask and flippers.

25 Santa Maria di Leuca

This is a scenic spot that never fails to excite: the **Punta Meliso** lookout, where the white, nineteenth-century **lighthouse** rises, as well as the **Madonna de Finibus Terrae** Basilica, linked by a stairway to the old port, and flanking the Monumental Waterfall, a thermal spa work on the Acquedotto Pugliese. From there, our gaze takes it all in, from **Leuca** to **Punta Ristola** and beyond, with the seaside road enriched with eclectic nineteenth-century villas, the tourist marina, the low cliff, **Torre dell'Omomorto**, and a rocky coast boasting a host of sea caves to be visited by boat.



26 Pescoluse

Ultrafine desert-colored sand, a sea with hues from turquoise to cobalt, deep bottoms, with the typical sandbars on the shoreline. Known as the **Maldives of Salento**, with small dunes covered with wild lilies, it is an open beach in many stretches. The sea is calm with the tramontane.



27 Torre Pali

A golden strip with the ancient, circular, partially-ruined **tower**, **immersed in the water** between the beach and the marina's access channel, accommodating fishing vessels and pleasure craft.

28 Lidi di Ugento

Broad, gleaming white beaches, low, sandy bottoms, a crystal-clear sea and, immediately further, pine groves, basins, channels and Mediterranean maquis for the marinas of **Ugento**, from **Lido Marini** to **Torre Mozza** and on to **Torre San Giovanni**, all lying within **Parco Naturale Regionale Litorale di Ugento**.

29 Gallipoli

Clear waters with marvelous reflections from green to turquoise, soft dunes covered with maquis, redolent of thyme and rosemary: a paradise of sand and low cliff, towered over by **Torre del Pizzo**, embracing the entire **Bay of Gallipoli** all the way to the old village and along the coastline. We are visiting Parco Naturale Regionale **Litorale di Punta Pizzo**. After crossing through the dense pine grove, we come to **Punta della Suina**, and from there we visit small coves and long beaches all the way to **Baia Verde**, with beachfronts for all tastes, as well as a pedestrian/bike path. The ancient village of **Purità** is home to the open beach for the residents of Gallipoli – a golden crescent on a transparent sea, opposite the **small islands** of **Campo** and **Sant'Andrea**.



30 Porto Selvaggio

Wild and beautiful. The tiny **pebbly beach**, reached after a walk through a small forest of **Aleppo pines**, leaves visitors breathless as it plunges into the bay's spectacular sea. And just a few meters away, by way of paths through the Mediterranean maquis running north or south along the coastline, we find ourselves in **accessible coves** and, less crowded in August, small **natural pools**. A sunset swim, with the sky a fiery red as the sun drops into the water, is pure magic.

31 Porto Cesareo

Strips of sand and blue-tinted emotions in the background. And on the horizon, **coastal towers**, rocks, and small islands covered with pine and tamarisk, like **Isola Grande** (or **Isola dei Conigli**), which visitors can swim to or reach by boat. Twenty kilometers of sandy coastline boast a marine protected area with a splendid underwater landscape, **multicolor bottoms**, archaeological finds and submerged sea caves. Enjoy a sunset aperitif and a seafood dinner by the shoreline.



32 Punta Prosciutto

Fiery red sunsets, enchanting transparent water thanks to the low bottoms, and **majestic dunes** covered with Mediterranean maquis. A clear sea with a kaleidoscope of reflections and **silken beaches**, natural and somewhat wild, at the boundary between the provinces of **Lecce** and **Taranto**.



33 Torre Colimena

This is the perfect beach for nature lovers. A spit of golden sand protected by **dunes** covered with Mediterranean maquis separates the sea from the **Vecchia Salina dei Monaci**, the salt marsh where sea salt was collected in the Middle Ages, and now a wetland belonging to a natural reserve.



San Pietro in Bevagna

34 San Pietro in Bevagna

This unique place attracts bathers at dawn's first light: at the **mouth of the Chidro**, a watercourse generated by a deep underwater crater, the ice-cold water plunges into the sea for a truly pleasant fresh/saltwater bathing experience. However, the place is too crowded in August.

35 The Dunes of Campomarino di Maruggio

After **Torre Borraco** comes a succession of long stretches of open beach on the **litoranea jonica tarantina** coastal road, delimited by majestic sand dunes of extraordinary beauty and importance to the community, pierced by **sea juniper** and shrubs of thyme.



