

THE IONIAN COAST

and its hinterland

A bespoke tour for explorers of beauty

Itineraries
and enchantment
in the secret places
of a land to be
discovered



BASILICATA

The Ionian Coast and its hinterland

Credit

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Basilicata regional department for archaeological heritage

photographic archive

Our thanks to: Basilicata regional department for archaeological heritage, all the towns, associations, and local tourism offices who made available their photographic archive.

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Last update

May 2015

BASILICATA COSTA JONICA



the itinerary



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The song of the

Boundless golden sandy beaches lapped by crystal clear sea. Here, in the heart of Magna Graecia with its extraordinary archaeological monuments set against unspoiled landscapes and truly unique nature

BLUE AND GOLD

The colours dominating the coast, a splendid tapestry of sea, golden beaches and dazzling Mediterranean light

Quiet, rolling stretches of endless fine sand, kissed by the sun and caressed by the undying lapping of the waves. Today, like thousands of years ago, the sea continues to sing the myths: stories of heroes and gods, philosophers and warriors, pioneering

artists and architects, rulers and brave military leaders that these shores have embraced from time immemorial. The Ionian stretch of Basilicata, in the province of Matera, begins at Metaponto – on the border with Puglia – and ends at Nova Siri, the furthest



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sea and of legend

the Towns to visit

Policoro

Bernalda-Metaponto

Nova Siri

Rotondella

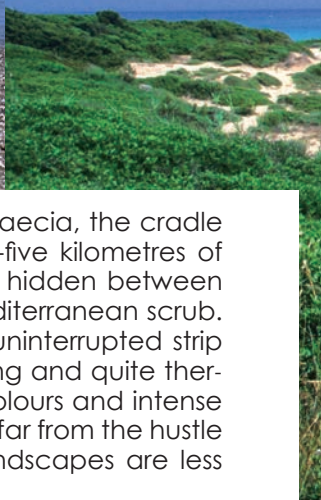
Montalbano Jonico

Pisticci

Scanzano Jonico

strip of the region before meeting Calabria. It is an amazing, intense fabric of history and nature, ancient legends and uncontaminated sea waters, golden beaches, art and culture. Here, and in other parts of the deep south of Italy, this culture has its roots

The Ionian coast will please every visitor,
alternating with more isolated,



in the extraordinary, refined Magna Graecia, the cradle of Western civilization. There are thirty-five kilometres of coastline, with many remote stretches hidden between the blue sea and the green of the Mediterranean scrub. In the middle, there is a long, almost uninterrupted strip of sandy shore, perfect for long, relaxing and quite therapeutic walks, enjoying the dazzling colours and intense light of this nook of the Mediterranean, far from the hustle and bustle of busier resorts, whose landscapes are less



The Metapontino Plain, a Geological Paradise

Lucania's only plain (92% of the region is covered by hills and mountains) covers an area of thirty-five by thirty kilometres. Its alluvial origin is linked to many centuries of erosion caused by the five torrent-type watercourses that flow from the Apennines and fan across the plain before emptying into the Ionian Sea, leaving debris along their journey and over the millennia this has made it very fertile. The Sinni, Agri, Basento, Bradano, and Cavone rivers have filled the plain with sand, stones and clay eroded from the region's western mountain, inseminating the earth and promoting the spread of vegetation and wet habitats characterized by extremely lush ecosystems. All this and the particularly generous climate are the reasons for the sheer variety found in this area, which has become one of the richest in the region, not only from a naturalistic perspective, but also in the economic sense, thanks to the quality of its agricultural crops, exported abroad in huge quantities.



INTO THE WILDS

Walk or ride horseback along the shore to discover unspoiled beaches bordered by dunes and vegetation.

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with its excellent lido facilities
wilder sections to be discovered



THE AIR OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

The mingling heady scent of Mediterranean maquis and salt air are typical of this coastline.

intact. The perfect destination for those seeking sun and sea but also art and culture. Here, close to the coast but also further inland there are many striking testimonies of the sophisticated Greek world that began to land on these shores from the seventh century BCE, leaving lavish traces across the territory, including temples, shrines, agora, theatres, and necropolises embellished with incredible archaeological gems now found in the area's splen-

did museums.

The area also vaunts two other regional landmarks. To the north, Matera and its *Sassi*; to the southwest, the other is a natural scenario, *Polignano National Park* and its spectacular scenery. Between the two, the *Metapontino Plain*, whose eight hundred square kilometres of very fertile soils make it the region's largest lowland, rolling gently down to the immaculate sea. Awarded a Blue Flag several times over, the sandy floors and shallow waters so typical of this coast are perfect for those holidaying with children. The variety of large beach-

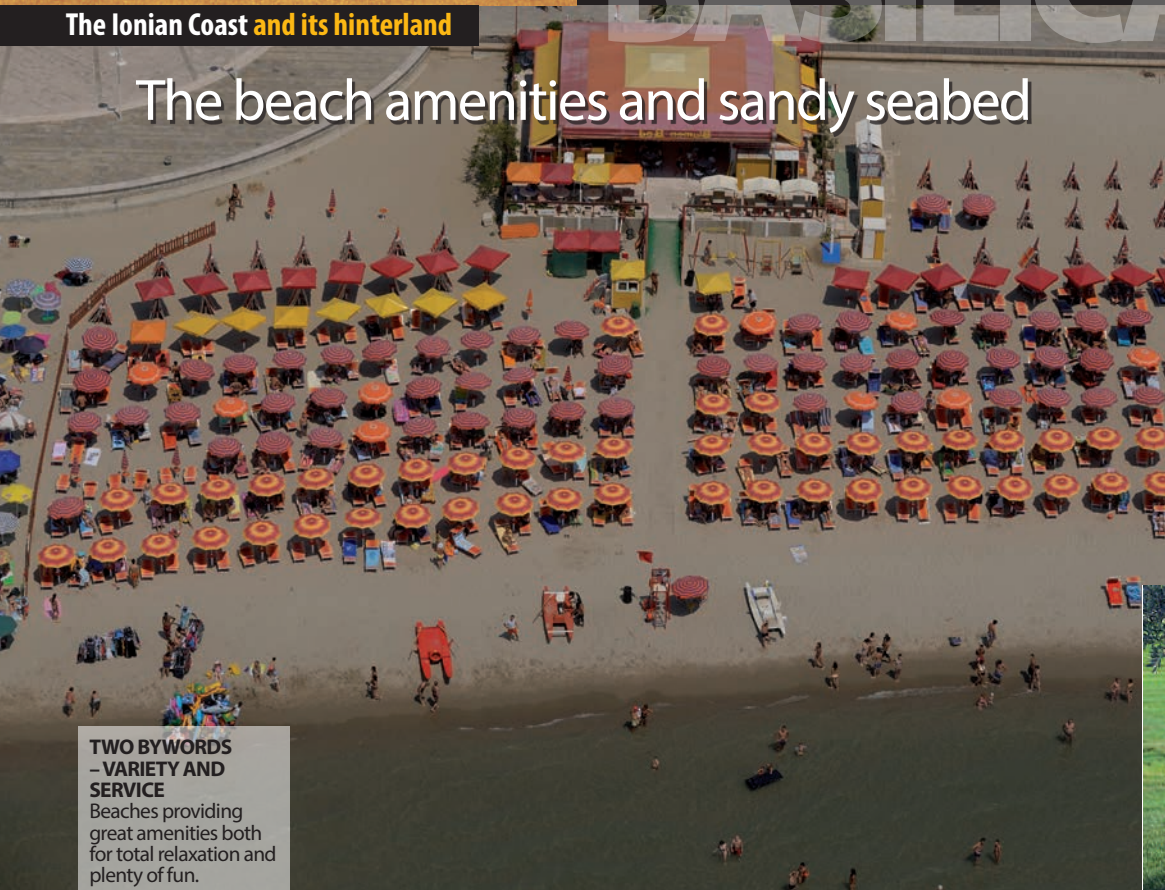


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The beach amenities and sandy seabed



TWO BYWORDS – VARIETY AND SERVICE

Beaches providing great amenities both for total relaxation and plenty of fun.

es along with a range of accommodation to meet the most wide-ranging demands and suit every pocket: cosy B&Bs to family-run agritourism facilities, lost in the countryside or close to the sea, and the most classic of hotels, resort villages and campsites. There are also beach facilities and private lidos providing all sorts of leisure fun and animation, and others offering bespoke services for family

tourism or for visitors who want to try their hand at sports such as golf, surfing, diving, canoeing, sailing, the latter boosted by the recent opening of the *Argonauti di Pisticci marina*. Lastly, there are more isolated, untamed beaches, fringed by dunes and Mediterranean scrub, for those in search of peace and quiet, or wanting to explore the beautiful surrounding scenery by mountain bike, on foot or on horseback. Any visitor can just follow their instincts and explore all these beaches, off the SS106 Jonica state highway that connects the entire coast. Those arriving from the north will be welcomed by Ionian Ba-

BESPOKE TOURISM

Accommodation for all budgets: luxury hotels, resorts, farmhouses and cute, cosy B&Bs.



