

**Basilicata** Sport & Nature

# Horse riding in Basilicata



**6** itineraries to experience horse riding as a protagonist

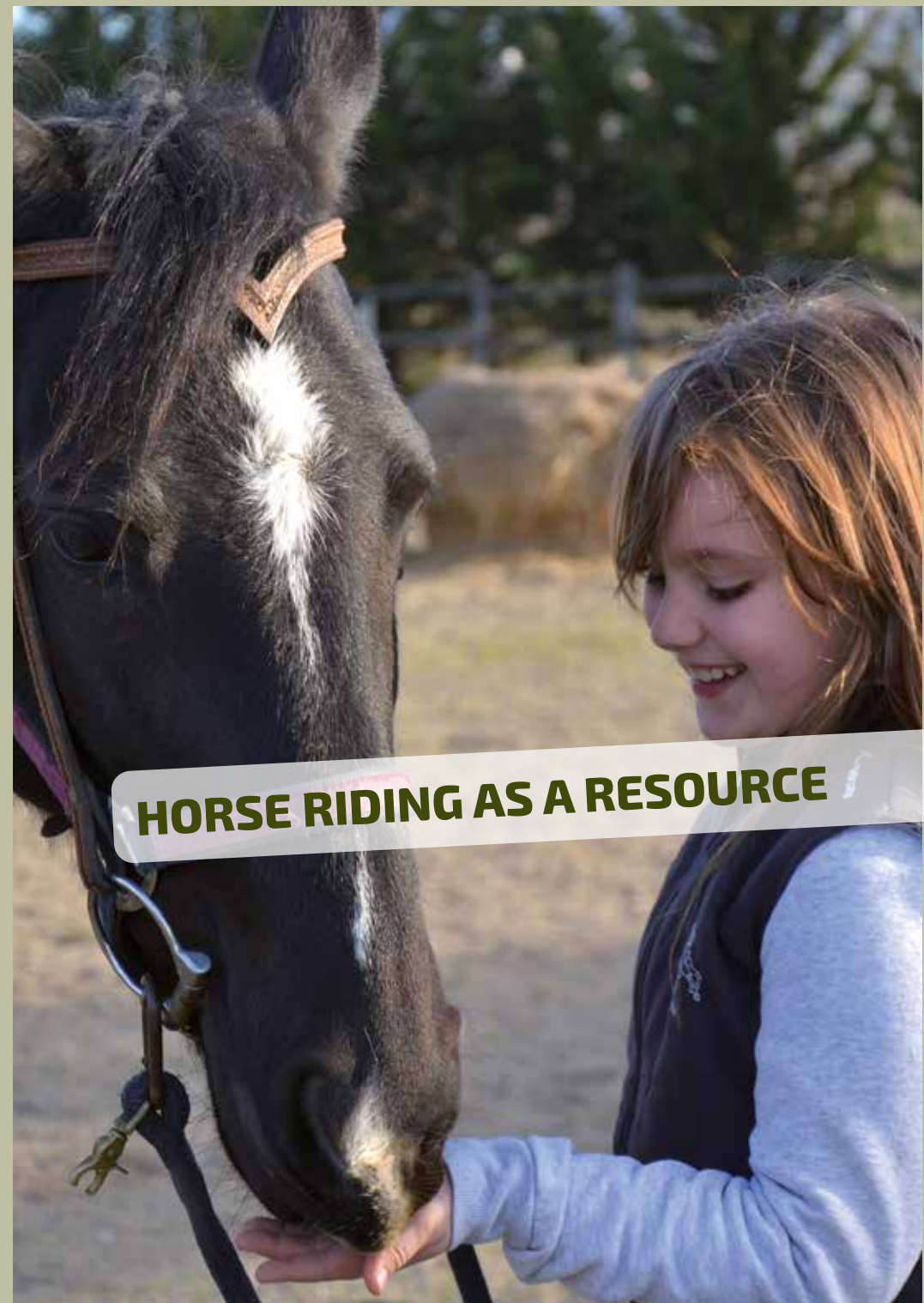


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**HORSE RIDING AS A RESOURCE**



With this guide, the Agency for the Promotion of Basilicata (APT) aims to provide those interested in horseback riding throughout the region with a series of itineraries that showcase some of the best bits of this enchanting and varied land, an ideal destination for horse riding lovers. This is the initial phase of a journey that will continue to evolve in future editions, given the potential of this land and the growing trend among travellers for authentic and direct engagement with nature.

Horse riding, and more generally any activity involving horses, is highly appreciated today. Escaping the hustle and bustle of daily life and finding inner balance through nature has led to a re-evaluation of the role of animals in general, and particularly horses, which are seen not only as a means to explore a territory but also as travel companions.

More and more often, children are being introduced—or ask to be introduced—to



the world of these splendid animals at a very young age. Knowing and interacting with these proud and intelligent beings can help little ones improve their self-confidence and acquire new skills. Nature in general is also recognized for its "therapeutic" capacity, thanks to the opportunity it offers to engage in outdoor activities, breathe clean air, enjoy the positive energy emanating from its vivid colours, and relax by listening to its "voices." The sounds and vibrations of nature become a melody for the mind, a stimulus for the body and,

ultimately, a source of well-being.

In Basilicata, it's possible to combine a love for nature with a passion for horses. This guide aims to inspire those wishing to explore the world of horses, whether newcomers, experienced riders seeking new adventures or nature-lovers in search of a slow tourism experience.

The guide features six itineraries, each varying in difficulty and designed to be completed in more than one day: the accommodation solutions proposed are equipped for both riders and horses.

Routes cater to both seasoned riders and beginners, featuring diverse lengths and highlighting captivating natural and historical-cultural landscapes.

Exploring Basilicata on horseback offers an immersive experience in pristine landscapes far from urban noise and is a great opportunity to immerse in local history, traditions and food and wine culture. It's an invitation to pause from the hectic pace of daily life, embrace the hospitality of the Lucanian people, and appreciate the innate beauty of the region.

The challenge lies not only in completing the entire journey but also in treasuring the beauty, the magic and fun enjoyed along the way.

**Antonio Nicoletti**  
*Direttore generale APT Basilicata*





## HORSEBACK RIDING SAFETY GUIDELINES

When horseback riding, whether on a leisurely ride or a more adventurous one, it's crucial to adopt certain behaviours to ensure your own safety, that of your horse, and that of others.