36 Leporano Marina

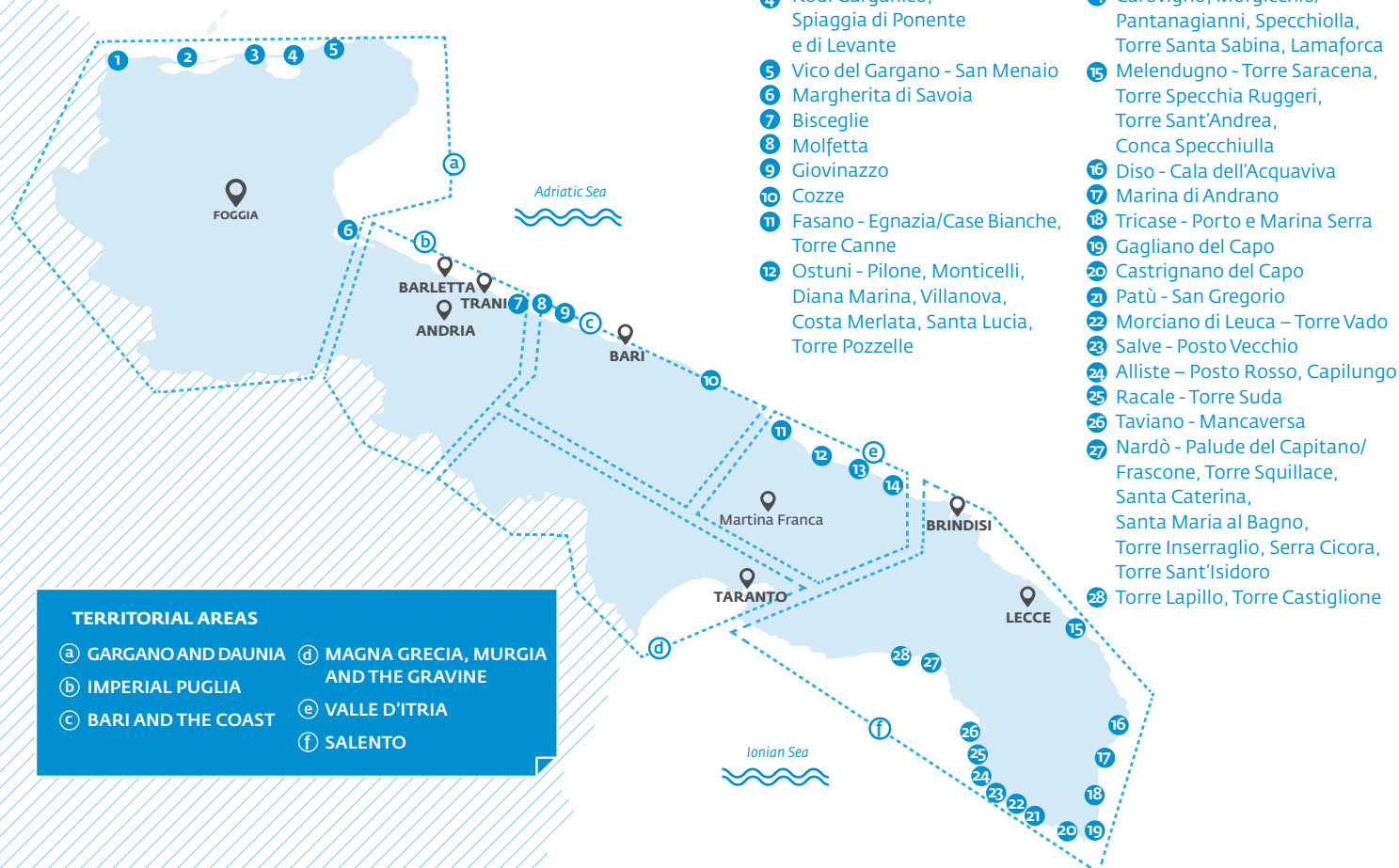
Myriad shades of blue, and heavenly, secluded coves along the Taranto shoreline. Particularly evocative is the bay of **Porto Pirrone** with its lookout tower and a turquoise sea, one of the most beautiful in the territory **Leporano**, along with the nearby beaches of **Saturo**, **Gandoli**, and **Baia d'Argento**.



37 Castellaneta e Ginosa Marina

The scent of Aleppo pines and the chirping of cicadas arrive all the way to the sea. Large, fine-sand beaches with open and solitary sections alternate with equipped beachfronts, offering a true paradise for youngsters and their families. All this can be found within **Riserva Naturale Statale Stornara**, an oasis that extends over 1,500 hectares and includes wetlands like **Lake Salinella** and the many lookouts - *Torre Marinella*, *Torre Mattoni*, *Torre della Marina* and *Torre del Lato* - along the Western coast of the **Gulf of Taranto**, bordering on Basilicata.

A COASTLINE AWAITING DISCOVERY





5 Vico del Gargano - San Menaio

Vico del Gargano, honored with a listing among "borghi più belli d'Italia" ("Italy's most beautiful villages"), is a village redolent of sea and citrus, resting on a hill between the cool green **Foresta Umbra** and the glare of the **Adriatic Sea** just six kilometers away. The long, sandy beaches of **San Menaio e Calenella**, edged by aromatic, age-old pine groves extending to the transparent sea, offer sandy, sloping bottoms ideal also for children. Extending inland from the coast is a luxuriant garden of olive and citrus trees that yield top-quality fruit like the *Bionda Orange* and the *Femminello Lemon*, bearing the *Gargano PGI* denomination.



11 Fasano - Torre Canne

A guaranteed picture postcard: golden sand, shallow bottoms, and transparent water in the shade of the tower-lighthouse built in 1927. From here, for 8 kilometers to **Torre San Leonardo**, Parco Naturale Regionale delle **Dune Costiere** offers a coastline that is unspoiled, wild, and immersed in the Mediterranean maquis, with some of its most beautiful beaches, like **Lido Morelli**, **Lido Verde** and **Lido Sabbia d'Oro**.

15 Melendugno -Torre Sant'Andrea

It is enchanting to swim in this small bay when the tramontane wind is blowing. The old fishing village boasts a harbor dug into the rock, grottoes, and *faraglioni* emerging from the blue-green water, like "**scoglio del Tafaluro**," which resembles a sphinx.



18 Tricase - Porto e Marina Serra

The marina boasts the most beautiful sea ever seen, emerald in color, with a tiny beach, resident geese, the fishermen's skiffs, an ancient lateen gullet, and *Portus Veneris*, the symbol of *Museo delle Imbarcazioni Tradizionali e dell'Arte Marinaresca*, which may be visited in the shed opposite the landing. A few kilometers in the distance, **Marina Serra** leaves visitors speechless; resembling a natural pool with crystal-clear water, it was actually dug in the 1950s, with cuts into the rock to create a landing for local fishermen. Diving there when the sea is calm is pure magic.