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are ideal for family holidays



silicata's huge beach at *Lido di Metaponto*, the village that is part of the municipality of Bernalda, lying further inland and which, in antiquity, was home to Metapontum, one of the richest and most prosperous of the Magna Graecia colonies. The beach connects the mouths of the region's two main rivers (the Bradano and the Basento), which flow into the sea precisely along this stretch of coast, which is definitely one of the most famous and popular here, dotted with extensive pine groves and rows of eucalyptus trees whose scent fills the air, mingling

Full speed ahead for sailing and golfing

A number of sports are on offer here, with sailing to the forefront since the optimal winds along this coast make it a real paradise for lovers of this sport. The Circolo Velico Lucano sailing club based at Policoro's Bosco Pantano nature reserve (Via Lido, +39.0835.910097 or www.circolovelicolucano.it) is very active, also offering courses in windsurfing, canoeing, water skiing, and kite surfing, the latter a new discipline from Hawaii fast spreading worldwide, practiced on a board from which the user manoeuvres the kite connected to cables using a special control bar. The club is affiliated with the Italian Sailing Federation and has been recognized a federal technical centre. Its various activities include the foundation of the first national school of match racing, a competitive speciality that became famous thanks to the America's Cup. Golf lovers will be in seventh heaven at the Riva dei Tessali Golf Club (Contrada Pizziche, Metaponto; info: +39.0835.748916; +39.099.8431844 or www.rivadeitessali.it), one of the most famous in southern Italy, set among citrus groves, vineyards and Mediterranean maquis not far from the sea. There is an eighteen-hole championship course covering 6,000 metres, 72 par, SR 130, with a very open layout, wide fairways and undulating greens, interspersed with bunkers and charming ponds.



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SEA DAFFODILS

From July to September, the sand dunes blossom with *pancratium maritimum*, a lovely wild white daffodil.



DUNES IN FLOWER

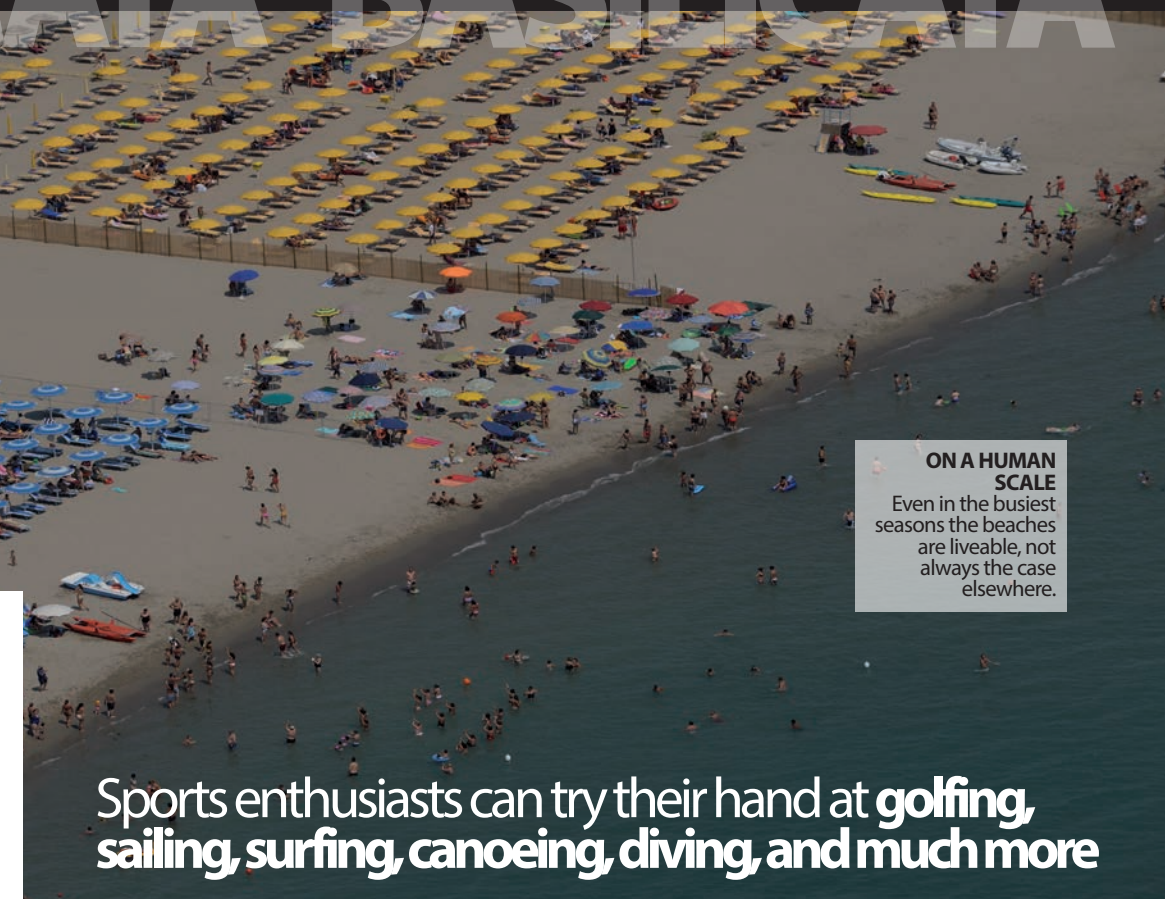
The stretch of dunes is a habitat for juniper, broom, mastic, agave, myrtle, and rosemary.

delightfully with the salty tang of the sea. The sea daffodil, *pancratium maritimum*, grows on these sandy shores and enhances the perception of a pristine wilderness, especially when high season is over and, come September, silence and a hint of peaceful melancholy return, typical of virgin coastal areas like this. From Metaponto, heading south, there are even more secluded landscapes at *Quarantotto Lido* and the beautiful beaches of *Marina di Pisticci*, with eight kilometres of pristine sandy beaches,

Porto degli Argonauti for Exploring the Coast

The Ionian coast of Lucania's yachting marina is located in Marina di Pisticci, the ideal spot for exploring the region's shores but also for reaching Calabria, Puglia, Sicily and its Aeolian Islands, as well as Turkey and Greece. Designed by the architect Luigi Vietti and the engineer Antonio De Nicolò (who also designed the resort itself), and by Professor Alberto Noli and Professor Alessandro Togna who managed the hydraulic and maritime works planning, the marina recently opened to offer a wide range of services from video surveillance to mooring assistance, fixed piers and nautical infrastructure, boat launch and maintenance. With 450 berthing spaces for small-medium vessels, as well as a convenient access channel, the marina was designed with two internal docks of up to three and a half metres in depth with fixed and floating piers. Coordinates: 40°.20'00 N – 16°.49'00 E. Info: +39.0835.470218 or www.porto-degliargonauti.it.




**ON A HUMAN
SCALE**

Even in the busiest seasons the beaches are liveable, not always the case elsewhere.