Below is a list of good practices to follow:

1. When riding in single file, avoid getting too close to the horse in front of you. Many horses do not like another horse too close and may kick.
2. If your horse tends to kick, it is advisable to tie a red ribbon on its tail as a warning signal to other riders.
3. If a rider dismounts, the group should stop and wait for them to remount. Many horses become agitated when their group moves away, making it difficult for the dismounted rider to regain control.
4. It's good practice not to gallop or trot near other horses, as they may become unsettled if not accustomed to being overtaken, potentially causing their rider to lose control.
5. If riding at the head of a group, always keep an eye on the last riders in case of emergencies.
6. Conversely, if you are at the back of the group, ensure you do not stray too far from the rest.
7. It's strongly advised not to tie your horse to the ground in open countryside. Instead, carry a lunge line to attach to your horse under the bridle when stopping.
8. Avoid very steep descents; choose slopes that allow the horse to maintain a straight position to prevent it from slipping.
9. On steep ascents, zigzag to reduce fatigue on the horse.
10. If leading a horse by hand along a steep slope, walk beside it, never in front. In case of slips, the horse could collide with or kick you.
11. The same applies when crossing streams or leading a reluctant horse from the ground.
12. If caught in a thunderstorm in an open area, seek the nearest shelter to avoid becoming a lightning target. Periodically check the saddle position during long rides to correct any shifts.

**By adhering to these simple yet crucial behavioural rules, you show consideration for your own well-being, as well as that of those around you, including the horses. Only by doing so can you enjoy outings in peace and safeguard them from unpleasant surprises.**







## THE ITINERARIES

- ① MELFI - MARATEA
- ② VALLE DI VITALBA - MELFI - VALLE DI VITALBA
- ③ VALLE DI VITALBA - SAN FELE/MURO LUCANO - VALLE DI VITALBA
- ④ LAURENZANA - CAMASTRA - ABRIOLA
- ⑤ MATERA - POLLINO
- ⑥ MELFI - METAPONTO





**1** THE ROUTE  
**MELFI - MARATEA**  
DAY 7

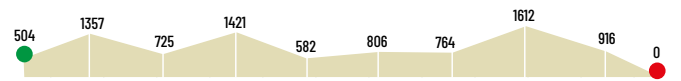


**TOUR INFO**  
Departure: Melfi  
Arrival: Maratea  
Total miles: 182,8 Km  
Durata: Day 7

Maximum height: 1612 m  
Minimum height: 44 m  
Road type: hiking path

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**H**orseback riding through Basilicata is a unique experience, an adventure that gratifies the senses, fills the soul, and clears the mind. The authentic connection with the Lucanian nature and the strong relationship built with the horse and based on empathy and mutual respect, make





it all special and fascinating and immerse travellers into a new and holistic dimension. The surrounding landscape, in particular, with its pristine natural beauties and fragments of history, carefully preserved and protected from the passage of time,

contributes to creating a bucolic and serene atmosphere, fostering a sort of magical bond between man and the Lucanian nature as well as between man and the horse, the perfect companion to discovering such a kaleidoscopic land. From the vivid green

of the Mediterranean scrub up to the high Apennine peaks that blend into the bright colours of the sky; the many shades of blue, their play of lights and their reflections in the crystal-clear waters of the beaches of Maratea, the journey's destination, where

the powerful woodland vegetation of the Lucanian mountains finds its endpoint. So, all that is left to do is to saddle horses and set off to discover Basilicata, to discover ourselves, and to encourage the curiosity that drives us to enrich our knowledge, explore,



and internalize the positive energy that Lucania emanates. A piece of the world that has managed to preserve the genuineness of a time, its centuries-old architecture, its pristine nature, still free from the impact of today's technology, and its countless gastronomic and religious traditions that enhance the allure of this land and enrich the soul of anyone who experiences them.

## THE JOURNEY

### DAY 1

The route from Melfi to Maratea is a 7-day real immersion in the cultural and naturalistic heritage of Basilicata. The starting point is the Frederician city, located in the north of Basilicata and home to the Norman castle where Frederick II of Swabia used to spend his summer holidays indulging in his



favourite hobby, falconry, which he enjoyed practicing through the dense forests of Mount Vulture. Here, it is possible to get lost in the intricacies of an ancient history that still resonates through the centuries-old town walls. Equipped with lookout towers, the walls frame the town against the natural landscape of Vulture-Melfese. Melfi is dominated by the suggestive

Norman Castle and further embellished by extraordinary cave churches such as those of Santa Margherita and Santa Lucia, dating back to the 13th century, and by the Gothic cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta. From Contrada Toppo Sant'Agata, the journey continues along SS 303 up to kilometre 89, where a path marks the end of the short excursion in the town of Melfi





and leads into the green of the Vulture area. After 12 km, it is time to intercept and take Via Fontana Castagno, cross the woods towards SP 167, and after about 10 km, reach the viewpoint over the Lakes of Monticchio.

Lying on the western slope of Mount Vulture, the two lakes occupy the craters of this ancient extinct volcano. Its waters reflect the whiteness and majesty of the Abbey of San Michele, a destination for pilgrimages and a trove of artistic treasures dating back to the 18th century and located near the smaller lake. The Abbey seems to watch over the two bodies of water to preserve their beauty, while adding a touch of elegance and regality to the reflection.



## DAY 2

The journey continues along a 'tratturo' (transhumance trail), which runs parallel to SP 167, towards Sant'Andrea di Atella. Beeches and oaks flank the trail as you horseback ride for about 7 km to Vitalba Valley.

Once here, head west towards the Fiumara di Atella, following the green road stretching alongside the SP Atella-Montesirico and take a moment to appreciate the historical resonance emanating from the nearby castles of Melfi and Lagopesole, which dominate the valleys, and the magical atmosphere that the surrounding dense forests evoke.







**DAY 3**

After leaving the valley, it's time to ride up towards Mount Carmine, taking the paths that wind through the woods alongside SS 93 towards Filiano-Lagopesole.

Along the way is the suggestive sanctuary of Madonna del Carmine.

A breathtaking panorama makes this sacred place even more special and offers a view over the trail to Lake Nettuno, in the municipality of Avigliano.

Another forty kilometres following SP 112 first, then SP 50 passing through Frusci and,

finally, again on SP 112 and the Lucanian capital, Potenza, appears before us.