27 Nardò - Santa Maria al Bagno

At the turn of the last century, ladies would stroll by in long skirts and carrying their poshest parasols; the rocks had masonry changing rooms, and it was a holiday destination for the local bourgeoisie. The eclectic *palazzetti* are now restaurants, and the small beach wedged into the rocky coast remains. The **Quattro Colonne**, the “four columns” of the sixteenth-century fort demolished in the nineteenth century and used as a restaurant/hotel in the postwar period, became a reference point in the 1960s and '70s for its unforgettable evenings featuring singers of the likes of Domenico Modugno, Gino Paoli, and Ray Charles.

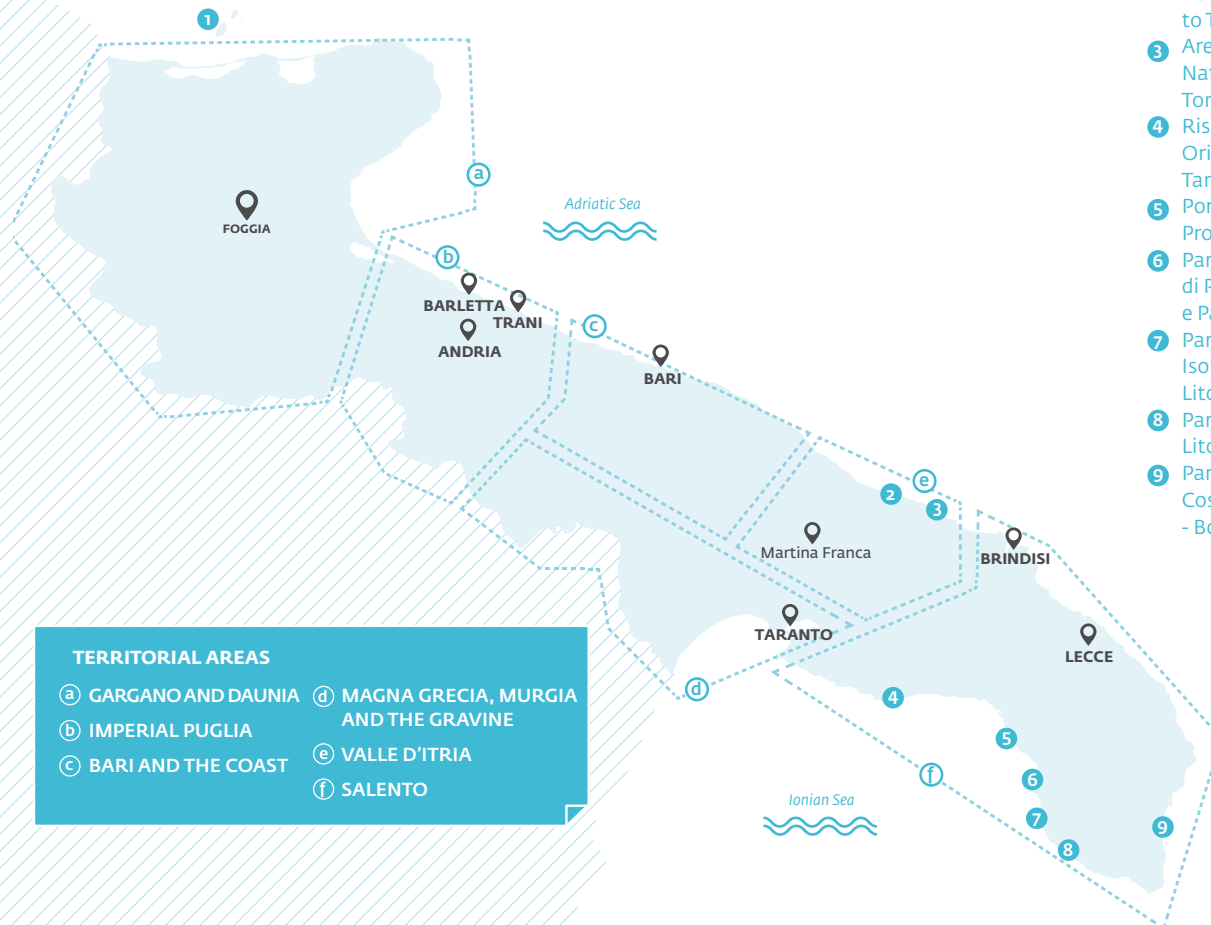
28 Torre Lapillo, Torre Castiglione

Between **Torre Lapillo**, which rises, solitary, on a cliff with a magnificent stairway supported by three arches, and **Punta Prosciutto**, a secluded bay of sand, stones, low rocks offers crystal-clear water, surrounded by Mediterranean maquis, south of the ancient coastal tower of Torre Castiglione now reduced to a small mountain.



Santa Maria al Bagno

MARINE PROTECTED AREAS



- 1 Tremiti Islands Marine Protected Area
- 2 Parco Naturale Regionale Dune Costiere from Torre Canne to Torre San Leonardo
- 3 Area Marina Protetta e Riserva Naturale dello Stato Torre Guaceto
- 4 Riserve Naturali Regionali Orientate del Litorale Tarantino Orientale
- 5 Porto Cesareo Marine Protected Area
- 6 Parco Naturale Regionale di Porto Selvaggio e Palude del Capitano
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1 Tremiti Islands Marine Protected Area

Green, white, and blue are the dominant hues of the small Gargano archipelago that boasts 2,000 years of history: **San Nicola** with towers, walls, and cloisters; **San Domino** covered with Aleppo pines, **Capraia**, a true diver's paradise; **Cretaccio**, little more than a "rock"; and the inaccessible **Pianosa**, an untouchable Marine Reserve. The little islands of marvels, totaling 3 square kilometers, are a concentration of biodiversity, with flora and fauna of unmatched richness, such as the Tremiti cornflower, the endangered *daphne olivella*, black coral, protected species and birdlife including *diomedee* (Great and Lesser Albatros) and seagulls. It has been a **Marine Natural Reserve** since 1989, operated by **Ente Parco Nazionale del Gargano**, and in 2018 a Reserve Commission of the **AMP** was instituted. Clear, emerald water, bright *faraglioni*, fine sand coves, spectacular grottoes, and rich bottoms for magical dives (tel. +39 0884 568911 - parcogargano.gov.it).