Sports enthusiasts can try their hand at **golfing, sailing, surfing, canoeing, diving, and much more**

away from the throngs of noisy tourists who usually flock to most Italian beaches. Here, bordering a crystal-line sea, the Mediterranean scrub is an explosion of colour, especially in spring, the air heady with the fragrance of blooming juniper, cistus, mastic and myrtle. From the mouth of the Basento up to the Cavone River, a long sandy carpet is home to the *beaches of San Basilio, San Teodoro and Macchia*, dazzling with bright noontime colours but as the day draws to a close and the sun drops from view, behind the purple horizon of dusk dissolving into sky and sea,

a dreamlike atmosphere will soothe away any cares. *Lido di Scanzano Jonico* and the *Terzo Cavone beach* are just beyond the mouth of the River Cavone, continuing this huge and seemingly endless sandy coastline, so very different from the crisper, obvious appeal of the sheer cliffs overlooking Lucania's Tyrrhenian Sea around *Maratea*, with less extensive beaches, overhangs and myriad coves, often accessible only by boat. Still further south, from the mouth of the River Agri as far as the River Sinni, the *Lido di Policoro* has broad expanses of sand and, together with Metaponto, is one

The most famous beaches are those of
and pristine are at Marina di Pisticci, while



BIRDWATCHING
Policoro's Bosco Pantano is a WWF OASIS, home to many animal species including the common reed bunting (above).

of the most popular and famous on Basilicata's Ionian coast, although its crystal clear waters are slightly deeper. The sea is so clean that the wide

beaches, especially those toward the mouth of the Sinni, were designated as a breeding ground for rare species of sea turtles, including *leatherbacks* and *loggerheads*, which nest from mid-June to mid-August. It is worth bearing in mind that in just thirty-five kilometres of coastline there

are five rivers flowing into the sea, after crossing much of the region from the mountainous, wooded areas in the western part, then forming wetlands characterized by ecosystems of extraordinary richness, the perfect habitat for many animal species, including a number of migratory birds. The latter include cranes, flamingos, storks and grey herons, hen harriers, black kites, ospreys, black-tailed godwit, moorhens, common reed bunting, which make the mouths of the *Basento*, *Bradano*, *Sinni*, *Agri*, and *Cavone* an authentic paradise for birdwatchers and nature lovers

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Metaponto and Policoro. The more isolated
the Bosco di Pantano is a true natural paradise



in general. In naturalistic and scientific terms, the peak is reached near the mouth of the Sinni, in the WWF's regional reserve oasis at *Bosco Pantano*, in Policoro (Idrovara district; tel. +39.0835.981360 or +39.0835.1825157; www.oasiwwfpolicoro.net), the last surviving testimony of the gigantic deciduous plains forest that once covered much of the Ionian coast, its thick, impenetrable vegetation rolling as far as the sea.



UNIQUE ECOSYSTEMS

The wetlands created by the mouths of five rivers that flow in the Ionian Sea offer the perfect habitat for many migratory and resident birds, including cranes, storks, flamingos, herons, and black-tailed godwits.

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Tangled swamps and vegetation make

RARE ANIMALS

These shores are home to rare species of sea turtles including the loggerhead and the leatherback.



UNIQUE BOTANICAL SPECIES

The oasis is a rare example of plains woods on the sea, the remains of an ancient giant forest.



In *Old Calabria*, the 1915 travel narrative that Norman Douglas wrote of his exploration of Southern Italy, a sort of *Grand Tour*, he says: "Twilight reigns supreme in this maze of tall deciduous trees [. . .] Policoro has the tangled beauty of a tropical swamp . . . and if you penetrate their verdant labyrinth you can even imagine yourself to be in some primitive part of the globe where the foot of man has never trod." Approximately 1,100 hectares now remain of the original forest: an incredible mingling of

Policoro Embraces the Return of the Endangered Mediterranean Monk Seal

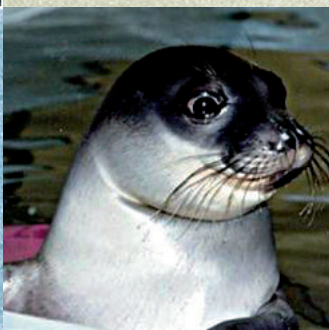
The Ionian coast, with its protected habitats, is one of the last refuges for rare species, including the Mediterranean monk seal, which recently returned to the area around Policoro's Bosco Pantano nature reserve. The rare pinniped is a fascinating animal that does not fear people and generally gets along well with divers. In ancient times it was a common presence in the Mediterranean, the Black Sea, and on the Atlantic coast of Africa, indeed considered a good omen by Greek sailors, and sacred to Apollo and Poseidon, even mentioned in the writings of Aristotle and Homer. From Roman times the population began to be decimated, hunted for skins and fat used for various purposes. Today, because of pollution, industrial fishing and mass tourism, no seal colonies exist in Italy and it is estimated that there are less than five hundred specimens living in the Mediterranean. Hence the importance of the Policoro sighting, which points to some positive scenarios for ethological research.

GREEN LIFE

Policoro nature reserve organizes many environmental education activities.

A HIGH-RISK MAMMAL

The Mediterranean monk seal, at threat in other parts of the world, has been spotted recently in the oasis.



the mouth of the River Sinni akin to a rainforest



PRIMITIVE HABITATS

In his work *Old Calabria*, Norman Douglas described the verdant tangle of the Bosco di Policoro woods and swamps, which reach as far as the sea.

lush vegetation and intricate wetlands reminiscent of equatorial forest, but in the heart of the Mediterranean.

Ash, common alder, silver poplar, cedar, turkey oak, maple, and field elm, with many other tree species, often concealed under impenetrable creepers, all creating a safe haven for hedgehogs, hares, porcupines, foxes, martens, badgers, otters and sea turtles, as well as more than 150 species of

birds and about 2,000 species of beetles.

The Lucania section of the coast ends with the sandy beaches of *Marina di Rotondella* and *Marina di Nova Siri*, with its mighty *Torre Bollita*, a watchtower erected in 1520 to monitor the sea and shore under attack by the Saracen Turks. From time immemorial these seas have always hallmarked the true identity of this land, and over the centuries they have changed from being a threat – as in the case of pirate raids – to an opportunity and extraordinary

The coast and its hinterland are an **incredible naturalistic and archaeological treasure**

SEA AND LAND FAUNA

The otter, which is no longer resident in many other parts of Italy, lives in the Ionian wetlands.



source of wealth, a means for meeting other civilizations, quite a natural development given the geographical conformation of the coast. Moreover, from the heel of Puglia to the most extreme tip of Calabria, the two thin strips of land

that surround and embrace all the Ionian Sea, giving the entire Ionian coast a circular outline, and like two

imaginary arms reach out to welcome all the good things the waters bring.

Like the vessels that began to sail these peaceful waters in the seventh century BCE, following the routes established centuries before by Mycenaean traders, who had described Lucania's plains as very fertile and generous, and abounding with navigable waterways. Some of the most excellent minds of the time sailed to these shores, including Pythagoras, who spent the last years of his life in Metapontum, dying here in about

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GOLD AND ORANGE

As the light changes, the fine sand on the wide beaches is tinged with magical shades.

495 BCE. Figures often in search of adventure and new horizons, but also fleeing from internal rivalries and power struggles that were turning the ancient splendours of the motherland into a cage for creativity and ingenuity. In Lucania, however, and in the rest of Magna Graecia, this creativity and ingenuity was allowed to express itself fully, establishing great, flourishing colonies, precisely like Metapontum, as well as Siris and Herakleia, today's Policoro, and *Pandosia*, built around what is now Tursi. Strik-

Gentle Sandy Seabeds on the Ionian coast

Unlike the coast of Maratea on the Tyrrhenian side, where the seabeds are deeper and rocky, the Ionian sea floor is sandy and shallower. Closest to the coast, up to ten metres in depth, the sand is medium-fine or fine, and is home to molluscs like clams, cockles, warty Venus, razor clams, and mussels. A little further down, between ten and fifteen metres in depth, there is a proliferation of sea urchins, starfish, squid and octopus, while at fifteen to twenty metres there are mainly shellfish like banded dye and spiny murex. Beyond this depth and up to five hundred metres, there are mud and clay floors, the habitat of tuna, swordfish, blue

shark, nor is it uncommon to spot dolphins. In addition to these large fish, the Ionian waters are frequented by rare species of turtles, including loggerheads and leatherbacks, which prefer deep waters but often approach the coast.



