



Rent a car in Bari to explore Puglia: our tips and advice

By Floriane

If you're here, you're probably planning a trip to **Puglia**, and most likely a **road trip from Bari**. And frankly, we agree: this region of southern Italy is great to discover on a road trip, as the distances between points of interest are quite long.

But very quickly, one question comes up (and it always does): **how do you manage car rental in Bari to explore Puglia without making a mistake? What's the best car rental company in Puglia?**

Because between rates that vary according to the season, insurance that's not always clear-cut, deposits that can be expensive, and above all the **ZTLs** (limited traffic zones) that are **very numerous in Italy's historic centers**, it's normal to have lots of questions.

In this guide, we share **our advice**, and above all what we'd like to have done to make the most of our stay in Puglia.

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Why renting a car in Bari to explore Puglia is (almost) essential

Let's be clear: yes, it's possible to visit Bari without a car. But when it comes to **exploring the Apulia region**, its secluded beaches and picturesque countryside, the car quickly becomes your best ally.

With a car, you can easily :

- Reach isolated **beaches** in the south of [Lecce](#) that are less accessible by public transport
- Alternate between **towns, villages, countryside** and **coastline** without having to depend on timetables
- Leave early in the morning (and in Puglia, this changes everything: less crowded, quieter, more beautiful), especially in the towns of [Monopoli](#) and Polignano a mare.
- Get lost in the countryside around Alberobello and admire the trulli with no one around.

□ For your road trip, our [Puglia road trip](#) article is the perfect complement: it helps you set the stages, balance the driving times, and avoid "doing it all" to the point of enjoying nothing.

Where to rent a car in Bari? The airport, the best choice

In the vast majority of cases, the simplest (and often most cost-effective) choice is to [rent your car at Bari airport](#).

Why? Because you arrive, you collect the car, and you leave. You don't have to waste half a day figuring out transport, lugging suitcases or organizing several stages. And because there are so many agencies at the airport, there's also **more choice**... and therefore often **better prices**, especially in high season.

Why rent directly from Bari airport?

- more **choice of vehicles** (very useful if you want an automatic, a decent

trunk, or a specific category)

- **prices often lower** than downtown
- **immediate recovery on arrival**
- easy return before the return flight (a real comfort when you're tired)

Bari, a good starting point for exploring Puglia

Bari is a great place to start a road trip:

- the coast to Polignano / Monopoli is fast (about 40 minutes from the airport)
- Matera can be reached in 1 hour by car
- inland (trulli, villages) is best done over a few days
- and if you're heading further south (towards Lecce and its beaches), the car makes everything simpler.

➔ [View Bari airport car rentals](#)

When to book a car in Bari

□ **Our simplest tip: book as early as possible.** This is also the case for [hotels in Puglia](#), as the tourist season ultimately only lasts a few months.

The Puglia region has grown enormously in popularity in recent years, and in summer this is quickly felt.

Small cars go first, prices go up, and you sometimes end up with an unsuitable vehicle. Especially if you're traveling between June and September, or during school vacations.

Anticipating allows :

- more choice
- pay less
- avoid discontinuity in practical categories (compacts / city cars)

And quite honestly: we'd much rather spend the budget on a nice night out, a restaurant, or an activity... than on a "last-minute surcharge" on the car.

Which rental company to choose in Bari? Our method (simple and effective)

Let's be honest: **there's no such thing as the perfect rental company.**

So rather than telling you "absolutely take X", our method is always the same:

1. **Compare**
2. **Read conditions** (franchise, depot, fuel policy)
3. **View recent reviews**

We use the [Discover Cars](#) comparator almost systematically because it gives us all the information in one place: insurance, deductibles, conditions, reviews... without having to open 15 tabs. This allows us to easily compare offers from numerous local and international agencies, all in one place.

You can easily add options such as **a car seat or booster seat**, as well as **insurance**, which will give you the final price you'll pay, so there will be no surprises once you're there.

□ [Compare car rentals in Bari with DiscoverCars](#)

Budget: how much does a car rental in Puglia cost?

Car hire in Bari is generally affordable, especially out of season. Prices rise especially in summer, when everyone has the same idea: road trip in Puglia.

In **order of idea** (it varies according to dates, duration, category, anticipation):

- **off-season**: often around €15 to €35 / day
- **in summer**: often around €35 to €70 / day

During our stay, we found very reasonable rates by booking **several weeks in advance**. For example, here's a simulation for 6 days in June with the Italian agency **Automania**, at less than €30 / day.

Insurance: not to be overlooked

Insurance is THE subject you don't want to deal with, yet it's often the one that makes all the difference to the stress level of your trip.

Driving in Puglia is pleasant on the whole, but as soon as you get close to the

historic centers, things tighten up, you have to park to the millimeter, scooters go everywhere, and a micro-scratch can happen very quickly (even if you're very careful).

Before confirming your booking, please check :

- the **amount of the deductible** (this is often where the real nasty surprise lies)
- what's covered and what isn't: **tires, windows, rocker panels...**
- any exclusions
- and the amount of the **deposit** blocked on the card

□ Our opinion (and our way of doing things): when possible, we prefer **full coverage/no deductible**. Yes, it can be an extra cost... but it avoids tense driving. And above all, it avoids endless discussions on the way home about a scratch we hadn't even seen. Count on around €10 a day for full coverage, which you should take out online, as the price will be more attractive than at the counter.