Potenza is a mountain town located on an Apennine ridge at 816 m above sea level and is the highest regional capital in Italy.

The route crosses the town starting from Via dei Molinari, then going all the way along Via del Gallitello until reaching SS 92, the point which marks the beginning of a new ride uphill.

Founded in the upper valley of the Basento River, Potenza is surrounded by wooded areas and high, easily accessible peaks,













such as the one in the area of Rifreddo, a small village in the municipality of Pignola, west of Potenza, where riders can stop and refresh at facilities equipped with all the comforts for both guests and horses, allowing everyone to peacefully enjoy the atmosphere of the surrounding woods and the recreational opportunities available in the neighbouring towns.

In particular, descending a few kilometres below by following a short path through the Rifreddo Woods, you can find Pignola, whose Mother Church houses some

precious canvases by Pietrafesa.

As you wander through the roads in and around the village, take a break at picnic areas, go bird-watching, or, in winter, take advantage of the ski slopes of Sellata-Pierfaone, at 1744 m above sea level, an ideal location also for mountain biking or hiking throughout the rest of the year.

Further downstream, the natural oasis of Pantano allows for long walks around the lake and guided tours among the animal and bird species hosted by the local WWF staff.

#### DAY 4

It's time to resume the journey on horseback. Leave Pignola towards Sellata-Pierfaone on SP 5 and then climb up to Abriola. A rugged and rocky terrain, a challenging test for the rider/horse duo, after which you start descending towards Marsico Nuovo, crossing the territory of Sasso di Castalda. Here, you will find it hard to resist the charm of the "Ponte alla Luna" experience (lit. 'Bridge to the Moon'), a Tibetan bridge named after Lucanian engineer Rocco Petrone, a member of the NASA Apollo 11

team who first set foot on the moon.

Installed among the peaks of the municipality of Sasso, the bridge is suspended in the air, at a height of 120 meters above the stream that flows among the rocks below, with a single span of 300 meters. Accessible with a special harness, this experience will surely give thrills and adrenaline nobody will easily forget.

After enriching the journey with such incredible experiences, you finally arrive at Marsico, a pre-Hellenic centre rich in archaeological finds, eighteenth-century





palaces, and numerous churches, among which stand out the sanctuary of Santa Maria di Costantinopoli and the cathedral of San Giorgio.

#### DAY 5

Follow SS 598 for 47 km and reach the Val d'Agri.

Characterized by rugged, difficult paths and literally breathtaking views, the area is dotted by small villages immersed in the

nature, with inviting gastronomic traditions that help alleviate the traveller's fatigue and warm the spirits.

After savouring the local products and resting the horses, head towards Lagonegro, a small ancient village located at the foot of Mount Sirino, in the Valle del Noce travelling along the SS 276, the SP 103, and the SP 26.

#### DAY 6

The finish line is near.

Cross the mountains by following SP 585 and passing the medieval villages of Rivello and Trecchina, the latter known as "the garden city" for the greenery of the flower beds that fill and colour it and for the wooded and floral vegetation that surrounds it.

Enchanted places where time seems to have stopped that will fill souls with a wealth of unforgettable suggestions. Interwoven





narrow streets lead visitors among ancient buildings and churches, making them feel the charm of a past that continues to live through rituals and traditions passed down over time. All is made even more special by the scent of the sea that bathes the nearby coast. A few more bends to reach the Passo la Colla area and the panoramic belvedere with its view over the Gulf of Policastro.

#### DAY 7

The descent towards Castrocuoco di Maratea gives riders the chance to catch a first glimpse of the crystal-clear sea of the "Pearl of the Tyrrhenian Sea", guarded and protected by the imposing and sumptuous statue of Christ the Redeemer, lying on the spur of Mount San Biagio, an excellent strategic point to admire the beauty of

the coast. Once in Castrocuoco, there is the possibility to enjoy an overnight rest in bungalows on the beach, a well-deserved reward after the effort.







**2** THE ROUTE  
**VALLE DI VITALBA - MELFI - VALLE DI VITALBA**  
 DAY 3

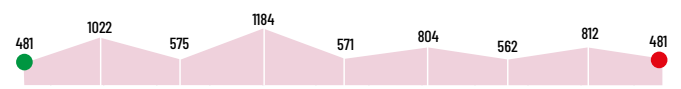


**TOUR INFO**  
 Departure: Valle di Vitalba  
 Arrival: Valle di Vitalba  
 Total miles: 100,982 Km  
 Durata: Day 3

Maximum height: 1184 m  
 Minimum height: 481 m  
 Road type: hiking path

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**A** dive into the past through a land steeped in history, an immersion in the shimmering and brilliant colours that mark the changing of the seasons, a journey through grand monuments and unique landscapes! All this is in the north of Basilicata. All this is possible on a horseback ride through Vulture Melfese and Alto Bradano. An unforgettable experience. Along the 'tratturi' (transhumance trails) car-

ved by herds, on the paths that were once used by armies of popes and kings, through the woods that helped brigands to hide and survive, one can still smell the scent of freshly baked bread or the aroma of grape must as it becomes wine. A special one, Aglianico del Vulture, a full-bodied wine with inviting bright ruby red colour, rimmed with orange with hints of field violets and penetrating red fruits. Aglianico is the per-





distance, and by the majesty of the castle of Pirro del Balzo in Venosa, the homeland of the famous Latin poet Horace and of the master of madrigal composition, Gesualdo da Venosa. You can ford rivers and streams to reach small, Nativity scene-like towns nestled on mountains and hills and then sip good wine in the cellars of Barile and feel part of a land made of distant legends and magical atmospheres.

## THE JOURNEY

### DAY 1

The starting point is at Contrada Piani di Carda, in Atella, an ancient Roman settlement. From here, the ride heads towards Lagopesole, alongside SS 93 road for about 15 km and crosses the so-called agro di Filiano countryside area.

Wandering through Filiano, more precisely in Contrada Tuppo dei Sassi, riders are captivated by the charm of the cave-shelter and its prehistoric paintings.

Once at the Lagopesole Castle, take a tour of Frederick II's large hunting estate, where you can visit the Emigrant Museum and the Mu-

fect pairing for local typical products, which are the driving force of this generous land and of a culinary tradition preserved over time and that visitors can find at the many Lucanian festivals that crowd the streets of the towns throughout the year.