2 Parco Naturale Regionale Dune Costiere from Torre Canne to Torre San Leonardo

This treasure chest of nature, recognized as a Regional Park in 2006, embraces many souls and provides thrills at every step. More than a thousand hectares and about ten kilometers of coastline between **Fasano** and **Ostuni** await discovery on foot, by bike, or on horseback, during the day or at sunset. From beaches protected by high dunes, covered with centuries-old juniper trees, to the **Morelli river** wetland with freshwater ponds used since the nineteenth century as an aquaculture facility, where sustainable fishing of golden grey mullet and eel is still practiced. From the fossil dunes covered with wild orchids to the millennial olive trees, to pastures and prehistoric grottoes, to the **Montalbano** dolmen, to the ancient farm houses called masserie, to the underground olive presses, and places like **Torrebianca**, often chosen as film sets. A rich biodiversity of flora and fauna, the **Regina di Torre Canne** tomato, a **Slow Food** specialty, a host of organic products, and flavor laboratories (parcodunecostiere.org).

3 Torre Guaceto

A stroll outside of time, through the Reserve's different habitats, while listening to ancient stories, the tales of plants, animals, and flavors. We start from the *Al Gawsit* visitors' center in **Serranova** and arrive at the **Punta Penna Grossa** beach along the coastline north of **Brindisi**. To reach the imposing Aragonese tower, we pass by way of age-old olive groves and agricultural wetlands, amid reeds and bogs, from the Mediterranean maquis to high dunes, to the beach with secluded coves, like **Caletta delle Conchiglie** – a marvelous place for a swim. On foot, by bike, or armed with mask and flippers, we are off to observe the bottoms of the Marine Protected Area, for a host of experiences: guided dives, boat excursions with fishermen from the reserve, night-time visits, theatrical productions and tastings of organic products and Slow Food specialties like olive oil, honey, and the **Fiaschetto** tomato (riservaditorreguaceto.it).



4 Riserve Naturali Regionali Orientate del Litorale Tarantino Orientale

Along the Ionian coastline, our gaze is lost amid bogs, salt marshes, soaring dunes, forests, and Mediterranean maquis. Brushstrokes of green and blue that embrace the provinces of **Lecce** and **Taranto**, and comprise two territories, covering 1,113 hectares. The first extends from **Boschi Cuturi** and **Rosamarina**, a small paradise redolent of holm oak, myrtle, and mastic in the Manduria countryside, to the mouth of the **Chidro** in **San Pietro in Bevagna**, where the underground river lets out spectacularly into the sea. The second comprises the **Salina dei Monaci** salt marsh in **Torre Colimena** with the small beach that the dunes separate from the former salt marsh; a "Riserva Regionale Orientata" (specialized regional reserve) since 2002, it is the realm of pink flamingos and stiff plovers, and continues with the **Palude del Conte** marsh and the **Coastal Dune-Porto Cesareo**. This mosaic of different territories boasts the ancient *Paludi del Conte*, *Feda* and *Fellicchie* marshes, an extensive system of basins and channels, the **Bosco d'Arneo** forest with pine groves, Mediterranean maquis and scrubland, and the *spunulate* of **Torre Castiglione**, sinkholes where freshwater mixes with saltwater (ceaportocesareo.it).

5 Porto Cesareo Marine Protected Area

From **Punta Prosciutto** to Torre Inserraglio, it is true magic: along 32 kilometers of coastline white beaches alternate with majestic dunes covered with sea lilies, and low cliffs facing a sea displaying every variation of blue. Then there are the imposing coastal towers, islands, and woods, underwater grottoes, and some of the most beautiful sea bottoms in the **Mediterranean**, abundant with highly colorful coral, posidonia meadows, shipwrecks and various archaeological finds, like the Greco-Roman columns in the bay of **Torre Chianca**. A **Marine Protected Area** since 1997, it is one of Italy's largest (16,654 hectares) and precious for its great biodiversity, with more than 40 diving points and a number of "Sentieri Blu" ("blue paths") identified by researchers at the local **Marine Biology Station**. In **Porto Cesareo**, a small, immortal jellyfish has even been discovered: *Turritopsis nutricula*, capable of reversing its own biological cycle (tel. +39 0833 560144 - ampportocesareo.it).



6 Parco Regionale Naturale di Porto Selvaggio e Palude del Capitano

Spectacular views over the sea can be enjoyed in Puglia's oldest park, from the high and rocky coast of **Porto Selvaggio** to the evocative landscape around **Torre Inserraglio**, and on to the **Palude del Capitano** marsh, where we can admire botanical rarities amid the *spunnulate*, depressions in the terrain inundated with brackish water. Through the large grove of Aleppo pines, we come upon a blue-green bay with a tiny, pebbly beach and, along a pathway redolent of thyme and juniper to the right, there are small bays with freshwater springs, rich with crags and former Messapian quarries; between one hollow and the next, lined with glasswort, a natural pool opens between the black rocks. Slightly further along, in the **Bay of Uluzzo** with its tower by the same name, we come upon a wealth of grottoes rich with finds and fossil fishes, like the grottoes of **Uluzzo** and **Cavallo**, which hold a place of honor in the world's prehistory

7 Parco Naturale Regionale Isola S. Andrea e Litorale di Punta Pizzo

This is a true eco-museum due to its great variety of environments and a surprising submerged area with **Salento's** largest posidonia meadow. Soft strips of sand are protected by dunes covered with prickly juniper, lilies, and morning glory. This is followed by a grove of Aleppo pines and fossil dunes, redolent of myrtle, thyme, and rosemary, and colored by spiny broom, cornflower, and orchids. Hidden between **Punta Pizzo** and **Punta della Suina** are remains of pre-historic hearths and age-old tanks where purple dye was processed. Of the ancient **Li Foggi** marsh, which once covered 150 hectares and was then drained, only reeds and channels remain, a real paradise for migratory birds. At sunset, from the island of **Sant'Andrea**, less than two miles from the village of **Gallipoli**, Corsican seagulls - a rare species that nests here - take flight by the hundreds. This precious treasure chest of flora and fauna boasts a nineteenth-century lighthouse to show seafarers their way.