LAWS OF NATURE

In the rich marine, rain-fed and marsh ecosystems every living creature has its own specific role in the food chain, starting with over two thousand species of beetles in Policoro's Bosco di Pantano.



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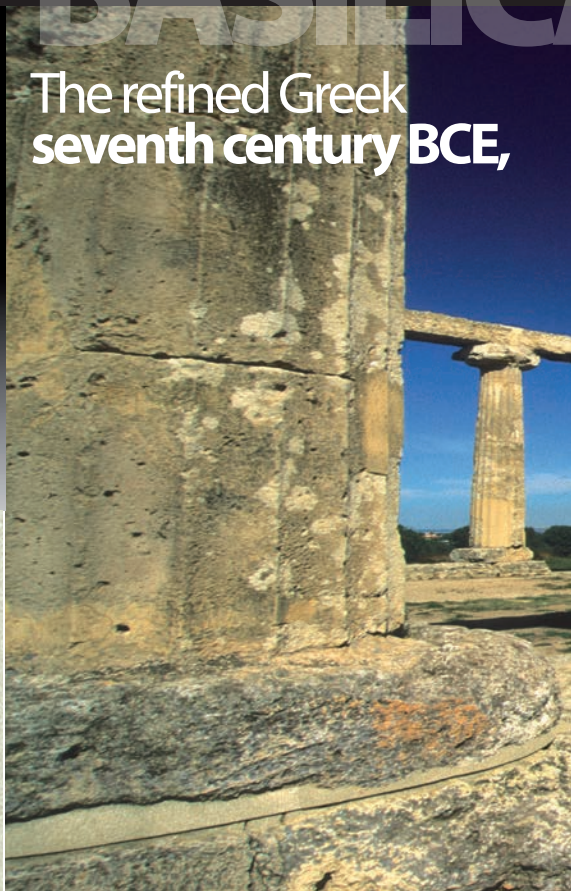


Oenotrians, Greeks, Lucanians. A Battlefield for the Meeting of Cultures

Geographical location, sea, navigable rivers that reach the heart of Lucania, the Tyrrhenian Sea and Etruscan Campania. These were the reasons that brought conflict here but also made it a meeting place for civilizations that left fascinating traces. From the seventh century BCE the Greeks of Magna Graecia left wonderful testimonies of their art (and before them the Mycenaeans) as did the Choni-Oenotrians who inhabited these lands from the ninth century BCE, and the Lucanians, who arrived from Italy in the fifth century BCE settling further inland, between the hills and the river valleys. The regional museums are now home to many of these items.

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The refined Greek
seventh century BCE,



ing evidence of these works survives in the various archaeological areas found here.

A journey back in time may begin in Metaponto, founded by the Achaeans, and one of the most important settlements anywhere in Western Greece, a thriving commercial emporium that owed much of its economic wealth to the extreme fertility of the land on which it stood, between the rivers Bradano and Basento. Its name is said to mean



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world landed on these shores from the
leaving temples, agora and theatres.



METAPONTUM

The Tavole Palatine, one of the most beautiful and majestic relics of all Magna Graecia.

TRADING PLACES

Metapontum became a thriving marketplace thanks to its strategic position by the sea and its navigable rivers.

“between two rivers”, while legends say it was founded in 773 BCE by Nestor of Pylos, a fugitive from Troy. A tour of the marvellous remains of the ancient town starts just off the SS106 state highway, at the so-called Tav-

ole Palatine, namely the Temple of Hera and the colony’s main place of worship. As was traditional throughout the Greek world, it was said to have been built on a hill near a sacralized spring. Several fragments of the complex polychrome terracotta architectural decoration typifying the imposing structure were found here, including striking lion’s head



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Metapontum, Siris and Herakleia were **Lucania's**



dripstones, as well as votive deposits and pottery used during sacred rites.

The temple, built in the Doric style in the sixth century BCE, still has fifteen surviving columns and anyone who lingers at dusk will be treated to an amazing spectacle with the pale pillars standing out against the blue of the sky and the horizon, slowly drawing forth burnished tints and conjuring up the glories and atmospheres of ancient Greece, populated by gods and fascinating mythological characters. The ruins of the ancient

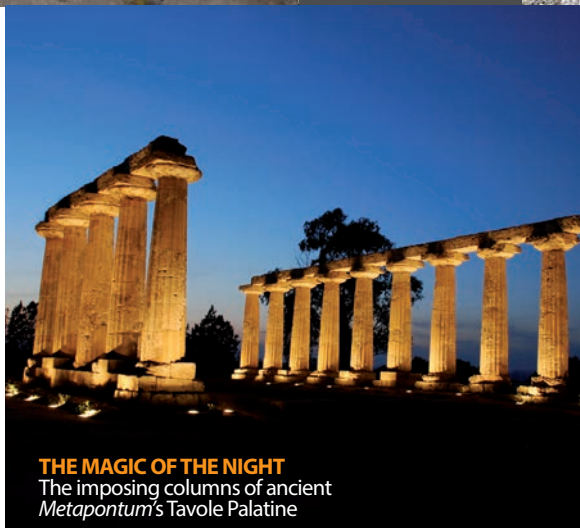
town, its urban structure defined by perfectly orthogonal streets, date back to the fourth century BCE and are found in the *Archaeology Park*, which is located in Metaponto's Borgo district. There are remains of dwellings but also of the agora, a hemicycle theatre, and four temples, including the largest, the *Temple of Apollo Licio*, built in the Doric style in the sixth century BCE, with a layout of eight columns by sixteen on the long side, an extraordinary testimony of the splendour of the sacred architecture of the time. The other two temples, dedicated to *Hera* and

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pearls of flourishing Western Greece



**MAGNA GRAECIA
AND ITS SPLENDOURS**
The Metapontum
excavations brought
to light some great
artistic masterpieces.



THE MAGIC OF THE NIGHT
The imposing columns of ancient
Metapontum's Tavole Palatine

Aphrodite, are of the same period, while the fourth (probably erected in honour of *Athena*) is in the Ionian style and dates back to about 407 BCE, constructed over an earlier Archaic structure for municipal assemblies. On the opposite side of the current access road to the park there is the area of the *castrum*, built in the third century BCE to house the Roman military garrison during the long war against Hannibal's Carthage. The park's substantial number of relics also includes the *necropolis*, found in the Crucinia district, used by Metaponto aris-

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Fine ceramics and lavish
document the wealth



A Journey in Time with the Treasures of the Public Museum

Metaponto's National Archaeology Museum (Via Aristeia 21, +39.0835.745327) offers an interesting narrative of the town's various archaeological phases, from the prehistoric period onwards. A rich selection of objects and burial and worship complexes are displayed in rooms with different themes, and which reflect the initial Choni-Oenotrian population of the coast during the Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age, followed by the Greek period, which began in the seventh century BCE, with the subsequent transformation of the Italic inland settlements between the sixth and fourth century BCE, up to the time of the Roman conquest, with the consequent slow abandonment and decline of ancient Metapontum.



tocracy during the fourth century BCE. Here the monumental burials are of the sarcophagus type, with caskets and lids made in rusticated stone blocks, and when opened revealed authentic artistic gems like fine ceramics, gold filigree earrings, strigils (the tools used by athletes to clean of perspiration), mirrors, and bronze fibulae, underlining the high social status of the deceased. Many of these and oth-



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jewels found in monumental tombs of Metaponto's aristocracy



THE NECROPOLIS OF CRUCINIA

The many finds include strigils, tools used by athletes to clean off perspiration.



FACING PAGE:

The National Archaeology Museum in the centre of Metaponto, and its exhibits, ranging from prehistoric times to the Late Antique period.

er finds are now on display in the town centre, in *Metaponto National Archaeology Museum* (for info and tours, including the Archaeology Park and the *Tavole Palatine*: +39.0835.745327), which offers a better understanding of the evolution of this Greek colony.