As you walk in the shade of beeches and chestnuts, among mushrooms and truffles hidden in the bushes, you can still hear the chants coming from processions dedicated to local patron saints, the invocations sung

by the faithful as they descend to the valley with statues of the Virgin Mary that are carried from mountain shrines to churches in the historic centres to watch over the community. And again, as you horseback ride through the green expanses, you can admire the flight of soaring hawks -the same ones that enchanted Frederick II and were later celebrated in his "De arte venandi cum avibus"- and then let yourself be fascinated by the Frederician castles of Melfi and Lagopesole, visible in the







seo Narrante ('Narrating Museum'). In summer time, make sure to attend the screening of "Il mondo di Federico II" (The World of Frederick II).

It's time to hop on horseback again for another 15 km, always alongside SS 93 towards San Giorgio di Pietragalla, where the Urban Park of Palmenti will surely catch your eye: about 200 tuff caves built starting from the 19th century and intended for wine production and storage.

An inviting transhumance trail leads then travellers to San Nicola di Pietragalla.

From here, after riding alongside SS 169 and Sp 6 for 32km, reach Acerenza, the so-called "cathedral city": a village erected around the

solemn Cluniac monument of the 11th century. With its alleys and a renovated historic centre, this is the perfect place to take a break and enjoy a well-deserved overnight rest.

#### DAY 2

It's time to travel via SP 10 towards Forenza, where you will have the chance to listen to the tales of the Templars or even relive them if you happen to visit the village in August, when the historical processions winding through the streets of the town reenact them for locals and tourists.

As the journey continues along SP 10, past Maschito and Ginestra, stop in Venosa, another Lucanian centre rich in history and

famous monuments, such as the castle of Pirro del Balzo, now home to the National Archaeological Museum, the so-called "Unfinished", a cathedral that looks up to the sky, and the Jewish catacombs. And to finish, the house of Horace and the archaeological site of Notarchirico, a prehistoric area dating back to about 359,000 years ago, which includes a Paleolithic settlement.

#### DAY 3

The journey continues by heading about 50 km south following the SS 93, in the heart of the Vulture, to reach the Frederician city par excellence, Melfi. Here, the spotlight is on the great castle where Frederick II used to

spend the summer time, a place where Pier delle Vigne drafted for the emperor the Constitutions of Melfi back in 1231. A treasure trove of history and traditions, legends and spirituality that you can immerse yourself in by simply wandering among the many churches that dot the urban landscape, among the numerous historical palaces and the town walls, strolling through the bustling alleys during the chestnut festival or taking part in the procession of the Holy Spirit. Among the town's most beautiful sites are the Norman cathedral, the Episcopal palace, and the Church of Santa Margherita, home to the effigy of the great Emperor with one of his hawks perched on one arm.





From Melfi, the journey continues for about twenty kilometres alongside SS 93 until Ripacandida, where you will find the Sanctuary of San Donato, a major destination for pilgrimages and a place of popular devotion, renowned for its frescoes, which have been likened by many to those of the Upper Basilica of Assisi.

Now it's time to head on to Ginestra and then Barile.

Before your eyes, little roads that make their way through vast expanses of green and gold. In the distance, the silhouette of the villages waiting to be reached and a few countryside houses that stand out alone on the sides of the road, with dense centuries-old trees as their only companions.

You will have the chance to step into a land



where the Arbëreshë culture has survived, a land rich in vineyards and small villages that have preserved an urban architecture that recalls that of nativity scenes, where the streets are filled with the warm smell of wine coming from the many cellars that enliven the daily life of this community.

From Barile, the journey continues on SP 90 for a couple of kilometres until reaching SS 93. After 3 kilometres, ride through the "capital of Aglianico", Rionero in Vulture, home to countless cellars carved into tuff. In the heart of this municipality stands the most important of the local manor houses, Palazzo Giustino Fortunato, the crown jewel of such a culturally rich town. Explore the Museum of Brigandage -where the memory of the renowned brigand Carmine Donatelli Croc-





co, whose birthplace is in this very town, is still kept alive- and the Museum of Natural History. Then ride through the enchanting natural landscape up to Monticchio, a small village that is part of the Municipality of Rionero and is known for its splendid volcanic lakes nestled in the western craters of Mount Vulture, now an extinct volcano. Take a break and treat yourself with a romantic stroll around the water mirrors framed by lush green vegetation, enjoying the tranquility of the scenery and the heart-warming reflection, in the smaller lake, of the white silhouette of the Abbey of San Michele, erected by the Benedictines in the 10th century and founded on a cave carved into the tuff.

The natural beauty of the place, combined with the allure of the legends that surround

it, such as the one that whispers of a vision where Archangel Michael supports the Abbey in times of ruin, give the environment a particularly evocative touch. What a better place for a relaxing pause with your horses before heading on to the journey's destination? The route concludes in Atella, after riding alongside SS 93 in a southerly direction for approximately 6 kilometres.

A wealth of emotions and strong sensations, unforgettable memories, an intimate experience with nature and an authentic connection with the soul of this land.

The true wealth of travel is the knowledge of yourself and of the world that is waiting to be discovered.

Doing it on horseback adds that pinch of adventure that makes the adventure more dynamic and filled with passion.





3



3 THE ROUTE  
**VALLE DI VITALBA - SAN FELE/MURO LUCANO - VALLE DI VITALBA**  
 DAY 2



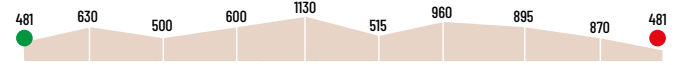
**TOUR INFO**  
 Departure: Valle di Vitalba  
 Arrival: Valle di Vitalba  
 Total miles: 106,406 Km  
 Durata: Day 2

Maximum height: 1130 m  
 Minimum height: 481 m  
 Road type: hiking path

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● Start ● Finishing Line



A green, flat, extensive and inviting valley, begging to be galloped through. A wild race to discover its religious and cultural heritage, the scent of the woods that cover the surrounding hills, its pungent and uncontaminated air, bathed in morning dew and crossed by mountain animals that freely roam, live and enrich it. This is where the horseback journey begins, with an initial stretch heading towards





Mount Vulture and then delving into the villages that were once pilgrimage destinations, where long lines of devotees moved in procession on foot or horseback.