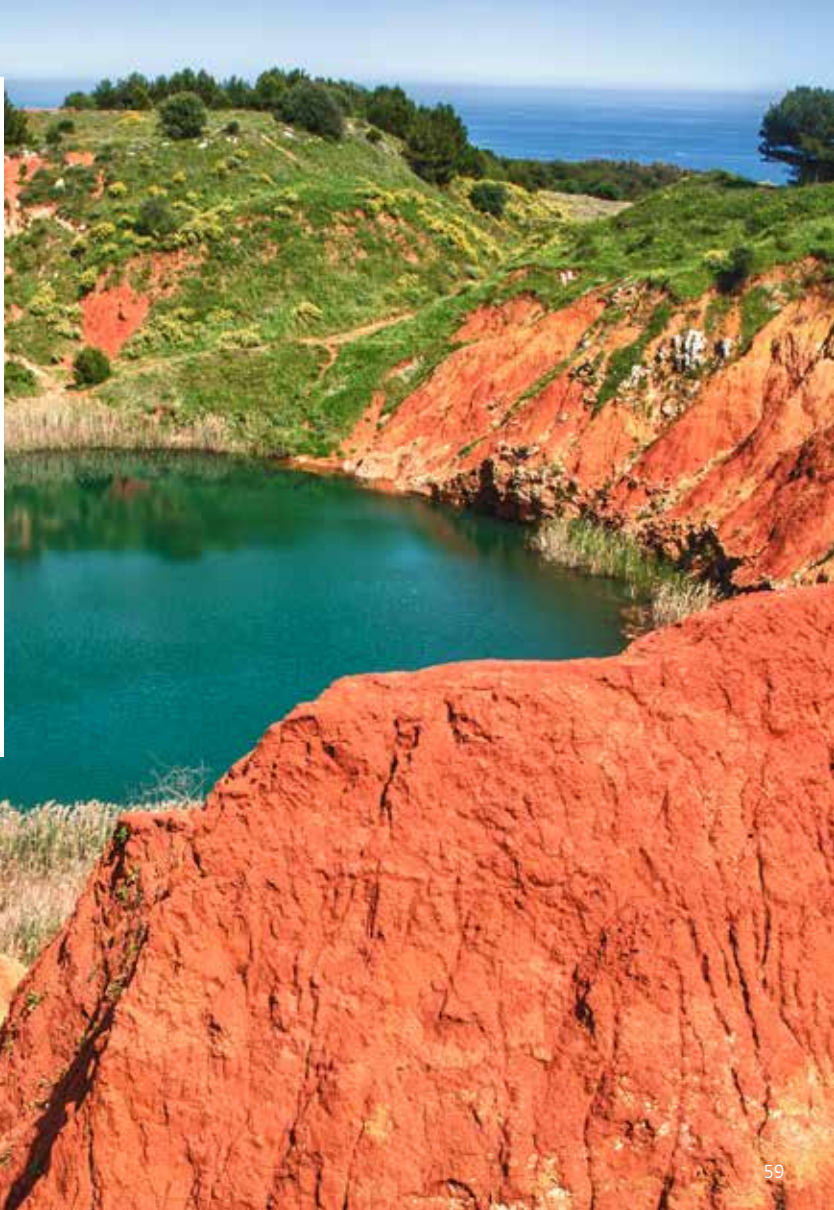


8 Parco Naturale Regionale Litorale di Ugento

Walking along paths redolent of history and archaeology, between the sea and the greenhouses of Salento, is the best way to discover the riches of the 1,600 hectare Natural Park. The low cliffs covered with glasswort and sea fennel from **Località Pazzo** to **Torre San Giovanni** are followed by beaches of golden sand and dunes all the way to **Lido Marini**. Everywhere, one sees crystal-clear water and breathtaking sunsets. Then there are the woods, and the Mediterranean maquis, before entering into the park's wetland perfect for birdwatching. From the ancient marsh drained in the 1930s, artificial basins remain - *Suddenna, Bianca, Ulmo, Spunderati, and Rottacapoza* - the realm of birds, frogs, turtles, and marsh campanulas, reeds, and rushes. The maquis then makes way for garrigue and pseudo-steppe, spontaneous orchids and birds of prey appear, and we enter into the more inaccessible areas, those of greenhouses and gullies, rock spurs and ravines, like the evocative **Specchia del Corno**.