Even before Metapontum became established as a rich trading town, other Greek settlements had already

begun to spring up on the coast further south, between the rivers Agri and Sinni. Some were short-lived but Herakleia (today's Policoro) was as successful as Metapontum, sometimes even encroaching on the latter's territory. It was founded in circa 433 BCE by the more powerful cities of Taranto and Thourioi on the ruins of old Siris, which had been built in the seventh century BCE by Greeks from Colophon, in Asia Minor, then destroyed in the following century by the Achaean colonies of Metapontum, Kroton and Sybaris.

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Herakleia was built on the ruins of ancient *Siris*, founded in the seventh century BCE



THE POTTERY OF MAGNA GRAECIA

Many large red-figure vases were made here thanks to a thriving pottery painting school.

For its prosperity Metapontum was elected head of the New League in 370 BCE and played a strategic role both for its position at the centre of the Gulf of Taranto and for the fertile plain on which it stood, crossed by two navigable rivers, an essential

waterways, continued inland and along the Tyrrhenian coast. Consequently it became the theatre of several battles for strategic control of the territory including the first major clash, in 280 BCE, between the Hellenistic world and the Roman community, in the years when Rome was trying to expand its influence on the Italian peninsula and aimed to conquer Magna Graecia settlements. On the plain between Herakleia and Pandosia, King Pyrrhus of Epirus led his army in defence of Taranto, and fought the Romans in the historic Battle of Herakleia. The Greeks emerged

intersection for sea trade arriving from the East which followed the two

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LARGE PHOTO:
A fly on the
Archaeological
Park Siris-Herakleia
near Policoro.



victorious largely to massive war elephants that Pyrrhus brought with him, shocking the Roman militia who had never seen such an animal.

The *Siris-Herakleia* Archaeology Park is home to significant remains of both towns. From the *Siris* period there are remains of small sacred areas and an earth brick fortification encircling



THIS PAGE:

Some of the finest archaeological finds from Policoro and the remains of an earth brick fortification dating from the period of Siris, founded by the Greeks of Colophon.



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Siris, Herakleia and Exceptional Indigenous Artefacts

Opened in 1969, **Siritide National Archaeology Museum** (Via Colombo 8, +39.0835.972154) documents the different aspects of life in the Greek colonies of Siris and Herakleia. The underpinning to the narrative is their penetration along the Agri and Sinni valleys, with the gradual Hellenization of the indigenous Oenotrian (with finds from the necropolises of Latronico, Chiaromonte, Alianello, Guardia Perticara) and Lucanian (necropolises of Sant'Arcangelo, Senise, San Martino d'Agri) peoples. The exhibits begin with the Neolithic and peak with the rich Siris and Herakleia collections, including exceptional large red-figure vases from the so-called Tomb of Policoro (400 BCE), the work of Magna Graecia painters.



The extensive exhibits of Metaponto and of Magna Graecia



the upper part of the settlement. The Herakleia period can be seen in residential buildings and workshops for the production of pottery and votive statuettes, dating to the fourth-third century BCE. Many of these finds are on display in the *Siritide National Archaeology Museum* (info and tours, including the archaeological area:

A MELTING POT OF ART AND CULTURE

The museum also documents the successful encounter between the Greek and Italic art.



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OENOTRIANS AND LUCANIANS

The Siritide Museum exhibits Greek artefacts and those of indigenous peoples.

in the archaeological museums
Policoro illustrate the splendour

+39.0835.972154), adjacent to the park, near which visitors also find the *Sanctuary of Demeter* and the *Temple of Dionysus*, of the seventh century BCE. The famous *Tables di Heraclea*, of the third century BCE, are now in Naples National Archaeology Museum. These tablets are considered a true document written on bronze, and of extraordinary importance, crucial to understanding how the administrative machine not only of Heracleia, but also of all Magna Graecia operated. During the summer the archaeological area comes to life with a spectac-

ular interweaving of history and drama, through the *Teatri di Pietra* Festival (info: www.teatridipietra.org or APT +39.0971.507611 and www.aptbasilicata.it), which offers a full calendar of plays staged by well-known actors. Beyond this site lies present-day **Policoro**, which developed organically starting from the time of the farming reform in 1950. It is dominated by the imposing silhouette of its *baronial castle* whose origins date back to the 1300s, although it is now seen in an eighteenth-century guise, precisely like the nearby rural church of *Madon-*



Policoro is known as the "town of strawberries", famous for their sweetness

FRUIT AND VEGETABLES IN A STARRING ROLE

Peaches and apricots, strawberries and vegetables of all kinds in this sun-kissed land.



na del Ponte, with the wooden statue of Our Lady from which it takes its name, dating back to the thirteenth-fourteenth century.

The town is surrounded by huge expanses of lush land where more or

less anything can be grown thanks to the damp, temperate climate so typical of this area. The fruit and vegetables include some very sweet

strawberries, exported worldwide, that have earned Policoro the title of "town of strawberries". Likewise the entire Metapontino Plain is land where prime crops are grown, rendered productive by the climate as well as by the five rivers that cross it. Here the peaches, apricots, plums, strawberries (of course), oranges, clementines, table grapes, cauliflower, fennel, lettuce, asparagus, aubergine, tomatoes, peppers and so much more, have earned these flatlands the title of *California of the South*, a jewel in the crown of Basilicata economy, exporting enormous

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POLICORO

The baronial castle and (alongside) the pure white façade of the town's mother church.



amounts of agricultural produce abroad every day.

Leaving the coast, the terrain gradually becomes more rolling, especially in the part to the southwest, which reaches the slopes of the Pollino park. This is the site of **Nova Siri**, its oldest part developing by the sea in the *Marina di Nova Siri* district, near the *Torre Bollita* tower, where a Hellenistic necropolis was found. Nearby there are also the remains of an *imperial villa* as well as sev-



GENEROUS MOTHER NATURE

Citrus fruits, plums, table grapes, cauliflower, fennel, tomatoes, asparagus, and salad are just a few of the many products grown in the Metaponto hinterland.

BASILICATA

The Ionian Coast and its hinterland



eral cisterns, also of Roman origin, in the Sant'Alessio district. The modern town, however, lies on a hill about ten kilometres from the coast and the SS106 state highway. The town is surrounded by gentle golden hills and is dominated by the outline of its castle, built in the Middle Ages and later refurbished, and its sixteenth-century mother church. Just minutes from here visitors will find **Rotondella**, whose lovely panoramic position has earned it the name

BASILICATA

The Metapontino title of “California of its agricultural



of the *balcony of the Ionian Sea*. The village perches neatly on a hill-top and coils perfectly around it, the highest part offering the most breathtaking view over the surrounding area, with the blue of the sea on the horizon, set amidst pale hills and in the distance the soaring peaks of Pollino, capped by snow in the long winter months. The distinctive urban plan reveals lovely spiralling lanes intercon-



CATA BASILICATA

Plain has earned the well-deserved
**of the South” for the quantity and quality
products**



**RECORD-
BREAKING
AGRICULTURE**
Every day huge
loads of fruit and
vegetables are
shipped abroad.



ECHOES OF THE PAST

Below and facing
page: several
views of Nova Siri,
around which
there are several
archaeological sites.

nected by pas-
sageways and
stairs that wind
between the
various mansions
adorned with
stone portals and
gargoyles. No
visit should miss

out on the massive sixteenth-centu-

ry *watchtower*, the Baroque *mother church* dedicated to Our Lady of Grace, and the *church of Sant’Antonio da Padova*, an integral part of the former seventeenth-century Franciscan convent.