It is impossible not to appreciate the beauty of the two most important Marian sanctuaries in the area, the Sanctuary of Madonna di Pierno and that dedicated to Madonna di Capodigiano. Around them, several small churches, equally interesting for their history and intrinsic artistic value.

Follow the 'tratturi' (transhumance trails) among the breathtaking beauties of Lucanian nature and ride through villages and hamlets of surprising charm, treasure troves of a culture rooted in the spirit of today's po-

pulation. Rites and traditions are followed with rigor and devotion as a sign of belonging to the land, a land that Mother Nature has gifted with incredible, exciting, unique views, like the waterfalls of San Fele. A paradisiacal place, ideally reachable on horseback after a walk through dense woods and expanses of reeds, the latter famous for being essential tools for the locals, who consider them perfect for keeping the Aglianico vines tied to the top, far from the ground, thus forming a sort of hut, or to make capacious and resistant baskets.

### THE JOURNEY

This is a circular route in the north-western



part of the region, which can be done in two opposite directions. Let's have a look at both options.

**First direction:**  
**Valle di Vitalba - Atella**  
**DAY 1**

The starting point is at Contrada Piani di Carda, in Atella, a convenient choice not only because of the many facilities in the area, but also an exclusive panoramic point over the valley that stretches away up to the slopes of Mount Vulture.

Cross the Fiumara di Atella stream east-bound and take a little road parallel to SS 93 for about 6 km until intersecting SP 219 towards San Fele.





Water plays a strong role in this route: streams and waterfalls will make the ride dynamic and the breaks bucolic, an environment perfectly tailored to your horses' needs.

After a first stretch through seemingly boundless greenery, you reach the ford of the Fiumara di Inforchia, not far from the homonymous hamlet: ride alongside the stream and reach the so-called "33 bridges" viaduct.

This is the complex infrastructural system that has regulated and supported the functioning of Apulia's aqueduct since 1906. A solution to the age-old problem of water scarcity throughout the area, described as a thirsty land in the verses of Horace: "nec tantus umquam siderum insedit vapor siticulosae Apuliae", translated as "nor was so great a heat ever cast by the stars on thirsty Apulia."

Up next along the route is the Bucito forest. A luxuriant flora, rich in dogwoods, tall and majestic oaks, holly trees, and much more. A perfect setting to relax while breathing fresh air, enjoying long walks or engaging in sports activities on the many hiking trails. Leave the forest behind and enjoy the view of the three main villages of the valley: Ruvo del Monte, Rapone, and the picturesque San Fele, nestled between the peaks of Mount



Castello and Mount Toretta. History is all around you as you walk through the streets of Ruvo del Monte: the sixteenth-century Castle, flanked by the imposing Angevin Tower, whose summit is still adorned with the original battlements, surely deserve a visit. The Museum of peasant civilization, sacred art and historical memory is also of particular interest.

Near the Castle is the Fontana Vecchia, the oldest fountain in the village: with its two large troughs, that is an ideal place for a stop with horses.

A series of churches are like milestones along the route, such as the Mother Church and the Benedictine Abbey of San Tommaso, after which you proceed alongside the remains of an ancient necropolis. A few





meters away, it's time for a new challenge: the second ford, that of the Bradano stream, followed by a transhumance trail that is a bucolic journey through history. Known as the "grain route", it was usually taken to transport wheat to the numerous mills located along the Bradano.

Finally, before approaching San Fele, enjoy the view of the ruins that dominate the hill once occupied by the castle-fortress built by Otto I of Saxony in an attempt to face the Byzantine sieges. Crossing the town center, it is easy to be intrigued by the many sacred buildings of the village, such as the Mother Church or the convent of Sant'Antonio, both home to important works of art. Once out of the town centre of San Fele, the landscape opens up to show the stunning views of the near waterfalls! The feeling is that of being into Monet's Water Lilies, where the scene is dominated by two elements, the water and the greenery that surrounds and invades it, dotted with colourful flowers and evoking a sense of inner, deep, silent joy.

This almost dreamlike dimension, where souls calm down and bodies release the tension that has kept them moving so far, invites you to take a longer stop, maybe with an overnight stay so that the horses too can enjoy a well-deserved rest before resuming the journey.

### DAY 2

The second part of the journey opens with a horseback ride towards the top of Monte Pierno, 1200 meters of altitude, home to one of the two largest Marian sanctuaries in the area. The panorama that unfolds before the curious and undaunted riders is that of the Irpinian valley with the town of Calitri, standing out in the background, and the Astronomical Observatory of Castelgrande. Proceed along this fascinating trail and get into a dense, lush, centuries-old forest of beech trees.





Here, the path is dotted by typical “nevie-re”, ancient underground snow cellars, covered with thick layers of straw and earth and used as water reserves.

As you face the ridge, your eyes fill with the stunning view of the Melandro valley on the right and the Vulture on the left, while herds of Podolian cattle undisturbedly graze in the surrounding meadows.

You reach the renowned Sanctuary, immersed in an area rich in vegetation and water sources. Crystal clear, fresh, pure. The water that streaks these lands and fills the silent air with the sound of its rushing is just one of the marks of authenticity and uniqueness of this place, and its greatest wealth.

A few more kilometres through cultivated lands, seasonal scents and breathtaking landscapes and you reach the castle of Sant’ Ilario, in the municipality of Atella. A brief stop in the area can be useful to delve into the humble, yet visceral, relationship between nature and man depicted by master Franco Zaccagnino in his paintings exhibited in the Arundiano Museum.

And so, this wonderful horseback excursion comes to an end.







**Second direction:  
Vitalba Valley - Muro Lucano  
DAY 1**

The starting point is still the Vitalba Valley, but this time towards Sant'Ilario. Take the SP Inforchia and go on for about 9 km. Behind you stands the imposing Lagopesole Castle, dominating the entire valley, with the Mount Vulture in the distance. From Sant'Ilario, it takes another 7 km to reach San Cataldo along a trail immersed in the woods that runs close to the old thermal baths, near the SP Inforchia.

There are more woods to cross for about 10 km following the SP Inforchia until intersecting the SP Bosco della Pietra. Another 5 km of ride and the Monte Santa Croce appears before your eyes.

The air cools down, the ride at 1407 m above sea level takes on a different, faster pace.

The journey continues by proceeding towards the SP 14 to reach the village of Bella. From the village's railway station, take an easy and pleasant path of only 2

km in the Fiumara di Muro. A stop in the town of Muro Lucano - a very suggestive village characterized by houses nestled in the rock - is surely recommended.

