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Salento puglia guide

I was planning to write a post about the best things to do on Lecce, but it's not really a kind of making room. Sure, there are some museums and dozens of churches to visit, but none of them are essential. Instead, Lecce is to experiment for strolling through the narrow golden sandstone streets, to find hidden squares, for lazy lunches in wine bars with a glass of local rose and a view of an extravagantly carved Baroque church. One of our favorite places in Lecce On our third visit to Lecce, we spent a month in this small university town (population: 96,000) located in the Salento de Puglia region on the heels of the Boot of Italy. Most visitors only come for a day or two, but we never got bored in our long stay. It is too beautiful a place, and despite the small size of the historic center, we always find a new corner hidden in our daily walks. Traffic is limited in the center so it is a pleasure to walk. And then there's the food. Morning pastries with coffee with iced almond milk, a rustic puff pastry for lunch, aperitivo evening snacks and dinners of various generous vegetable antipasti dishes and hearty pasta dishes, topped with an ice cream and a stroll through the beautifully lit streets. Puglia is our favorite Italian region to eat and is wonderfully vegetarian (although fish and meat lovers will find plenty of offer too). Lecce has grown in popularity since our last visit five years ago and tour groups have arrived, but it's nothing compared to the crowds in Florence or Rome. All you have to do is go down a side street to find a quiet place for yourself. Content things to do in Lecce, Italy Although I said there is no must-see in Lecce, here are some sites and activities that you could include in your strikes. I recommend collecting a map of the tourist office in the Main Square of Sant'Oronzo. You can also see our map of Lecce below with all our favorite places. Back in the Roman Amphitheatre of Contents and the Plaza Sant'Oronzo The Roman amphitheatre of Piazza Sant'Oronzo A good starting point for your explorations in Lecce is the main square of the city, Piazza Sant'Oronzo. The highlight is the great Roman amphitheatre that once seated 14,000 spectators on its two levels, although only the lower level remains—sometimes concerts still take place here. In the square you can also see the column of Sant'Oronzo (currently covered for restoration works) and an unusual bronze clock 20 meters high, the Orologio delle Meraviglie, created in 1955 on the wall of the Bank of Naples. If you're in need of soda, Caffe Alvino is a good place to have a coffee and pastry or aperitif. The return to Lecce Cathedral in the evening is located in one of Lecce's most beautiful squares, Piazza del Duomo. Unlike Piazza Sant'Oronzo, full of cafés and shops, Piazza del Duomo has a more intimate atmosphere and is surrounded by ornate buildings such as the bishop's residence and seminary. This was originally built 1144 and was rebuilt in the 17th century by the architect Giuseppe Zimbalo in the decorative Baroque style that now characterizes the city. It's also worth watching the Duomo lit up at night. Lecce Cathedral is free of charge from 08:30 to 12:30 and from 16:00 to 18:30. The most extravagant Baroque church of Basilica di Santa Croce Lecce is the Holy Cross, also designed by Zimbalo. Unfortunately, during our last visit the facade was covered as it was under restoration work (it is now finished). We could still enter and admire the ornate columns and the decorative ceiling. Next to Santa Croce is another Zimbabwean creation, the Palazzo dei Celestini, now the headquarters of the local government. After admiring the exterior you can walk through the courtyard and the arch to reach Lecce Park (see below). Just beyond the church and palace is a small street full of wine bars, perfect for a light lunch or a snack. The Santa Croce is free of charge. I'm not sure about opening hours, but like most churches it closes in the afternoon. Church Tour Santa Chiara Church is in a beautiful square There are so many other churches to explore in Lecce – wander randomly and meet them or follow the path on the tourist map of the city. Some to take care of are Santa Chiara, San Matteo, Santa Irene and San Giovanni Battista. Most churches are intricately decorated in the 17th-century Baroque style with querub, gargoyles and gremi carved from the soft Lecce stone. Return to Contents Night Passeggiata Passeggiata in Lecce If you want a real experience of Italian life, join the night walk when locals of all ages take a pre-dinner stroll. The streets come to life after the afternoon fall and buildings turn golden as the sun sets. The heart of the action is via Vittorio Emanuele II between Plaza Sant'Oronzo and Piazza del Duomo, on weekends it gets very busy, but it is certainly lively. Back to the Content Cooking Course Learning how to make pasta at Lecce Our favorite experience at Lecce was to do a cooking class with Cooking Experience Lecce. We joined local chef Gianna for a tour of the city's produce market before heading to a 17th-century palace for a fun, casual cooking class. We all signed up to make local specialties such