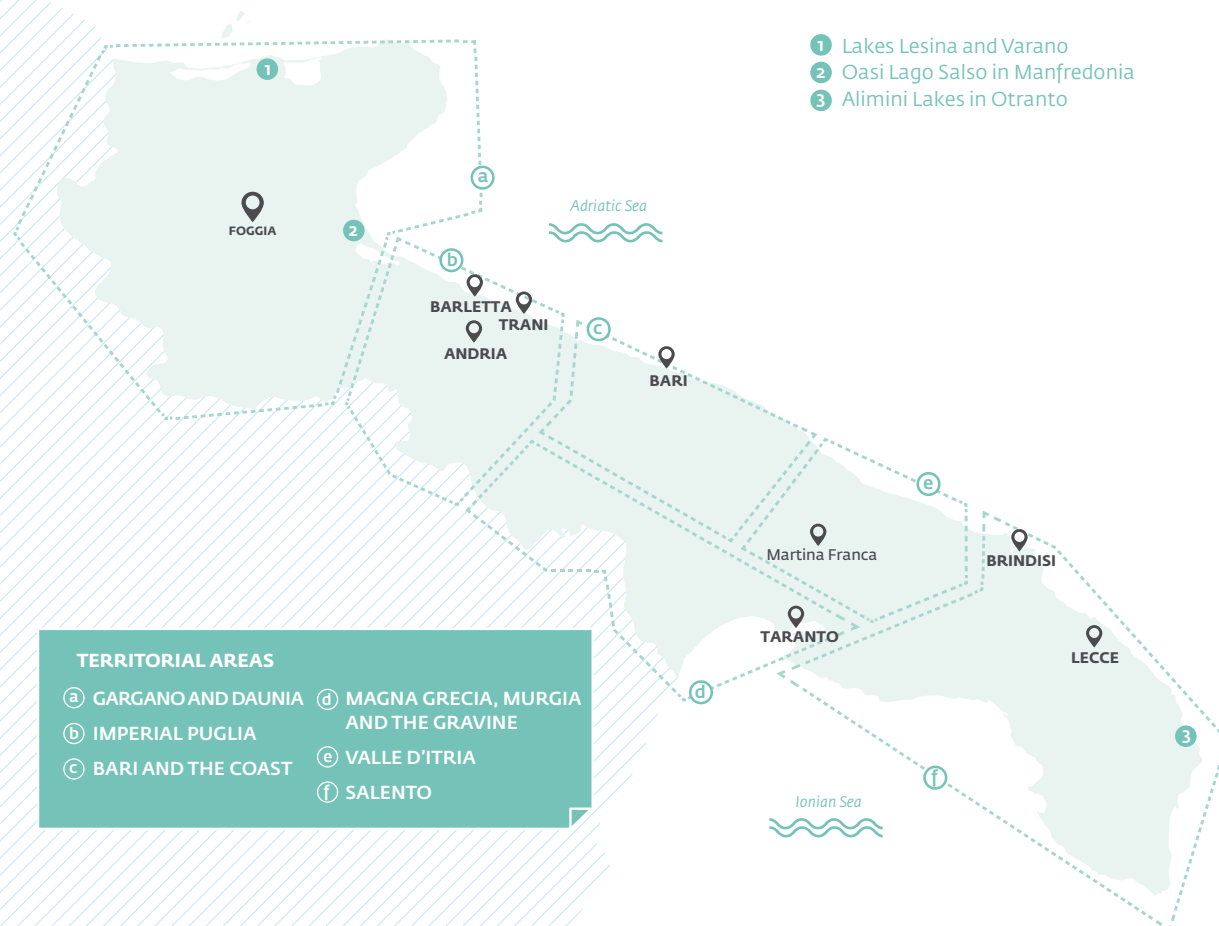
9 Parco Naturale Regionale Costa Otranto S.M. di Leuca Bosco di Tricase

Bianco, giallo, rosso, verde: in primavera la costa adriatica salentina, nei 60 chilometri del Parco da **Otranto** a **Santa Maria di Leuca**, è un trionfo di papaveri, asfodeli, anemoni, orchidee, margherite. Si susseguono antichi borghi e torri costiere, cattedrali e castelli, ville eclettiche, fari e grotte antichissime, muretti a secco e pajare. Riecheggiano nell'aria miti e leggende, come quella della quercia Vallonea di **Tricase**. A sud di Otranto ci sono scogliere a picco sul mare, i suggestivi canaloni di **Porto Badisco**, **Acquaviva** e il **Ciolo**, falesie dorate come **Porto Miggiano**, piscine nella roccia come **Marina Serra**. A passo lento o in bici si percorrono angoli selvaggi, dal Laghetto di Bauxite in un'ex cava alla **Baia delle Orte** e sentieri a picco sul mare, come quello delle **Cipolliane**. Tuffi, bagni, veleggiare, immersioni nelle acque sulfuree di **S. Cesarea Terme** e giri in barca nelle grotte tra **Punta Ristola** e **Punta Meliso** (tel. +39 0836 926028 - parcootranto-leuca.it).



LAKES

- 1 Lakes Lesina and Varano
- 2 Oasi Lago Salso in Manfredonia
- 3 Alimini Lakes in Otranto



TERRITORIAL AREAS

- (a) GARGANO AND DAUNIA
- (b) IMPERIAL PUGLIA
- (c) BARI AND THE COAST
- (d) MAGNA GRECIA, MURCIA AND THE GRAVINE
- (e) VALLE D'ITRIA
- (f) SALENTO

1 Lakes Lesina and Varano

A fragile boundary between Earth and sky, between lakes and the sea, on the northern coast of **Gargano**. An ornithological paradise with red herons, bitterns, herons, and flamingos, it is perfect for fishing and birdwatching. So close, yet so different:

Varano is on the Gargano highlands with the town of **Cagnano** 165 meters away; **Lesina**, on the other hand, has flat horizons and two channels, **Acquarotta** and **Schiapparo**, to the west and east of the coastal dune that divides the lagoon from the sea. It is a town of eelers, and on the lakeshore road we can catch a glimpse of their typical small boats called "*sandali*"; at the **Visitors' Center** we can discover the Aquarium and the ethnographic museum **La Casa del Pescatore**. It is a thrill to walk on the lagoon's isthmus or do the entire loop by bike, amid pine groves, rushes, fields, channels, shacks, and sandy shorelines. The **Tremeti Islands**, 12 miles in the distance, may be glimpsed.