**DAY 2**

The next day, head towards the artificial lake of Muro and then follow SS 7 to Castelgrande.

From Castelgrande, SS 7 will guide you for a few kilometres in a northeasterly direction where a junction will lead you to the right towards San Fele.





4



● Start ● Finishing Line

**TOUR INFO**

Departure: Laurenzana  
 Arrival: Abriola  
 Total miles: 85,891 Km  
 Durata: Day 2

Maximum height: 1302 m  
 Minimum height: 534 m  
 Road type: hiking path

DOWNLOAD THE ROUTE ▶



4 THE ROUTE  
 LAURENZANA - CAMASTRA - ABRIOLO  
 DAY 2



A new scenery awaits. Pristine nature, stunning beauty, unique emotions and much more. Explore the forest of Grancia, the first historical-rural park in Italy and don't miss "La Storia Bandita" (The Outlawed History), a grand spectacle that every summer is staged in this natural amphitheater, retracing the events of Italian post-unity Brigandage. A whole host of sensations evoked by the charm of the past, the colours of nature

and its enchanting sounds, a whispered melody that is the soundtrack to the wonders that unfold before your eyes. A one-of-a-kind, timeless itinerary characterized by symbols, tales and traditions that the Park has brought back to light and made available to visitors. Brigandage, with its myths, legends and characters, takes center stage and offers a very special perspective on the post-unity days in Italy and this area.









A page of Italian and Lucanian history you can 'read' on horseback, an experience that will surely leave a deep, indelible mark. Riding along the same trails once trodden by brigands, smelling the same woodland scent that they once smelled while trying to hide and save their lives will make it possible for travellers to feel part of history and experience something they have only ever read about in books. Time to get lost in history, in nature...  
...in a journey that becomes passion, ex-

perience, life!  
Time to get lost in Basilicata while discovering its beauties, riding on emotions and turning a pastime into a source of knowledge.

## THE JOURNEY

### Day 1

Brindisi di Montagna marks the beginning of the journey, which is divided into two main parts.

Travellers leave the small town on the back of



their horses, heading onto Via Aia Chiaffa towards Laurenzana (where it is possible to enjoy the only long break of the journey) after riding through a series of little towns nestled among the Lucanian Dolomites, immersed in

nature, sometimes hidden in dense forests. The first stop, after about 16 km, is Trivigno. It is a small village just 28 km from Potenza that was ravaged by the followers of brigand Crocco on November 3, 1861. Massa-





eres and brutality occurred in those beech woods that today appear so calm and relaxing, in perfect harmony with the peaceful atmosphere created by the church of San Pietro, with its square-based bell tower and baroque altars.

The journey goes on for another 15 km on a historical transhumance trail that runs alongside SP 16 and later continues on the Interpodere Santa Croce Camastra, connecting the towns of Pietrapertosa and Castelmezzano. The latter, built among the spurs of the Lucanian Dolomites, within the Gallipoli-Cognato Park, is referred to as 'città-paesaggio' (lit. "landscape city") for the views it offers and for the beauty that runs through it.

Along the paths one can enjoy the heady, wild scent of chestnut, linden and elm barks until reaching Accettura, using SP Accettura/Gallipoli as a reference.

Accettura is completely immersed in greenery and is renowned for the patronal festival 'Il maggio di Accettura' (Accettura's May), an event linked to a tree ritual that has its roots in ancient peasant tradition: a cult that is celebrated in honour of San Giuliano and that over time has become the driving force of a cultural and religious heritage recognized throughout the region.

The final stretch of the route is not yet over. There's about thirty kilometers left (westbound), among the beech woods that represent the natural border of the Gallipoli-Cognato Park, to get to Laurenzana, where travellers can finally get their well-deserved rest.

### Day 2

On the following day, the riders start the second part of the journey by launching into a gallop amidst the colours and stunning landscapes of the Lucanian Apennine Park, heading towards SS 92. They pass through Calvello, Abriola (SP 16), and Pignola (SP 5) and finally reach Rifreddo, a picturesque

town nestled within a forest. It is finally time to take a break and savour local delicacies to replenish energy before descending towards Brindisi di Montagna and returning to Grancia, following SP 92.





5



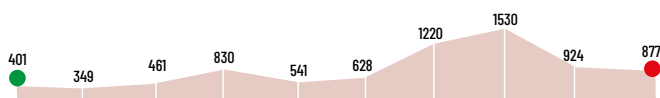
● Start ● Finishing Line

**TOUR INFO**

Departure: Matera  
 Arrival: San Severino Lucano  
 Total miles: 137,42 Km  
 Durata: Day 3

Maximum height: 1922 m  
 Minimum height: 349 m  
 Road type: hiking path

DOWNLOAD THE ROUTE ▶



5 THE ROUTE  
**MATERA - POLLINO**  
 DAY 3



Welcome to Matera, 2019 European Capital of Culture, an incredibly charming town home to the spectacular 'Sassi', ancient cave dwellings that resemble a nativity scene. Breathtaking views will fill your senses, ignite memories

and create a magical 'southern' atmosphere, the same that one can find in the writings of Ernesto De Martino or in the photos of Franco Pinna. It is here that this itinerary starts, in eastern Basilicata, before moving south-west







towards the peaks of Mount Pollino. The beginning is marked by the stunning views over the many Rupestrian cave churches of the Murgia Materana Park: this is an area with centuries-old, strong religious traditions and rituals, the most cherished being those linked to the feast of Madonna della Bruna. Faithful people vigorously assault the float parading along the streets of the town in an attempt to tear off and conquer a piece of that papier-mâché of which the religious icon is made, a symbol of a deeply felt belief.

A horseback ride near the city center allows you to admire monuments, palaces, churches, the characteristic alleys filled with the scent of local cuisine and the wide, welcoming squares. After that, it's time to get lost in the vastness of nature that unfolds as soon as you leave the Sassi, as soon as you start following your curiosity: a new, unexplored,

and uncontaminated world takes center stage, pushing the minds of the riders towards the southernmost boundaries of the region, caressing the oldest local traditions and discovering gastronomic pairings never tasted before.