Leaving Rotondella in the direction of Policoro, taking the SS598 state highway along the Agri valley floor,



Rotondella, with its coiled urban layout, is a natural balcony over the Ionian Sea



IN THE ROUND

The village is a tapestry of arches, stairs and lanes tumbling one after the other.

visitors will come to the **Montalbano Jonico** turning. The road takes to a little town set on a slope overlooking the hills that roll gently towards the plain and the sea on one side, and on the other the inland area and the River Agri,

flanked by the so-called *Giardini di Montalbano*, where juicy citrus fruits and various vegetables are grown,

as well as vaunting abundant olive groves that produce oil of excellent quality. The town is also known as the birthplace of Melchiorre da Montalbano, the famous architect and sculptor (who usually signed his works with a monkey mating with a rabbit), who worked extensively in Basilicata during the thirteenth century, producing many magnificent sculptures, including the portal of Rapolla Cathedral and the extension of the apse of *Santa Maria di Anglona*, a lovely sanctuary in nearby Tursi. In the old town there is the interesting eighteenth-century

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CRYSTAL-CLEAR SEA

Just a few minutes from Rotondella and the inland area there are wide beaches and a clear sea.

mother church of Santa Maria dell'Episcopio, its original nucleus dating back to the sixteenth century, and home to various works of art including a beautiful polychrome marble altarpiece in the chapel dedicated to the patron Saint Maurice; a seventeenth-century painting by Mattia Preti of the *Virgin and Child offering the Cross to Saint John the Baptist*; an eighteenth-century canvas at



The Agrarian Reform and the Economic Recovery

After centuries of neglect, the swamp-covered malarial lands and uncultivated soils were reclaimed during the two decades of Fascism, the post-war period for the Metaponto district was one of great economic recovery that led it to become one of the most prosperous in the region. Thanks to the reform implemented from the 1950s, the poverty and poor living conditions – so often condemned – of countless country labourers, were addressed and supported also by the front-line presence of the Meridionalista reform movement. A process that led to expropriation and redistribution among the poorer classes of thousands of hectares of abandoned estates, the result of the deep-rooted landocracy that had hitherto prevailed, which then gave great force and economic vitality to the entire Metaponto Plain.

THE VOICE OF THE STONES

The history of many inland villages is told by these massive defensive towers, portals and carved coats of arms.



BASILICATA

The Ionian Coast and its hinterland



A Totem of Nature in the Magical Badlands

In the countryside between Montalbano Jonico and Pisticci there is a truly unique place known as Petrolla, which means “*small big stone*” in local dialect. This large limestone outcrop was created by strong tectonic thrusts: a rock spur that mysteriously emerges from the clay-rich soil, resembling a giant meteor fragment that plummeted down from outer space. At the top of the rock, used in the past as a refuge by brigands, there are the remains of an ancient fort. Other, smaller boulders are plunged into the ground, like the shards of a huge explosion that occurred in some distant past, giving the whole area, with its rippling badlands, a magical atmosphere.



BASILICA

Pisticci is one of the
of nature: the desert



tributed to Oronzo Tiso, depicting the *Repose in Egypt*. The seventeenth-century *Porta dell'orologio* gate is worth a visit, as is one of its coeval buildings, *Palazzo Cassano*, home to the Rondinelli public library, famous for hosting anti-Bourbon Republican meetings in 1799.



From Montalbano, the itinerary returns to the Agri valley floor and continues to the junction with the SS103 state highway, reach-



gateways to another marvel landscapes of the Calanchi Lucani badlands



MONTALBANO

In these pages several views of the town, known for its luxuriant gardens.
TOP: the clock tower.

ing Peschiera and the SS176 state highway, which winds through enchanting solitary, desert-like landscapes as far as **Pisticci**. The town is one of the gateways to the *badlands*, another of the region's natural wonders (see the dedicated section in this guide). Pisticci stands on a hill surrounded by steep crumbling moonscapes, unfolding in

authentic mystical landscapes that cast unique magical atmospheres that conjure up the idea of remote imaginary deserts. The neighbourhood known as *Dirupo* rises on one of the many clay crags, and was built when the inhabitants of the town refused to



The inland Ionian area is dotted with **fortified**



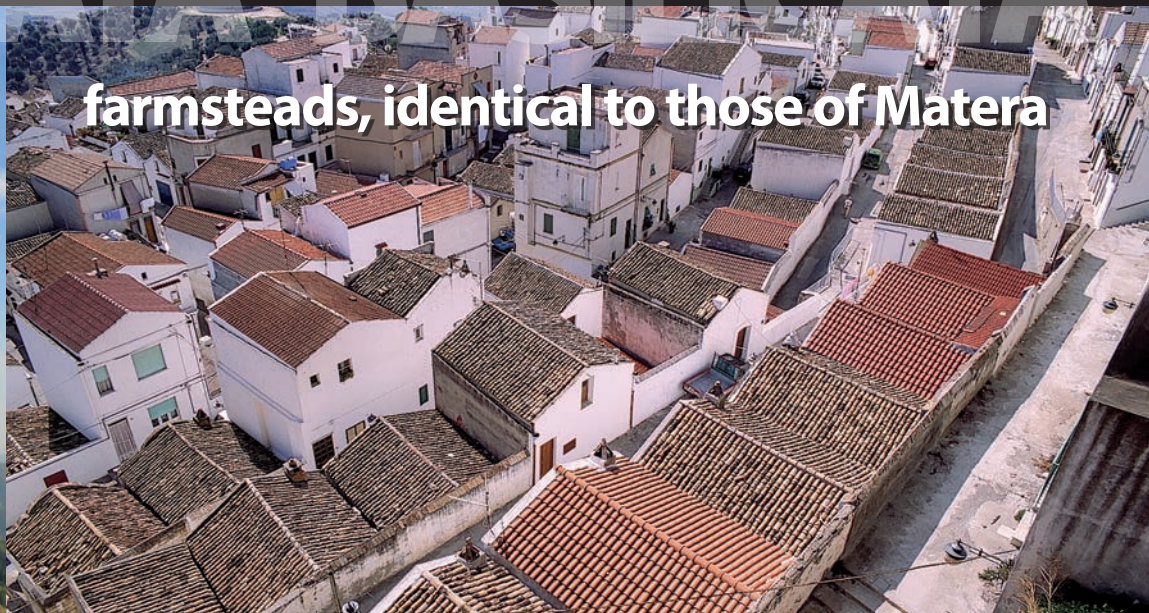
DEFENSIVE TOWERS

Several ancient watchtowers are scattered around Pisticci, including Torre Accio.

move to a safer area after the massive 1688 landslide which effectively cleft the old town, dragging one half down with it. It is a unique example of urban layout, with its long rows of small one-storey white houses, called "casede", all lined up in the shadow of *Terravecchia*. This is the highest and most ancient area of Pisticci,

developing around the medieval castle (of whose ancient structure only one part has survived) and the sixteenth-century church of *Santi Pietro e Paolo*, built on an earlier, thirteenth-century building of which the fine belfry has survived. Inside, the church has sixteenth and seventeenth-century decorations and several eighteenth-century paintings; outside, there is a magnificent view from the parvis, spanning as far as the sea. There are many sacred places both in the town and in the surrounding area, including the seventeenth-century Church of

farmsteads, identical to those of Matera



ABOVE: the typical white "casedde" of the Dirupo quarter, all in a row.

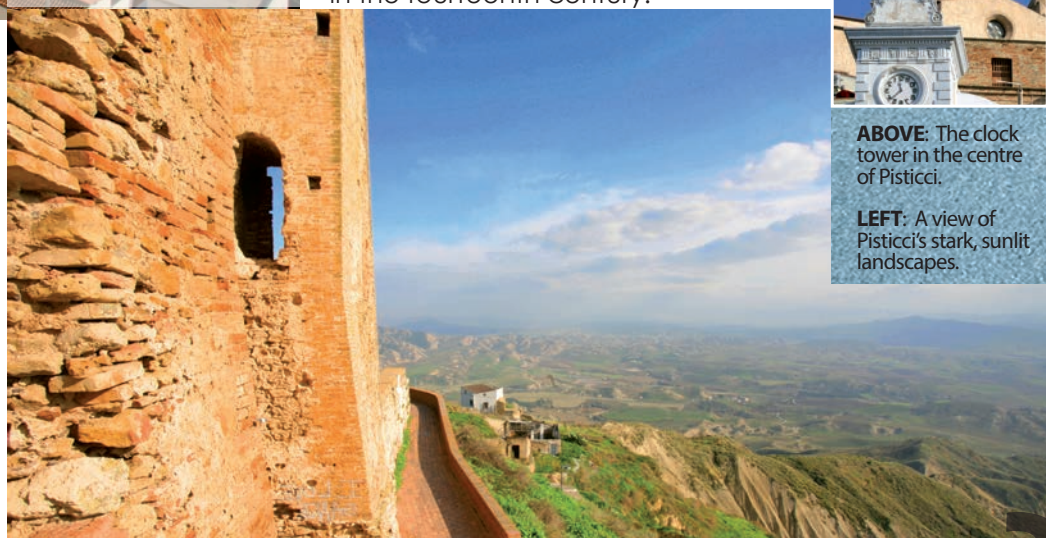
FACING PAGE: Pisticci, the village dominated by its Santi Pietro e Paolo church.