What type of car should I rent in Bari for Puglia?

Of course, as you can imagine, there's absolutely no need for a big car, or even a 4x4. We recommend either a small city car or an SUV for more comfort and storage.

Small city car or compact car

Perfect if :

- you move around a lot (Monopoli, Polignano, Ostuni, Lecce...)
- you want to park easily
- you want to limit your budget

It's often a wise choice for a road trip in Puglia, because centers are tight and parking spaces can be tight.

Compact SUV / wagon

Interesting if :

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- you have a lot of luggage
- you are 3-4 with a necessary trunk
- you're on a long stage and want more comfort

* In all cases: **air-conditioning essential** in summer.

Driving in Puglia: what you need to know

Driving in Puglia is often very pleasant. There's that "vacation road" feel that we love: the scenery changes rapidly between sea and countryside. The driving is much nicer than in the [Naples area](#).

Here are a few points to keep in mind:

- in cities, driving can be a little "lively" (scooters, horns, overtaking)
- historic city centers are often **narrow** and sometimes pedestrianized
- in high season, parking lots near tourist spots fill up fast

□ The tip that really makes a difference in everyday life: **choose [accommodation in Puglia with parking](#)** or with parking nearby.

This is the detail we underestimate when booking... and which we bless when we arrive tired in the evening, especially without the towns of **Polignano a Mare** or **Lecce**.

ZTL in Italy: Italy's point of vigilance

If there's one subject we'd put on a huge billboard at the beginning of this article, it'd be this one: **ZTLs**.

ZTLs (Zona a Traffico Limitato) are zones with limited access (often reserved for residents, authorized vehicles, cabs, etc.). They are often found in Italy's **historic centers**. And in Puglia, it's a true classic: the more beautiful and ancient the center, the more likely it is that a ZTL will be hanging around.

The important point is that checks are often carried out using **cameras**. So you may enter by mistake, not notice anything at the time... and receive a fine **later**, sometimes several weeks after the trip.

How to avoid ZTLs without depriving yourself of historic centers

- don't follow the GPS "with your eyes closed": it sometimes takes you to the wrong place
- aim for **peripheral parking lots**, then finish on foot (often more pleasant).
- if your accommodation is in a restricted area: ask in advance how things work (some hotels may declare the plate, depending on local rules)
- look for "ZTL" signs (located at city center entrances) and timetables: this is

often where it all comes down to it.

Don't panic, if you're vigilant, you can easily avoid them. This was the case for us during our 10-day road trip.

Puglia tolls: how do they work in Italy?

In Italy, on [toll freeways](#), it's the classic way:

- take a ticket at the entrance
- you pay at the exit (card or cash depending on the route)

In Puglia, you can often avoid the freeway by taking the back roads, especially if you like to take your time. It may take a little longer, but it's often prettier, and fits in well with the "road trip" spirit.

3 simple options

1. **Avoid tolls** (simplest option): on Google Maps / Waze, check "avoid tolls".
2. **Pay as you go**: if you take the freeway occasionally, no worries.
3. **Electronic toll tag**: useful if you already have one or if you often travel in Italy, but not essential.

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Our opinion on car rental in Bari

Renting a car in Bari is clearly **the best way to discover Puglia**. It's simple, it gives you real freedom, and it lets you experience the region as you like it: alternating between sea, villages, old stones and improvised moments.

To sum up:

- ☐ the car is almost indispensable for a real road trip
- ➔ Bari airport is the most convenient starting point.
- ☐ compare on an aggregator + choose clear insurance + ZTL vigilance = much more serene travel

☐ [Compare car rental rates in Bari](#)

Quick checklist before leaving the counter

Checklist to be checked at the counter before collecting your [rental car](#) (you can download the **PDF** article **below** and then print our checklist before your stay):

Check at the counter (car rental in Bari)

✓ /
Notes

Required documents (license, ID/passport, confirmation)

Credit card in the name of the main driver (**credit preferred**)

Exact amount of security deposit blocked

Deductible: amount + conditions (when it applies)

Insurances included and options selected

Insurance exclusions : tires / windows / sills / roof / keys

Fuel policy (ideally “full/full”) + which fuel?

Mileage (unlimited or capped)

Additional driver: cost, conditions, properly registered in the contract

Equipment included:

- GPS
- baby seat

Vehicle condition: photos/videos (scratches, rims, windshield, interior)

Fuel level noted in contract (and compliant)

Lights / tires / air conditioning OK (quick test before setting off)

Assistance number + breakdown/accident procedure

Return conditions (time, exact location, full load, cleaning)

Possible expenses after return (tolls, fuel, cleaning, delays)

ZTL: confirmation of areas to be avoided + instructions for hotels in historic centers

Itinerary for leaving Bari/airport (to avoid stress on departure)

Don't hesitate to leave us a **note** or **5 stars** below, to let us know if you're planning this trip, to ask any questions you may have, below we'll answer you with great pleasure.

Before you leave and to **build your itinerary with the right steps**, you can complete your visit with our articles:

- [Itinerary of our Puglia road trip](#)
- [Our hotels in Puglia](#)
- [Visit Matera](#)
- [What to do in Lecce](#)
- [What to see in Monopoli](#)

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- [Visit Polignano a Mare](#)
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