## THE JOURNEY

### Day 1

It is advisable to set off after a hearty breakfast, perhaps at one of the agriturismo nestled in Matera and its surroundings, so as to have all the time and conveniences to prepare the horses and also enjoy the unique blend between urban landscape and nature of eastern Basilicata. The journey starts by heading from Contrada Le Matinelle towards Lake San Giuliano following SS 7 and crossing the Archaeological Historical and Natural Park of the Rupestrian Churches of Matera, known as the Park of Murgia Materana.







Crossed by the Bradano River, this is a site of particular charm, made even more fascinating by the ravines ("gravine") of Matera. It is no surprise that it has been included in the UNESCO heritage site list along with the Sassi.

The journey goes on until catching sight of the silhouette of Castello del Malconsiglio: beautifully located on a hill, the castle marks the arrival to the town of Miglionico. Within its walls, a well-known historical event is reenacted every year through a careful and faithful representation in costume: the Conspiracy of the Barons of the Kingdom of Naples against King Ferdinand I at the end of the 15th century.

After this taste of history, the riders can resu-

me their gallop alongside SS 7 for about 40 km along the Val Basento until Ferrandina, where it is necessary to spend the night to let the horses rest.

### Day 2

On the second day, riders set off on SP Ferrandina/Stigliano with a short detour to the "ghost town" of Craco: from a distance, it feels like looking at a sculpture of medieval origins. Here, one can already catch a glimpse of the impressive calanchi (badlands) surrounding Aliano, the place where writer Carlo Levi was confined. A 'lunar' and evocative landscape where promontories of white clay encircle the tiny inhabited area. On the barren and arid ground stand out

the furrows carved by the Agri river, which in the warmer months is just a trickle, highlighting the pallor of the surrounding terrain. As Levi wrote, "... and all around, more white clay without trees and grass, dug by water in holes, cones, slopes of a malignant appearance; like a lunar landscape... and from every side there were only precipices of white clay, on which the houses seemed to float in the air."

trees ranging from yellow to brown and austere pine trees. The sounds of nature seem to blend with the brisk wind, and the sky, slowly reappearing through the leaves, is crossed by proud birds.

Welcome to Pollino National Park.

The route skirts Castronuovo Sant'Andrea and continues towards Chiaromonte with a brief stop at Lake Monte Cotugno, the largest earthen dam in Europe.



After leaving Aliano, it is time to take SP 4 again towards the verdant Missanello, an ideal location to stop and taste the local typical dishes before arriving at Roccanova, the 'city of wine'.

### Day 3

The third day starts by intercepting SS 598 and crossing Roccanova, the last municipality at the gates of Pollino National Park.

For the wine explorers, it is recommended to try the renowned Grottino di Roccanova Dop, mentioned in Pliny's Naturalis Historia. Now the colours begin to change, the environment warms up, the green gets more intense, hectares of woods unfold before the riders' eyes with reddish maples, beech

After that, the ride becomes more exciting, with a descent towards the Sinni River followed by an uphill stretch towards Mount Caramola, at 1,100 meters above sea level. The finish line is finally there, at San Severino Lucano, reachable via SP 4. This little town is a destination for pilgrimages dedicated to the Madonna del Pollino and an ideal location to spend a day outdoors, in nature, away from the noise and hecticness of everyday life, enjoying the sight of the horses raised in the wild and moving freely through and around the forest of Magnano, an area blessed by the presence of two streams, Frido and Peschiera.







6



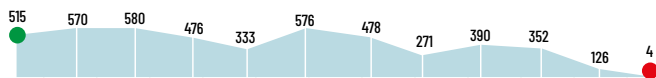
● Start ● Finishing Line

#### TOUR INFO

Departure: Melfi  
Arrival: Metaponto  
Total miles: 157,98 Km  
Durata: Day 5

Maximum height: 580 m  
Minimum height: 4 m  
Road type: hiking path

DOWNLOAD THE ROUTE



## 6 THE ROUTE MELFI - METAPONTO DAY 5



An intense, evocative, diverse route that gives riders the chance to cross the eastern side of Basilicata, from north to south, through sun-drenched lands where white and reddish limestone blends with golden fields of wheat, where gorges and ravines alternate with gullies and canals, sinkholes and old 'tratturi' (transhumance trails). And then ancient roads like the Ap-

pian Way, the Herculean Way, the scented routes of olive oil and wine, the blend of art and nature, enriched by archaeological sites and fortified 'masseria' farms. Feel the caress of the wind, a source of relief in moments of fatigue, and let yourself be cradled by the pace of the gentle hills and the sweet song of birds accompanied by the cry of the kestrel.





