



The Puglia Region (Italy)

The Puglia region forms the most eastern part of the Italian mainland, jutting out between the Adriatic and the Ionian seas towards Albania and Greece, thus forming a “bridge” between Europe and the countries of the eastern Mediterranean. The territory of the region is geographically attractive to human settlement, combining the hilly areas (Gargano, Subappennino Dauno, Murgia Alta and the sub-region of the Serre) with extensive and rich plains (Tavoliere, Premurgia and Tavoliere Salentino). People are attracted to the region by its rich cultural heritage, its beautiful rural landscape dotted with dry stone walls and monuments, and the thriving historic centres of its towns, together with the strength of its traditions, the industriousness of its inhabitants and its multiform economy.



Cultural heritage and environmental resources of Pilot areas (Gargano, Valle d'Itria and Northern Salento)

The landscapes, shaped over time by the history of the “living peoples” that inhabited and continue to inhabit the Puglia region, constitute the primary heritage (environmental, regional, urban, social and cultural) and the main element attesting to the identity of the places chosen as pilot areas (see fig. 2).

The Gargano peninsula is one of the most attractive coastal regions in southern Italy, due to its imposing monumental terraced hillsides and the exceptional scenic beauty of the steep southern slopes. Olive trees, typically associated with almonds, and small vineyards are grown on the lower terraces. The Sanctuary of Monte Sant'Angelo in Gargano is one of the three UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Puglia. The area of the Valle d'Itria (in the Murgia dei Trulli sub-region) in the Northern Salento is one of the best known landscapes in Puglia. Its historical legacy, marked by a succession of cultures and civilisations, is visible today in cathedrals and castles.



The Valle d'Itria is among the most important destinations in the world for those seeking a form of tourism that is culturally rich and attentive to the sustainable management of natural resources. It is also evident in the distinctive conical rural dwellings known as "trulli", the rock-cut chambers rich in exquisite frescoes, fortified farmhouses (masserie), mansions, churches, cathedrals and chapels, as well as the considerable range of food-and- wine products.

Economic activities and regional strategies

The economic fabric of Puglia is characterised by the concentration of heavy industry and a large number of small-to-medium-sized companies. Many of the latter operate in the food-processing sector, often associated with specialised agriculture. Tourism is a growing sector, producing double the added value of the agriculture and food processing sectors. In the pilot areas there have been many initiatives aimed at achieving these objectives. The high density of valuable cultural and environmental resources, characterised by the complexity, quality and integration of services available and the advanced development of the associated production chains, has prompted public bodies and private subjects to seek to link all the tourist and cultural attractors and create a system among the many important local initiatives. In addition, efforts are now being made to set up integrated tourism districts which can represent a nucleus that others can join, with a view to creating a complex but compact regional system that is competitive in terms of tourism and the economy.



Tourist attractions of Pilot areas (Gargano, Valle d'Itria and Northern Salento)

The landscapes, shaped over time by the history of the "living peoples" that inhabited and continue to inhabit the Puglia region, constitute the primary heritage (environmental, regional, urban, social and cultural) and the main element attesting to the identity of the places chosen as pilot areas (see fig. 2). The Gargano peninsula is one of the most attractive coastal regions in southern Italy, due to several factors including its imposing monumental terraced hillsides and the exceptional scenic beauty of the steep southern slopes. Olive trees, typically associated with almonds, and small vineyards are grown on the lower terraces. The Sanctuary of Monte Sant'Angelo in Gargano is one of the three UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Puglia. The area of the Valle d'Itria (in the Murgia dei Trulli sub-region) in the Northern Salento is one of the best known landscapes in Puglia. Its historical legacy, marked by a succession of cultures and civilisations, is visible today in cathedrals and castles, the exuberant Baroque of the Northern Salento (see Lecce) and its more restrained variant in Martina Franca. There is an increase in specialised festivals and events, which serve a variety of purposes, including the promotion of tourism, the enhancement of a place's image and the celebration of group and place identity. Many festivals are dedicated to food specialities, whereas in some municipalities, Holy Week in the Easter period is characterised by significant expressions of devotion linked to the celebration of religious rites, which attract a considerable number of tourists.



Local products linked to the Mediterranean Diet

The geographical and environmental continuity of the Valle d'Itria and the Northern Salento corresponds to a cultural, social and economic continuum that encompasses the unique features of the inland areas and a coastal area rich in ancient architectural elements, crafts and food production. Here, viticulture for wine-making is becoming more and more specialised and has been awarded certificates of origin such as the "Denominazione di Origine Controllata" (DOC) and "Indicazione Geografica Tipica" (IGT). Each one is different, with its own history, and many have gained international recognition. The vineyards in the pilot area share the land with extensive olive groves. Indeed, the area is also a key player in the production of extra-virgin olive oil certified by Protected designations of origin (DOP Colline di Brindisi, DOP Terre Tarantine and DOP Terra d'Otranto), all characterised by specific forms of cultivation, natural beauty and landscape features. Wine-tasting tours and festivals are an important expression of gastronomic tourism and are highly popular with tourists.



Cultural routes and itineraries

The pilot areas have activated new, effective management of regional resources. What attracts people to the pilot areas, and represents a key element of connection between the various nodes of the regional tourism network, is their rich cultural heritage, their beautiful rural landscapes dotted with dry stone walls and monuments, their thriving historic towns, the strength of their traditions. The cultural and landscape aspects of the centuries-old olive groves and the vineyards of the pilot areas have been safeguarded by creating extensive oases of protected olive grove landscapes, as well as itineraries based on olive "oil roads" and "wine routes" such as that of "Doc-Locorotondo and Martina", which winds through historical towns, vineyards, hills and terraces of great charm. In addition, the pilot areas are specialised in offering pilgrimages and walking holidays that follow ancient pilgrimage routes such as Marian devotional paths, the Via Michaelica in the Gargano region and long stretches of the Via Francigena with its many churches and shrines in the Valle d'Itria and the Northern Salento. Moreover, much of the attractiveness of the Gargano lies in the opportunity it offers to combine a visit to the coast with a stay in the hills, enjoying attractive scenery and a visit to Monte Sant'Angelo, the first Western sanctuary dedicated to the Archangel. Both inland and along the coast, there are several towns of historical interest and there are now many popular beach resorts. In addition, in the Valle d'Itria it is possible to explore the layers of history manifested in the strong signs of human endeavour, especially in the ravines known as lame (between Fasano and Monopoli).