PUGLIA La Puglia tra natura incontaminata e spiritualità: Tremiti – Parco Nazionale del Gargano - 4 giorni

PUGLIA Puglia among pure nature and spirituality: Tremiti - Gargano National Park - 4 days

**Day 1: Tremiti Islands** Boarding for the Tremiti Islands (approx. 1 hour of navigation), the only Italian archipelago in the lower Adriatic Sea, composed of 5 small islands, completely different. Only 2 of them are inhabited: **San Nicola** and **San Domino**.The others are the **Capraia**, the **Cretaccio** and the distant **Pianosa**. Walking tour of the Island of **San Nicola**, a real open-air museum. It hosts the largest abbey in the Mediterranean Sea: it' s the abbey of S. Maria a Mare, whose origins are lost in the legend. The Benedictines settled here in the 11th century. In 1334 it was attacked by pirates, but a few decades later it was once again inhabited by canons. The abbey was suppressed in 1783 by King Ferdinand IV of Naples. Abandoned for centuries, most of the external perimeter, the church facade and some valuable mosaic floors are still visible. **Curiosity**: The sanctuary of Santa Maria a Mare is a sort of fortress-monastery that makes the Tremiti islands unique. So how was it possible to build such a large structure on such a small archipelago? Legend has it that the Madonna appeared to a hermit in a dream, asking him to build a large temple and pointing out a place to dig. At that point, the hermit found a sepulchral inscription and, behind it, a large treasure, which made it possible to build the sanctuary. Fish lunch in a traditional restaurant. In the afternoon departure by boat for the tour of the Island of **San Domino**, the largest island of the Tremiti archipelago, the most characteristic from a naturalistic point of view. Entirely covered with Mediterranean scrub, it has only one sandy beach, Cala delle Arene. **Curiosity**: cars are not allowed on the Tremiti archipelago, the only ones that circulate are those of the residents, therefore in San Domino it is possible to move on foot, but the distances are not that short, due to the constant ups and downs. From the port to the center of the village 20 min. (uphill) and 15 minutes downhill. Visit of the **Grotta del Bue Marino**, 70 m. deep and dominated by high cliffs, which owes its name to the monk seals that used to stop here; the **Grotta delle Viole**, whose name derives from the purplish red color of calcareous algae; **the Grotta del Coccodrillo**, the **rock of the Elephant** and the beautiful **Pagliai**. Boarding for the return, dinner and overnight in hotel.

**Day 2: Gargano** Full day stay in Gargano: an itinerary that, crossing the enchanting southern coast, touches Manfredonia, until arriving in Vieste. The coast is interspersed with ''trabucchi'', ancient wooden fishing tools and coastal watchtowers, a defense against frequent attacks by Saracen pirates. Visit of the old village of Vieste, consisting of alleys with white houses linked to medieval arches (on request: boat trip to the sea caves of the Gargano). The Pizzomunno is an imposing 25 m. high limestone monolith at the beginning of the beach south of the town, called "del Castello" (because it is dominated by the Swabian Castle) or "Scialara". Thanks to its grandeur and its charm it became the symbol of the Gargano town itself. **Curiosity**: According to the tale, in Vieste lived a young fisherman called Pizzomunno, handsome, tall, with black eyes and hair. He was deeply in love with Cristalda, a young girl with sea-eyed eyes and very long blonde hair. Every day Pizzomunno went to the sea to drop his nets and each day, the mermaids, daughters of the god of the sea, tempted him with bewitching songs and proposals of love. Furious of the continuous refusals, they decided to punish the young man, dragging his beloved into the depths of the sea. He suffered so much that he felt his heart and body petrified by the pain, until he became the cliff that still today dominates the "beach of the Castle". Legend has it, however, that the god of the sea, driven to mercy, decided to make up in part for the terrible gesture committed by his daughters, allowing the two lovers to meet, every 100 years, on a night of full moon. Lunch in a restaurant. In the afternoon a short stop in **Peschici**, surrounded by the walls of the ancient castle. **Byzantine**, with its narrow streets carved into the rock, craft shops, inns and winding stairways, climbing between the little white houses. Proceeding through the ancient Umbra Forest, the green heart of the Gargano National Park. Dinner and overnight in hotel.

**Day 3: Monte Sant'Angelo – Manfredonia** Departure for **Monte Sant'Angelo**, visit of the Romanesque complex of San Pietro, Santa Maria Maggiore and the medieval district Junno and the wonderful Sanctuary of San Michele Arcangelo, an international pilgrimage destination since the Middle Ages. This is where the apparitions of the Archangel took place in a cave."Before coming here... go to Monte Sant'Angelo and call upon the help and protection of the Archangel Michael." Padre PioAfter lunch continuation to **Manfredonia**, a city founded by Manfredi of Swabia: visit of the Cathedral, the Castle of the Angevin era and, just out of the city, the suggestive Romanesque Church of Santa Maria di Siponto. Dinner and overnight in hotel.

**Day 4: San Giovanni Rotondo** Visit of **San Giovanni Rotondo**. In 1916, the then very young Padre Pio arrived here. He dedicated his life to the service of the Church, promoting the creation of Prayer Groups and the realization of charitable works, first and foremost the "Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza" Hospital, defined as a "temple of prayer and science". The hospital is located near the two churches dedicated to Santa Maria delle Grazie, where Padre Pio lived and worked, and the new church designed by Renzo Piano in which the mortal remains **of St. Pio of Pietrelcina** are kept.

**Curiosity**: San Giovanni Rotondo was founded in 1095. Among the ruins that still exist you can see the remains of a baptistery, it is said that it was intended for the cult of the Roman god Janus, and then became a chapel dedicated to San Giovanni Battista (this is why the village is called "San Giovanni"). The circular shape of the baptistery ended up giving the place its name. Thus, "San Giovanni Rotondo" is not a new saint, but simply the name given to the circular chapel of San Giovanni Battista around which the town was founded.