

Visit Matera and its Sassi: Puglia's must-see troglodyte town



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By Matthieu

Matera is an **extraordinary troglodyte town**, unique in the world. It's a must-see on your [trip to Puglia](#). Its history and architecture set it apart from other Italian towns.

A **UNESCO World Heritage** site, Matera is also one of the **oldest inhabited towns in the world**. People were already living here over 7000 years ago, and some families were still occupying the caves as late as 1952.

Today, the finest hotels still stand side by side with caves left in their natural state. The town is a maze of alleyways, stairways and **breathtaking views** of troglodyte dwellings and rock churches. It's impossible to remain indifferent to its unique atmosphere.

If you're planning a **trip to Puglia**, don't miss Matera. At the end of this article, you'll find our **interactive map** with useful addresses to help you plan your stay.

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Matera, a must on your itinerary

Many people wonder whether Matera is part of Puglia. Actually, no: **Matera is the capital of** neighboring **Basilicata**. But it's so close (just **1 hour from Bari**) that it's a natural fit for an itinerary in Puglia.

If your stay is short, we recommend **Matera over Bari**. It's an incomparable city, at once authentic, moving and spectacular.

Troglodyte hotel in Matera: [information and booking Il Belvedere Matera](#)

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[Info and booking for a guided tour in French](#)

What to see in Matera: our must-sees and itinerary

Matera dominates a canyon carved out by the Gravina river. Its charm lies in its **troglodyte dwellings** (the famous *sassi*) and its **many rock-hewn churches**. There are over 150 in and around Matera.

Today, the town is undergoing a **cultural renaissance**. Abandoned caves are gradually being transformed into museums, [hotels](#) and restaurants, while retaining

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their authenticity.

The best guided tour

To fully appreciate Matera's wealth of attractions, book a [guided tour in French](#). You'll discover several emblematic sites with a passionate local guide. A complete experience that we recommend without hesitation.

You can explore Matera on foot. About **3 hours** are enough to see the main points of interest, but the town easily deserves two full days to soak up its atmosphere.

Our walking itinerary

1. **Sasso Barisano**: a photogenic maze of natural and man-made caves.
2. **Sant'Agostino church**: superb Baroque architecture and exceptional view of the canyon.
3. **Madonna delle Virtù**: rock church with ancient frescoes.
4. **Duomo di Matera**: the city's most important Romanesque cathedral, dominating the entire site.
5. **Casa Noha**: immersive museum retracing the history of Matera (30-minute film, highly instructive).
6. **MUSMA**: a highly original contemporary art museum housed in a former

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troglodyte convent.

7. **Sasso Caveoso**: a more authentic, less touristy district.
8. **San Pietro Caveoso**: cliffside church, emblematic of the site.
9. **Santa Lucia alle Malve**: one of the most beautiful rock churches (€3.50 admission).
10. **Piazza San Pietro**: superb viewpoint over the town and the natural park opposite.
11. **Gelateria I Vizi degli Angeli**: for excellent artisan gelato.
12. **Osteria Malatesta**: simple, tasty local cuisine at lunchtime.
13. **Radino Wine Bar**: refined address for dining, excellent value for money.
14. **Evening stroll**: the evening lights make Matera even more magical.

Matera, an open-air movie set

Matera's narrow streets have been the backdrop for many international films, including Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*, *Wonder Woman* and, more recently, **James Bond - Dying Can Wait** (2021). The city's raw, timeless charm inspires filmmakers the world over.

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Where to stay in Matera: our favorites

Spending a night in a **sassi** is a unique experience. These troglodyte accommodations combine ancient charm with modern comforts. Book in advance, places are limited.

Our recommendation

We loved [Il Belvedere Matera](#). Ideally located in Sasso Caveoso, it offers spectacular views of the city and breakfast on a panoramic terrace. An address offering unbeatable value for money.

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Low-budget options in Matera

Budget option in Matera: comfortable rooms 5 minutes' walk from the historic center

[Info and booking Vicolo Fiore Affittacamere II from 75€, rated 9.3/10 on Booking](#)

Hostel option in Matera from 23€ for a dormitory bed in the center of town

[Info and booking for The Rock Hostel](#)

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How to get to Matera

- **By car:** 1 h from [Bari](#). [Renting a car at Bari airport](#) is the most practical way to explore Puglia.
- **By train:** with [Ferrovie Appulo Lucane](#) from Bari Centrale (approx. 1h45 journey time).
- **By bus:** the [Cotral](#) or [Miccolis](#) companies provide a direct link from Bari airport (1h30, from €4).

△ The historic center and the **sassi** are in a **ZTL** (limited traffic zone). Avoid driving there, as fines are automatic. Park on the outskirts or ask your accommodation provider for advice.

Find our complete guide and all our tips to help you [rent a car at Bari airport](#).

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The most beautiful viewpoints around Matera

- **Belvedere Murgia Timone:** situated on the hill opposite the town, it offers spectacular views of Matera and the sassi. Accessible by car or on foot via a suspension bridge. Best done at sunset.
- **Belvedere Luigi Guerricchio:** Located at the northern end of the historic center, this belvedere offers an unobstructed view of the **Sasso Barisano** and the Gravina. Less frequented than Murgia Timone, it allows you to observe Matera from a more urban angle, with a clear reading of the volumes, terraces and organization of the Sassi.
- **Belvedere San Pietro Caveoso:** Located close to the church of San Pietro

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Caveoso, this belvedere overlooks the **Sasso Caveoso**, the most mineral and raw part of the town. The view is closer, more immersive, with a marked sense of depth over the troglodyte dwellings.

Our map of good addresses in Matera

We always list our **tips** and points of interest on an interactive map to make your visits easier. You can use it directly below.

Our opinion on Matera

We stayed in Matera for **2 days and 2 nights**, and our memories are unforgettable. This ancient yet lively town is our **favorite in Puglia**. In October, out of season, the atmosphere was peaceful and magical.

Next time, we plan to return for a more in-depth visit, before continuing on to [Alberobello](#) and its iconic trulli.

We wish you an **excellent trip**! If you're planning your Puglia itinerary, leave us a note here or on [Instagram](#).

Before you leave and to **build your itinerary with the right steps**, you can

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