2 Oasi Lago Salso in Manfredonia

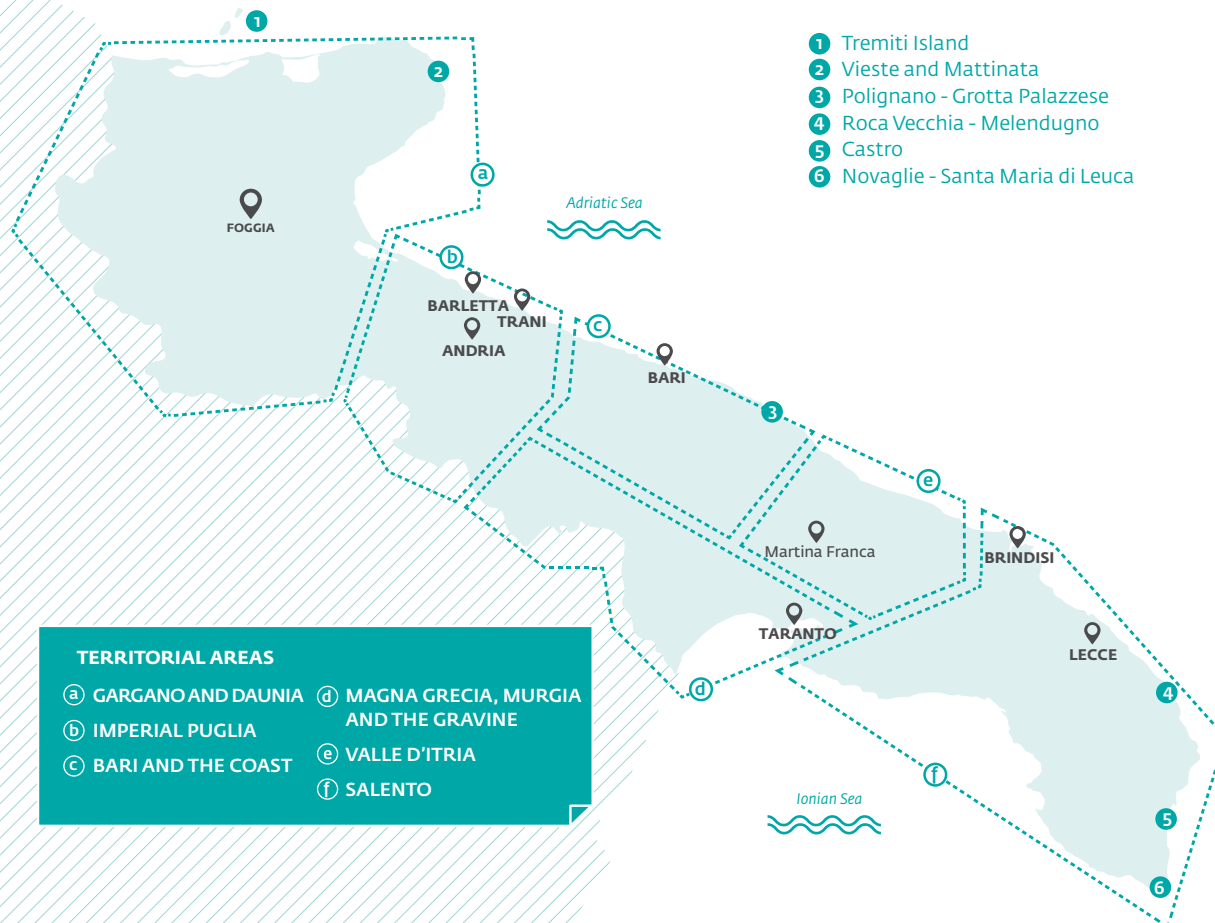
On foot, by bike, or on horseback, there is a host of paths to discover in this 540 hectare **WWF Oasis** between lakes, basins, and dense reed thickets, among the largest in southern Italy, near **Manfredonia** and **Margherita di Savoia**. For 30 minutes or for 4 hours, armed with binoculars, we can observe birds and mammals: badgers, martens, hedgehogs, and foxes, as well as mallards, herons, ducks, wigeons, common pochards, rare ferruginous ducks and, in the months of May and June, pink flamingos, cranes, and storks as well.



3 Alimini Lakes in Otranto

Once they were **Frederick II's** hunting reserve; now they are a precious natural ecosystem, a favorite spot for herons, swans, black-winged stilts, storks, and birds of prey, and an attraction for those who love birdwatching and fishing. The small natural basins ten minutes from **Otranto** are connected to one another by **Canale Lu Strittu**. Two and a half kilometers in length and covering 130 hectares, the brackish **Alimini Grande** is generated by freshwater springs and by the sea, where it lets out to the east, while to the north it gives rise to the **Traugnano Marsh**. By horseback, amid the reed thickets and along paths immersed in the Mediterranean maquis, it provides breathtaking views. The other lake, called **Alimini Piccolo** or **Fontanelle**, is much smaller, and mostly freshwater, surrounded by marsh vegetation. Beyond the road, a long, white sand beach opens, with high dunes covered with pines and Mediterranean maquis.