as parmagiana di melanzana (eggplant parmesan) and orecchiette pasta before enjoying a quiet dinner on the terrace. A cooking class is a great way to learn more about local food, have a unique experience, and enjoy a delicious meal. Read more about our Lecce cooking class experience. Lecce Porta Porta Napoli The three remaining city gates of the walled city are useful sights for navigating the city and all are decorative and worth watching. Once passed through them we leave behind the historic center for the modern part of the city, which is less attractive, but has some good restaurants and shops. The main gate of the city is Porta Napoli built in 1543 for a state visit of Charles V V molded into a Roman triumphal arch. On the outskirts of the city is the obelisk and beyond this is the university area. Further south, on the same side of the city is Porta Rudiae, the oldest of the gates, which is crowned by statues of saints. Just outside is the small product market. Porta Rudiae Across the center is Porta San Biagio, probably the least visited door, but it's still impressive. Brings San Biagio Back to Content Museo Faggiano Normally we do not visit archaeological museums, but we were intrigued by the Faggiano Museum because of its origin history. It was a normal private home until 2001, when the owner needed to enter the ground to deal with a sewer problem. Below the family they discovered layers of archaeological remains dating back 2500 years. You can take a self-guided tour of the house and see what they discovered, including underground cisterns, graves, escape holes and secret corridors. The building dates back to the pre-Roman era and was a Knights Templar house from 1000 to 1200 and a Franciscan nuns' convent until 1600. The Faggiano Museum is open all day from 09:30 to 20:00. Admission is €5. Palazzo Taurino Jewish Museum Palazzo Taurino opened in 2016 to highlight Lecce's little-known Jewish history. We had not realized that this area was a thriving Jewish community in the Middle Ages until they were expelled around 1540. Most of the Jewish buildings were destroyed and Baroque churches were rebuilt at the top, including Santa Croce (next to the museum). The entrance includes a guided tour and at the end there is a moving video on another aspect of Jewish history in Salento when Jewish refugees after World War II were put into camps here and worked in collaboration with local Catholics. Palazzo Taurino is open daily, except on Saturdays from 10:00 to 13:30 and from 16:00 to 19:00 (Sunday mornings only and other days in winter). Admission is €5 and includes a 30-minute guided tour. Hidden Roman Theatre among the narrow streets of the Baroque city is a 2nd-century Roman Theatre that once had capacity for 4000 people and was only rediscovered between gardens and palaces in 1929. You can see the theatre from Via Arte della Cartapesta, a small street to the left of Chiesa Santa Chiara. To enter, the entrance is via Degli Ammirati and costs €3 and includes admission to a small museum. Opening hours are limited (mornings are probably the best time). Returning to Happy Convitto Palmieri Convitto Palmieri is not a tourist attraction in Lecce. I discovered it by accident and I was surprised that this large column-lined square was not marked on tourist maps. The building houses a library and the square is a place to hang out for children at night with a couple of bars in front. El Villa Comunale Park Lecce the most pleasant green space of the Parco Du content and is the small Villa Comunale, located on the outskirts of the center. It is worth visiting for a short walk or a picnic. Back to Contents Day Trips from Lecce Otranto is a great day trip from Lecce Lecce is the ideal base for exploring The Salento region is located between the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, so you can reach all of the mainland's attractions in 30-60 minutes. In just over an hour you can also visit the magnificent cities of the Arria Valley further north, but I prefer to stay in this area for part of my time in Puglia. Having a car is by far the easiest and fastest way to make day trips from Lecce, as public transport is limited (see how to get to Lecce below). To cover a lot of land without a car you can make one of the visits offered by the tourist office in the main square. They offer a wide variety of visits in minivans for 9 people for 60 € for a full day. You can read my post in the best cities to visit in Puglia for ideas. These are my favorite places to visit with driving times from Lecce: Otranto (40 minutes) – A beautiful seaside town overlooking the turquoise sea. North coast of Otranto (about 35 minutes) - Some great beaches like Torre dell'Orso and the only cave swimming hole of poetry. Galipoli (35 minutes) - Another beautiful seaside town with a beach and old olive press to visit. Galatina (25 minutes) - A small village with a Baroque center that is often overlooked. Corigliano d'Otranto (25 minutes) – An uneasy village with an interesting medieval castle. The nearest beach to Lecce is San Cataldo, but a better option is the chain of beaches north of Porto Cesareo, including Torre Lapillo and Punta Prosciutto. Go to Booking.com to dislike. Back to Content Where