



The Feudi di Guagnano vineyard in Puglia

ette (little ears), which they sell to local restaurants and tourists.

The heel of the Italian boot dips into both the Adriatic and Ionian seas, stretching hundreds of miles. This means distances are greater than you may think from a glance at the map. Public transport is often infrequent, except in key towns and resorts.

A car is essential for exploring Puglia's coastline, framed by precariously arranged whitewashed cubic villages and Basilicata's se-

cret hilltop medieval towns.

The early morning sun is blazing as a plump bunch of grapes destined for the Leone de Castris 5 Roses rosé label (available in Ireland) slides from my clumsy grasp after an ad hoc harvesting lesson.

The piercing eyes of the formidable Contessa Luisa Leone Plantera de Castris di Lemnos (1901-1950), doyenne of this wine empire, bore into me from their shrine to Italy's first ever rosé wine.

The side looks of veteran pickers – some with over 30 years' experience – whose buckets already overflowed, say it all. I am destined to drink, not pick.

My companion harvester Concezio of Discovery Puglia has a flashback to his student times: "We started the picking before 5am and they brought us a feast of cheese, ham, salamis and wine at 8am," he says. A great incentive to keep those shears snipping away, we decide.

## Factfile

### How to get there

Ryanair flies from Dublin to Bari from April to late October, four days weekly (ryanair.com).

Discovery Puglia (discoverypuglia.com, 01-2544280) are native specialists of the region offering authentic holidays from food and wine tours to family friendly or escorted and tailor-made trips. A four-day wine odyssey costs from €350. Five-day gourmet cookery classes and food tasting-based breaks cost from €700, with stays at enchanting manors, farm houses and beachside hotels.

### Where to stay

In Bari, elegant **Hotel Oriente** on Corso Cavour 32 beside the Opera House (featured on all hotel booking sites online with great out of season rates) is close to the old town and shopping.

**Masserie** – expect to pay from €120 upwards for a double room with breakfast – are historic fortified farmhouses turned into boutique hotels specialising in style, comfort and traditional cuisine. At monumentally elegant **Tenuta Monacelli** (tenutamonacelli.com) we slept in a converted coach house.

Rustic **Masseria Salinola** on the outskirts of Ostuni (masseriasalinola.it), surrounded by fruit and olive trees, offers gorgeous bedrooms

converted from stables. **Masseria L'Astore**, Cutrofiano (lastoremasseria.it) has B&B accommodation, wine tasting and guided tours of the underground oil mill.

In the picturesque town of Irsina (40 minutes from Matera) a stylish apartment for €450 a week will sleep up to six in a wonderful location above olive groves, with wifi for those who need to keep a foot in that other world. See [homeaway.co.uk](http://homeaway.co.uk) for 'romantic apartment' Irsina, Basilicata.

### Where to eat

Puglia is famous for its diverse antipasto and seafood, special cheeses such as burrata, sun-ripened vegetables, premium olive oil, flavour-some Altamura bread, Orecchiette pasta served with grated aged ricotta cheese and fresh tomatoes

In Bari don't miss an excursion to one of Italy's best known 'slow food' restaurants, award-winning Terranima on Via Putignani, dinner €30-35 each with wine. (terranima.com). Look forward to superb rustic fare and luscious desserts (death by chocolate in a warm pudding). Wines: Primitivo, Negroamaro and Nero di Troia are the main players here.

For further information on Puglia see [viaggiareinpuglia.it](http://viaggiareinpuglia.it)

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