SEA CAVES



1 Tremiti Islands

These small, unspoiled islands, surrounded by a crystal-clear sea and wild nature, are an open-air museum. The rocky coasts of **San Domino** are rich with caves and coves, providing magical plays of light, as at **Grotta delle Viole**, named for the wildflower that grows there on the crest, and is reflected in the water. After looping around **punta dello Zio Cesare**, the famous **Grotta del Bue Marino** opens, once inhabited by the monk seal and now by albatrosses. Seventy meters in length, with shallow water and a small, pebbly beach, it is ideally visited by canoe to admire in silence the extraordinary colors at sunset. Towering over it is the steep crag called **Ripa dei Falconi**, the realm of peregrine falcons. **Grotta delle Rondinelle**, named for the sea swifts twirling within it, is one of the spots preferred by divers for night-time dives. The only cave on the **Island of San Nicola**, in the part oriented southward, is that of **the Skull**, or "**Testa di Morto**," while on the **Island of Capraia**, **Cala Sorrentino** a romantic place with its **Grotta dell'Amore**, with an enveloping light that brings an atmosphere of enchantment.





2 Vieste and Mattinata

This is the most dramatically scenic part of the Gargano promontory: white crags soaring over the sea, covered with Aleppo pines, and caves and coves to be reached by boat or canoe. After **Baia San Felice**, a perfect bay for snorkeling, comes a spectacular succession of **grottoes**, like the bell-shaped **Campana Piccola**, reminiscent of the interior of a trullo; **Grotta Viola** close to **Baia di Campi**, the sea cave taking its name from the color of its walls, **Grotta Sfondata** which lacks an upper portion, and **Grotta dei Due Occhi**, the “two-eyed sea cave” with two openings in the rock. Between **Baia di Pugnochiuso** and **Vignanotica**, we encounter **Grotta dei Marmi**, smooth as marble on the inside, **Grotta delle Sirene**, and **Grotta delle Due Stanze**, with two connected caves. **Grotta Tavolozza** enchants visitors with its colors, which seem to come from the hand of a painter; and at **Baia delle Zagare**, with its renowned *faraglioni*, a majestic cave opens, dug into the rock and more than 40 meters tall. Then comes **Grotta Campana**, followed by **Grotta del Serpente** and **Grotta Rossa**, which has a surprise in store: a narrow corridor suddenly broadens onto a small beach inside, with an emerald sea.



3 Polignano a Mare Grotta Palazzese

Crags up to twenty meters tall, interrupted by a host of natural caves, narrow inlets, and pebbly coves: **Polignano** is perched on a rocky promontory soaring over the **Adriatic**, with white houses suspended between sea and sky. The coastline is dotted from north to south with crags and caves, with marvelous shades of color and plays of light reflecting between stone and water. We arrive there by swimming or by boat, and are enchanted. From the **Grotte di Santa Caterina** to **Grotta delle Rondinelle**, from **Grotta Azzurra** to **Grotta dell'Arcivescovado**, and all the way to the most spectacular of all, the famed **Grotta Palazzese**, 21 meters tall and covering an area of 2,500 square meters, we continue on to the **Grotta dell'Eremita**, **Grotta dei Colombi**, **Grotta dei Passeri**, and **Grotta Sella**, the “saddle cave” with a natural arch.

4 Roca Vecchia - Melendugno

A wealth of stories, between myth and reality, revolve around **Grotta della Poesia**, a karst cavity dug out by the sea, which arrives inside it via underwater tunnels, and appears like a beautiful, natural pool. The name derives from the Medieval Greek *pōsis*, which means “freshwater spring.” On its walls and in the nearby **grotta Poesia Piccola** (not open to visitors) ancient inscriptions dating to the protohistoric age of the second century BC may be found: depictions of hands and feet, anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, and abstract figures, and a wealth of votive inscriptions in Greek, Latin, and Messapic. These are prayers to the god *Thaotor Andirahas* for protection during sea crossings. The **archaeological area** with strata from the Bronze Age to the Renaissance, blocks of the city wall, and a necropolis with tombs dating to 1600 BC, is worth a visit.



5 Castro

Imposing and phantasmagoric: one is left speechless upon entering **Grotta Zinzulusa**. Already inhabited in the **Neolithic Age**, its vaults are filled with spectacular **stalactites**, which must have resembled laundry hung to dry ("zinzuli" in the local dialect), before the fishermen discovered it. It is one of the ten most important karst environments in the world. Visitors arrive by boat to the amphitheater-shaped **Atrio**, or on foot by descending the stairs carved into the rock: we cross the **Vestibolo** and **Corridoio delle Meraviglie**, full of stalactites and stalagmites that sometimes join together as in the **Cripta**, to become imposing, crystalized columns. Lastly there is the **Duomo**, a large, dark hall with a very high ceiling, the back of which conceals a secluded freshwater lake, **Cocito**, home to rare species like shrimp without eyes or pigmentation, a sponge that is unique in the world, and a small colony of bats.



6 Novaglie - Santa Maria di Leuca

The grottoes along the cliff between **Marina di Novaglie** and **Santa Maria di Leuca** are all different: some traversed by freshwater springs, others rich with archaeological finds, few accessible from land, and many submerged, which you can only swim or ride a boat to. The luminous **Grotta Azzurra**, with its reflections of cobalt, is countered by the dark and narrow **Grotta del Diavolo**, followed by **Grotta di Porto Vecchio** and the evocative **Cipolliane** complex with finds from the Paleolithic age; then we come to **Grotta Grande** on the **Ciolo** with an imposing entrance and a blue lake; the **Mannute** complex of caves, all interconnected, and **Grotta della Vora** or the Grotto of the Cathedral: tall, with a large, luminous opening. Towards **Punta Meliso**, the **Grotte Cazzafri** sea caves have an immense vault, rich with stalactites. From Punta Ristola on the Ionian side, **Grotta Porcinara** opens, reachable by land, boasting Greek and Latin inscriptions; it is followed by **Grotta del Diavolo**, rich with Neolithic finds, and **Tre Porte** with arches and a chamber with stalactites and stalagmites. Remains of pachyderms, Byzantine fragments, and bronze coins have been discovered in **Grotta dei Giganti**, and **Grotta della Stalla** and **Grotta del Drago** offer cooling baths.

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