Sant'Antonio (later refurbished), with various works of art such as seventeenth and eighteenth-century paintings by Andrea Vaccaro and Giovanni Tommaso Guarini. Also nearby, the *Abbey of Santa Maria del Casale*, dated thirteenth century although the original nucleus seems to date from the eleventh century, and the lovely portal was added in the fourteenth century.



ABOVE: The clock tower in the centre of Pisticci.

LEFT: A view of Pisticci's stark, sunlit landscapes.



BASILICATA

The Ionian Coast and its hinterland



Scanzano Jonico

Until 1974, Scanzano was a district of Montalbano Jonico, then becoming the province of Matera's last municipality to be created, following the land reform that involved the entire area, and which drove the agricultural development that is now one of the flagships of Ionian Lucania's economy. Farming is rooted ancient times here, when the area was frequented by the Mycenaeans, of whom important traces can be found in the Termito locality, not far from the centre, in the archaeological remains of a settlement dating back to the thirteenth–eleventh centuries BCE. The town's baronial mansion – the “Palazzaccio” – is worth seeing, built in the 1700s over an earlier medieval building, and surrounded by a characteristic coeval farming hamlet. A mighty Aragonese tower can be seen near the sea and the beautiful beaches (picture above).



BASILICATA

The “Pisticci Painter” colonies to use



The Pisticci district vaunts several defensive towers, like the *Accio* and the *Minnaia*, directly connected as part of the territorial protection system with the *Torre Bruni*, a tower located in the historical centre, and also a rich treasure of classical archaeology. Many finds came to light in the various necropolises located across the district, the artefacts bearing witness to flourishing local pottery production from the seventh century BCE, today found in regional museums but also abroad. London's British Museum, for example, displays

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was the first artist of the Magna Graecia
red-figure painting to decorate vases



THIS PAGE: Masseria San Basilio, a former Basilian convent converted to a castle by Roger I of Sicily.
LEFT: Church of Sant'Antonio, Pisticci.



some striking pieces by the Magna Graecia vase painter known through history as the *Pittore di Pisticci* (fifth century BCE), the first in this area to use red-figure painting to decorate pottery. Lastly, near the hamlet of *Marconia*, it is worth stopping over to see the *fortified farmstead* of *Castello di San Basilio*, whose original nucleus was

a Basilian religious complex dating back to the fifth century, later converted into a castle by Roger I of Sicily, shortly after 1000 AD.

The next stop is **Bernalda**, reached in less than a quarter of an hour's drive, crossing the SS407 Basentana state highway. The town offers a beautiful view of both the sea and the lower Basento valley. The centre unfolds around the pretty and always lively Corso Umberto I, with the nearby seventeenth-century *convent of Sant'Antonio*, now the town hall, which has a lovely frescoed

BASILICATA

The Ionian Coast and its hinterland



Amaro Lucano: the Secret Recipe of a Century of Success

Amaro Lucano is one of the Lucania products best known to the general public, sold on a large scale both in Italy and abroad. It was invented here, in Pisticci to be exact, in 1894, in the back room of a small family business, where Pasquale Vena made the bitters that took Italy by storm in just a few months, with Casa Vena becoming the official supplier to the Royal House of Savoy. Today, fifteen million litres are produced annually and it has become a kind of regional icon, founded as it is on values of tradition and authenticity. Indeed, the long production process that gives it such a unique flavour is applied to the letter, using a recipe of rare herbs and a mysterious secret ingredient jealously guarded by the Vena family.

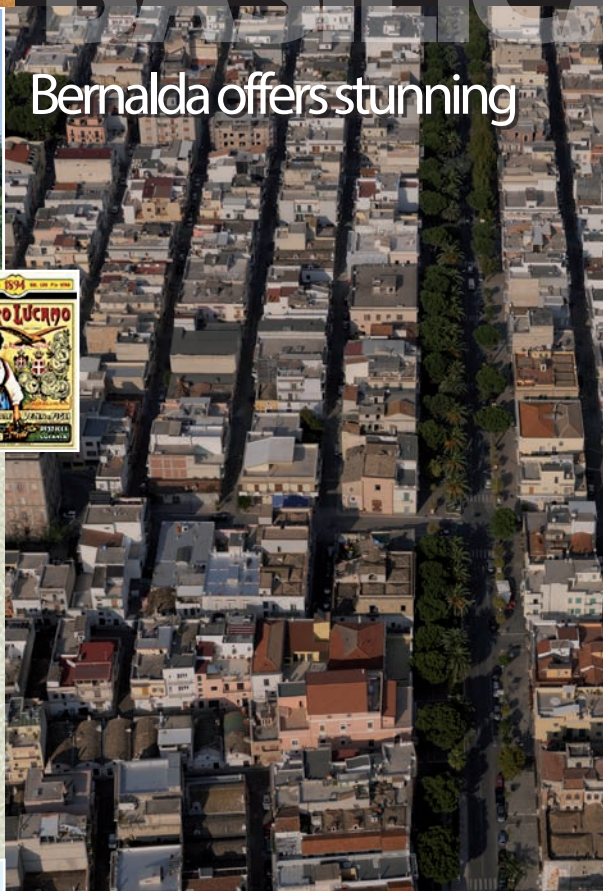


BERNALDA CASTLE

A mighty fortress founded in the fifteenth century.

cloister used – mainly in fine weather – as a venue for numerous concerts and shows

Bernalda offers stunning



for pleasant evening entertainment. In the historic centre, with its many eighteenth-century mansions, it is also worth seeing the *castle* with its two towers, built in the fifteenth century, and the Renaissance *church of San Bernardino*, the town's patron, whose feast day is celebrated in May and August. In the lush surrounding countryside there are a number of fortified farms or *maserie*, identical to those found in the nearby Matera hills. Before ending this exploration of the fascinating inland areas and the archaeological and artistic gems guarded so jeal-

ATA BASILICATA

views of both the sea and of the Basento



BERNALDA

The pretty centre unfolds around the always lively Corso Umberto I.



ously, it is worth visiting the *Masseria Torre di Mare*, not far from Metaponto Archaeology Park.

Now the itinerary ends at the sun-kissed beaches of the coast and the soothing sweet notes of the Ionian Sea, continuing to sing the same legends it has over many centuries.

Francis Ford Coppola: Lucania Talent

"When you see Basilicata, the fields, vineyards, the beautiful landscapes, a land still preserved, authentic, unpolluted, you see the earth the way it was intended to be." Francis Ford Coppola, in the Basilicata Autentica spot, talks about the land where his roots as a man and a superb artist lie. The grandfather of the great director and screenwriter of unforgettable films like *Patton*, *The Godfather*, *Apocalypse Now* and many others, left Bernalda in 1904, crossing the Atlantic Ocean to pursue his dream of a new world. Yet he never forsook the memory and traditions of his home, and Coppola has often declared that many were faithfully replicated in the United States. Such deep roots have drawn the director repeatedly back to Bernalda, of which he is also an honorary citizen, and where he acquired the sumptuous Palazzo Margherita, converting it into an exclusive hotel.

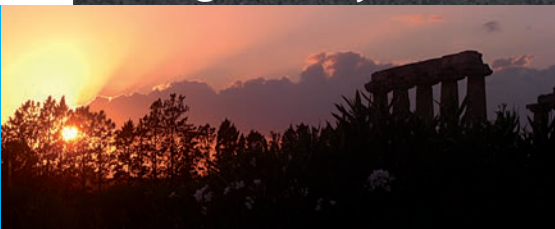


AND THE OSCAR GOES TO...

A great director and screenwriter, whose art is as visionary as it is hard hitting, who came to the public eye with his memorable *Godfather* trilogy, and who has taken home several Academy Awards in his career.