to Eat at Lecce Burrata Pizza at Pizza & Co See our detailed guide to Lecce restaurants for the best local dishes and restaurants to try, but here are our top picks: Pizza & Co - Absolutely delicious pizza slices. Perfect for a fast and economical meal. Baldo - Our favorite ice cream site. Enoteca Mamma Elvira - Brilliant wine cellar with a wide selection of wines in the glass and delicious light meals. Osteria Da Angiolino - Excellent value for money from traditional food. Alle Due Corti - Another ideal place for traditional dishes. Osteria degli Spiriti - A luxury restaurant with an excellent multi-course antipasti. Where to stay in Lecce I recommend staying in the historic center if possible, as it is much more attractive than the modern part of the city. That said, if you have a car it will be easier to find parking outside the center (where traffic is restricted). Back to Content Airbnb Apartment Our Airbnb apartment on Lecce Airbnb is a good alternative to hotels and can be better value for money. If you haven't tried it before, sign up here for £25 for your first stay. In our last stay of a month in Lecce we rented an apartment in Via Giacomo Antonio Ferrari, near the main square. It's no longer available, but you can search for more Airbnbs on Lecce here. Our street in Lecce Back to Contents Lecce Hotels and B&B B Luxury Dimora Storica Lecce The Parco 1419 - My best option for a luxury stay is this magnificent hotel in a medieval castle with its own tower outside the centre. The elegant rooms have been restored with antique furniture and modern facilities. Book the hot tub suite for special occasions! Classic rooms can be surprisingly affordable if you book in advance. La Fiermontina Urban Resort - This 5-star hotel is the only place within walking distance of the center with a swimming pool. It looks very elegant and quiet. Vico della Cavallerizza - Rooms with character in an old palace in the heart of the historic center. Some rooms have frescoed ceilings and all have a balcony. El Mid-Range B&B B&B B Cuore Barocco - One of the cheapest places to stay in the center, but the rooms look lovely. 19Venti - Budget rooms near the park with all the amenities you need. Spiriti Suite - We stayed in one of these elegant, good-value suites on a previous trip. It is a 10-minute walk from the historic center. You can search for more hotels and B&Bs in Lecce here. Back to Content Clothing and Souvenirs We're not in shopping, but Lecce has plenty of cute-looking independent clothing, jewelry and craft venues. The good sailing streets are Via Palmieri and Via Vittorio Emanuele II. For chain clothing and lingerie shops leave the center from the main square of via Salvatore Trinchese. Unlike most small shops, many of the chains remain open all afternoon. Lecce is famous for its paper mache (Cartapesta in Italian) which was originally used for creating religious statues that were lighter to wear for festivals. Via Vittorio Emanuele II offers small studios around the city, including Cartapesta Riso. Food La Dispensa, a fantastic food shop in the morning market of Lecce, just outside Porta Rudiae, is a small market where you can pick up local produce. La Dispensa - A nice bulk shopping shop full of beans, lentils, unusual flours, spices and nuts. This would be a good place for foodie gifts too. Fortnightly Market - Unfortunately the Lecce Market (Monday and Friday) is quite far from the center near the stadium. It is huge and consists mainly of cheap clothing, although there are some good low-cost products that sell fruits, vegetables, olives, nuts and dried beans. If you have booked with us and you want to say that our reviews are from great customers who have booked at the property. Dok - The largest supermarket in the center. Where to run in Lecce It's best to run as soon as possible to beat the heat and avoid the crowds by running through the center. The small Park Villa Comunale, near the center, would be good for laps, but it doesn't open until 9 a.m., so it wasn't good for me. For short runs I headed to the Parco di Belloluogo next to the cemetery (leaving the Old City of Porta Napoli), Napoli), opens at 8 am and there are toilets and water taps. A full loop is about a mile away and takes you past a tower and olive trees. For longer I left the city towards the countryside along the Via Vecchia Frigole north of downtown. It starts as pavement, becomes a bike path, and then becomes a quiet rural road. You have to cross a highway at one point, but there was no traffic early Sunday morning. Back to Content Arriving in Lecce by train, Lecce can be easily reached by direct trenitalia from cities such as Brindisi (30 minutes), Bari (1.5 hours), Rome (5.5 hours) and Bologna (7 hours). From Naples you will have to change trains to Caserta (5.5 hours in total). You can check the timetables and book tickets in advance to get the best rates from trenitalia's website. It may be a bit difficult to use, however, since you have to use Italian silly (i.e. Turin not Turin). An easier option for English speakers is ItaliaRail. Booking.com part of Booking Booking.com and a reservation has been made in case there is a problem loading the reviews. Train prices are the same as at trenitalia's