ECHOES FROM THE PAST

Pythagoras, the Genius Designated by the Gods



Born in Samos in 570 BCE, Pythagoras left Greece in 531 and moved to Crotona, one of the most prosperous of the Magna Graecia colonies. Although born to a human family, it was always rumoured that there was a legend by which he was sent to Earth by Apollo, as had been prophesied by the Priestess Pitia (the Pythoness), which also explains his name. An intellect perpetually intrigued by the world around him, Pythagoras travelled to Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia, where he learned the laws and the mysteries of Heaven and Earth from the priests of Isis, the magi of Babylon and even from Zarathustra, all of which led him to be considered a demigod at the time, while turning him into one of the greatest geniuses of antiquity. In Crotona, where his reputation was already known, he was indeed hailed as a divinity, disseminating miracles and teaching honourable conduct wherever he went. Here he founded his prolific school, subjecting potential students to harsh trials and admitting only those who resisted. Following his teachings they were then able to vaunt the title of "Pythagoreans" after a lengthy course of studies, respected as philosophers, namely "lovers of wisdom", feared for their knowledge of magic and occult sciences, two worlds that the master never separated in life. It is said that even when he discovered the law of his famous Theorem, he gave thanks to the gods with arcane rituals. Marvels and success, popularity that grew over time, however, made him much envied by powerful enemies who allied against him, forcing him to leave and to take refuge in Metaponto, where he spent the rest of his life, continuing to spread his teachings through the school he founded, which remained active for a long time, even after his death in 495 BCE.

HOW **WHERE** WHEN

How to get there

The Ionian coast can be reached overland from the Adriatic, taking the A14 motorway as far as Bari Nord. From here, follow the SS7 and SS106 state highways to Metaponto. From the Tyrrhenian side, take the A3 Salerno-Reggio Calabria motorway and exit at Sicignano. From here take the E847 to Potenza and the SS407 Basentana state highway for Metaponto. By sea, use the Porto degli Argonauti coordinates to reach Marina di Pisticci: 40°.20'.00" N - 16°.49.00" E.

Info: +39.0835.470218

www.portodegliargonauti.it



Saint Bernardino and the Plague

Bernalda is known for a longstanding tradition connected to Saint Bernardino, who is celebrated on 20 May, the anniversary of his death, and on the days between the second and third ten days of August, when there is a commemoration of his miracle in freeing the town from the plague. In a crowded procession, with riders on horseback and figures in costume, his statue is carried on an ancient wagon driven by the winner of an auction held for owners of trucks and tractors. There are also many cultural and sporting events.





When the Seventh Art Takes the Stage

The **Lucania Film Festival** (www.lucaniafilmfestival.it), held every August in Pisticci, showcases good Italian and foreign films submitted by many directors from all over the world. Amazing locations are used for the screenings: not clinical cinemas but real natural stages, among wheat fields and ancient ruins. The itinerant festival **Cinemadamare** (www.cinemadamare.com) was conceived especially for young filmmakers.



Ionic excellence

Metaponto is home to a structure of scientific research of excellence for the entire nation, the Metapontum Agrobios, formed in 1985 with the aim of transferring innovation in agriculture with projects related to plant biotechnology and the environment. Among these applied research to GMOs and to improve the quality of crops, including, for example, the San Marzano tomato, as well as to new forms of protection of plants against viruses and insects.

Fun Events and Sport

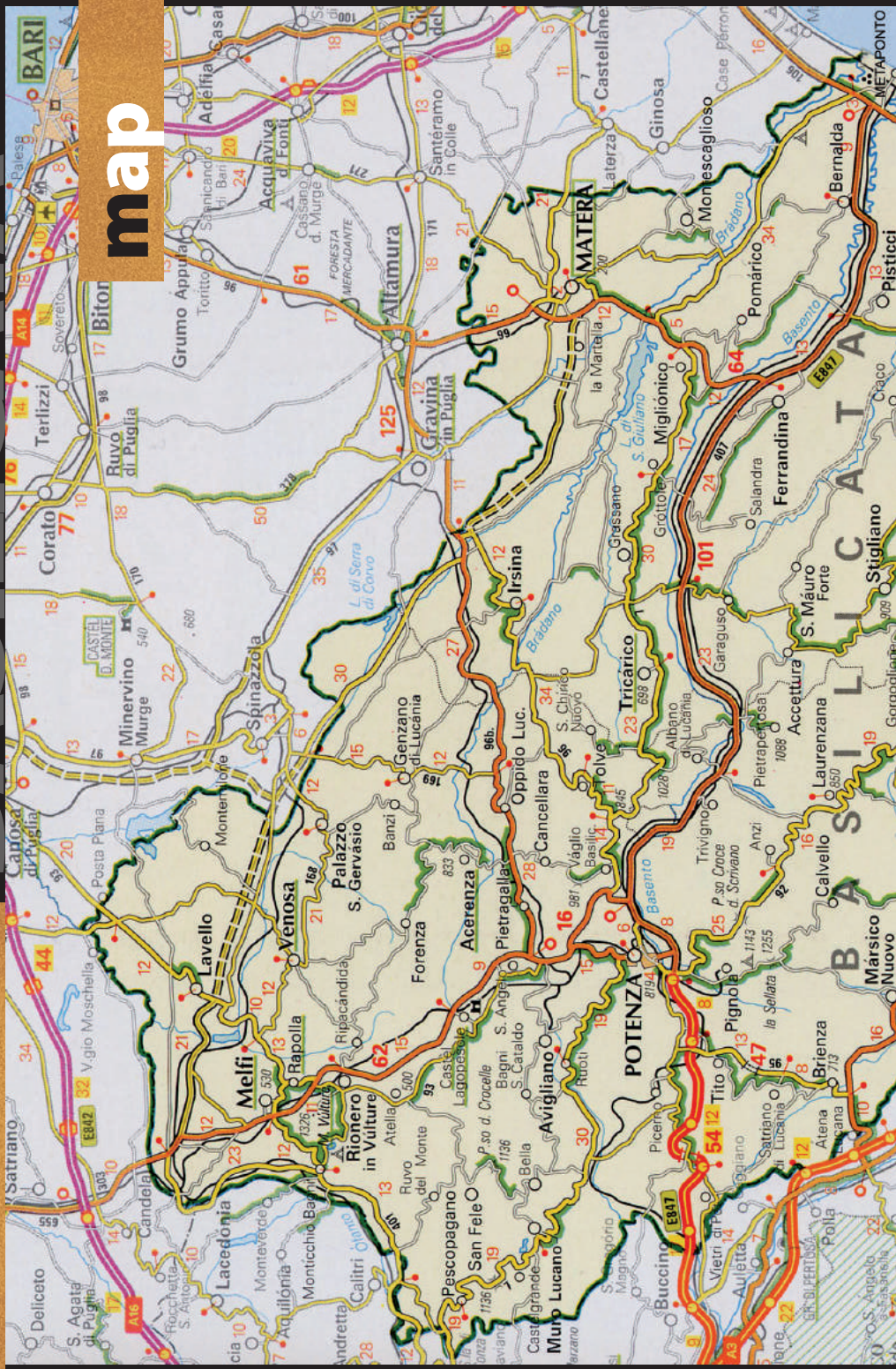
For bikers who want to combine the thrill of riding their motorcycles with the beauty of nature and the sea, the Motoclub Herakleia (www.herakleia.it) is an excellent way to explore the coast and the hinterland. Fun guaranteed by lively Ionian nightlife with events like Lammieinmusica (www.allelammie.org), a pop music festival in Pisticci, Siritidestate concerts and shows in Policoro, and lots more (info: www.aptbasilicata.it).



Surf and Turf Cuisine

The area boasts many culinary specialities, all using prime ingredients grown both on the plain and inland, and include: "sarde arraganate" (sardines seasoned with oregano and breadcrumbs), "capriata" (pulse soup), "gnommaredde" (rolls made with kid entrails). A number of festivals are also organized throughout the year, for example Bernalda's Sagra della Castagna for chestnuts, in November; Rotondella's apricot fair in July (info: www.aptbasilicata.it).













Basilicata Tourism Promotion Authority

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