site and most trains are ticketless (only one PNR number is shown on the train). The train from Bari to Lecce Trenitalia stops at various locations in Puglia, including Polignano A Mare, Monopoli, Cisternino and Ostuni. Lecce is also on the local esf train line, but these trains are much slower, less frequent and may be unreliable. Gallipoli is 1 hour and 45 minutes from Galatina. Getting to Otranto involves two changes (to Zollino and Maglie) and takes at least 1.5 hours. Be sure to check the train timetables out and return before leaving on a day trip. Avoid travelling on Sundays when services are even more limited. In summer (mid-June to early September), the esf sometimes manages additional trains to the Salento, which makes travelling around the region a little easier. By car you don't need a car in Lecce as it's small enough to walk everywhere and parking isn't easy, but if you're going to explore the area it's much easier to do it by car than by public transport. On our first two short trips to Lecce we had a car. In our last long stay we arrive by train from Bologna and rent a car for only a few days for some day trips. We intended to move by public transport, but the timetables were so limited and the trips much longer than we decided to rent a car. Search for cheap car hire deals in Kayak and Rental Cars. Booking.com is part of Booking Booking.com and has stayed at the property in the last 24 hours. The staff were very friendly and well-booked, to enjoy your entry in any category. Maggiore's office is a 20-minute walk from the center of Porta Napoli. When we left Lecce we rented a car for a one-way rental from Lecce to Foglia for a two-week road trip along Region. It cost €232 (\$311) over 15 days, including a one-way fare with Avis (again booked through Expedia) who were more professional than Maggiore and our car was more modern with a USB plug. Avis Office is a 20-minute walk south of the center, past the train station. Once we got off the train in Foglia we took the train to Rome (3 hours). I recommend renting the smaller car as it is easier to navigate the narrow streets of Italy and park. Check out with your accommodation in Lecce where to park. Free parking was found on the street outside the Old City just north of Via Giuseppe Petrariglione Station. From the airport to Lecce The nearest airport to Lecce is Brindisi (30 minutes by car), while Bari Airport is a 2-hour drive away. You can rent a car at Brindisi Airport or take a shuttle bus from the airport to Lecce (40 minutes, €6.50). Back to Content The best time of year to visit Lecce We visited Lecce in April, May, June and September and the weather was hot and sunny most of the time. The summer months of July and August are very hot and crowded and it is best to avoid visiting them if possible. June and September have a reliable climate and are probably the best times to enjoy the beaches without large crowds. In April-May it was sunny most days with daytime temperatures in the high 20 centimeters and night temperatures around 17-20°C— at the end of April we were able to go out to dinner without a sweater. Ydn error. October would be similar. If you're not worried about sunbathing on the beach, then winter isn't a bad time to visit. The weather will be variable, but you will benefit from lower prices and fewer crowds. Back to Content Lecce Italy Map resources to plan a trip to Lecce's guide – I like Lonely Planet South Italy or Lonely Planet Italia if you're traveling north too. Travel insurance – Essential in case something goes wrong. The best value we have found is True Traveller (UK/EU citizens), which we have been using for the past six years. World Nomads (worldwide) is another reliable option we've used in the past. Accommodation – Search Booking.com (hotels and B&Bs) and Airbnb (rooms and apartments- get \$38 out of here). Flights – Check Kiwi.com flights to Brindisi. It offers plenty of flexibility to help you find the best deals (choose a date range to find the cheapest day to fly). Train Travel - See the man in seat 61 for the best advice, read our post when travelling from London Italy by train, and consider an Interrail or Eurail pass if traveling to various destinations in Europe. Pack light – To avoid paying checked baggage fees to airlines. My book, The Carry-On Traveller: The Ultimate Guide to Light, shows you how to travel with hand luggage on any trip. To track travel expenses, use our iOS Trail Wallet app, which will help you stay on budget and know how much you're spending on both euros and startup currency. Check out our travel resource page for more gear and tools to help you plan your trip. More Puglia Tips Lecce is one of our favorite cities in Italy. We love the beautiful architecture and the lively but relaxed atmosphere. I hope you add it to your Puglia itinerary and that this site helps you make the most of your stay. If you liked this post, pin it down! This article was originally written in June 2018 and last updated in 2019. Are you looking for Christmas gift ideas? Check out our guide to the top 50 gifts for travelers that includes unique suggestions for exploring the world at home. There's something for every budget. Back to Content ItalyLeccePuglia ItalyLeccePuglia