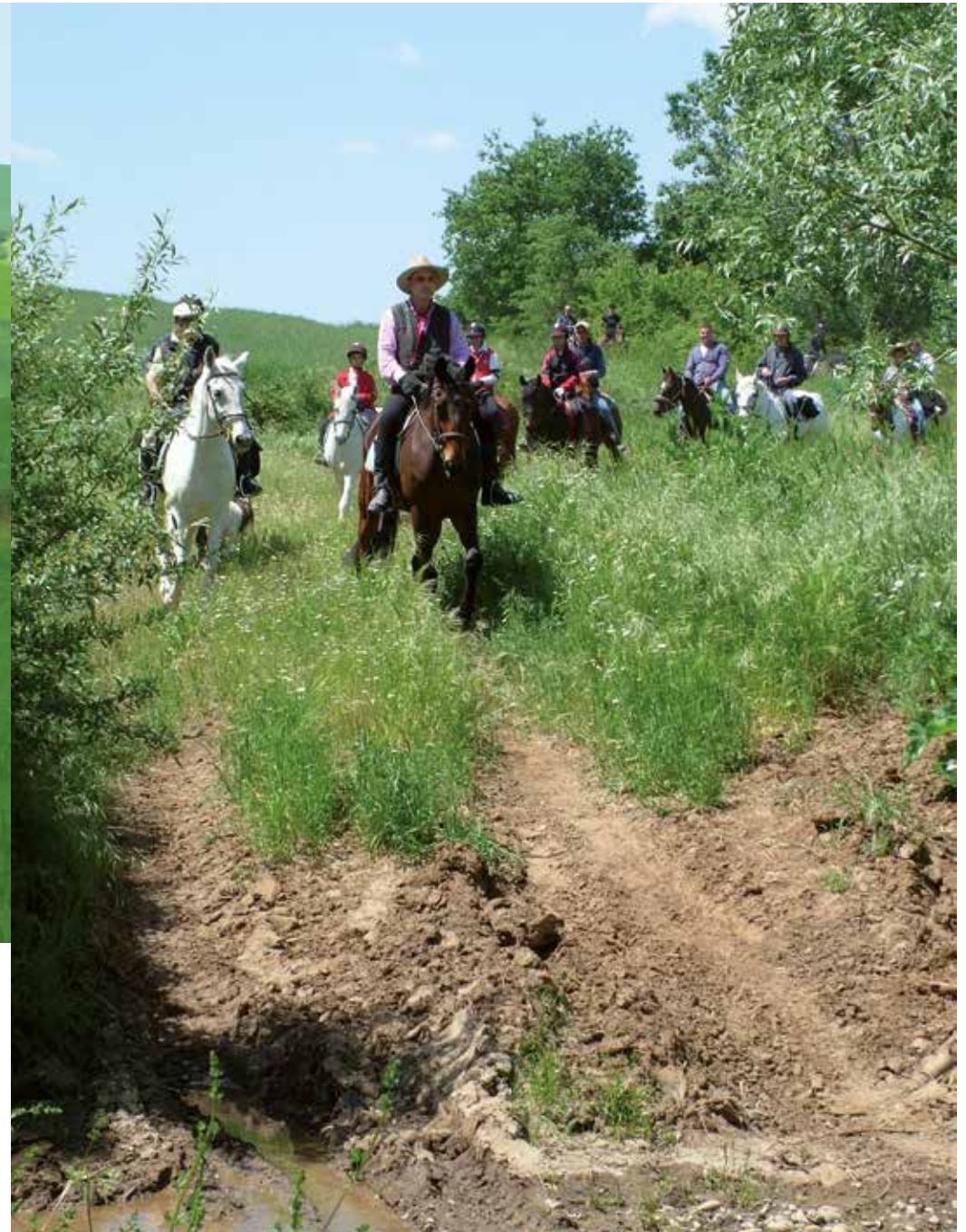
In the meantime, the hoofbeats of majestic and powerful horses echo in the air, recalling those of the steeds that once belonged to Byzantine and Lombard troops.

## THE JOURNEY

80\_HORSE RIDING IN BASILICATA

### DAY 1

The starting point is in Venosa and goes on for 35 km on SP 168 and SP 6 towards Genzano di Lucania, an ancient Roman settlement perched on one of the spurs from which it is possible to behold the enchanting Bradano valley below.



HORSE RIDING IN BASILICATA\_81



**DAY 2**

The route gets you into golden wheat fields for around 30 km following SP 33, SS 96 bis, and finally SP 209 until reaching Irsina, where the trace of the medieval past of the village is still strong, evoked by its picturesque alleys and walls. Lose yourself in the

panorama filled with the colours of nature around Bradano and Basentello rivers. It's time for a second stop, to indulge in the local specialties and allow the horses to regain strength for the second part of the journey.

**DAY 3**

There's about 50 km left to Matera: the 2019 European Capital of Culture can be reached via SS 655 and then SP 8. It is necessary to stay overnight there to regain the energy needed for the continuation of the journey.

**DAY 4**

The next day, resume the journey on SP 3 riding alongside the border of the Murgia Park towards Montescaglioso, also known as the "City of Monasteries" for the presence of four large monastic complexes including the Benedictine Abbey of San Michele Arcangelo.





**DAY 5**

After crossing this real treasure trove of cultural and religious wonders, head towards a new conquest, Bernalda, a village of undeniable charm where you can gaze upon the remnants of the past.

The Ionian Sea is getting closer and closer, the smell of the sea intensifies, the colours change and become lighter, the beaches of

Metaponto are just around the corner... a few kilometres more and you will get the chance to ride the sandy waves of the Ionian coast.



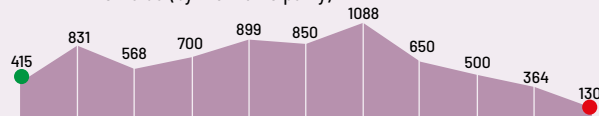




● Partenza | ● Arrivo | ● Sosta | ○ Passaggio

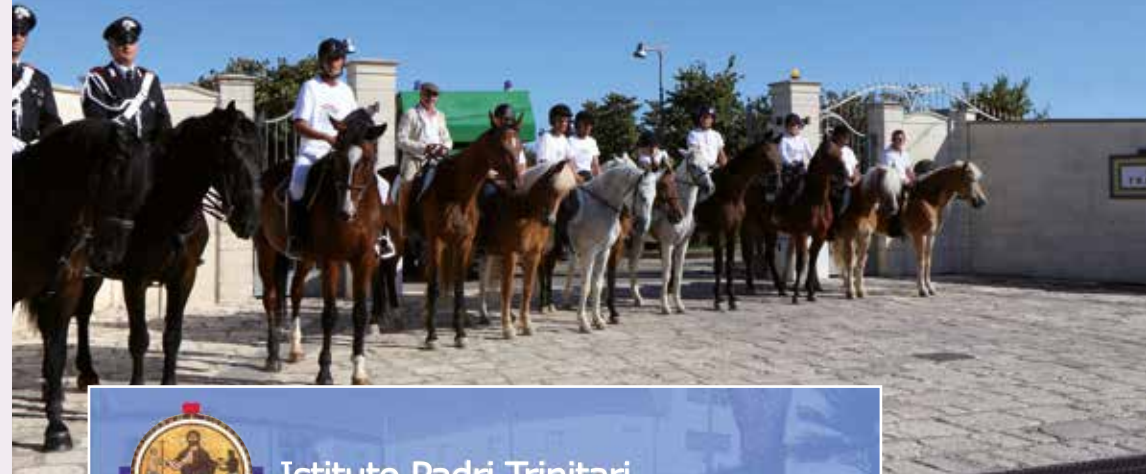
- Day 1** | Venosa (Centro Ippico Padri Trinitari)  
Acerenza (by the municipality)
- Day 2** | Acerenza (by the municipality)  
San Chirico Nuovo (Agr. Straziuso)
- Day 3** | San Chirico Nuovo (Agr. Straziuso)  
Castelmezzano (Agr. Grotta dell'Eremita)
- Day 4** | Castelmezzano (Agr. Grotta dell'Eremita)  
Cirigliano (by the municipality)

- Day 5** | Cirigliano (by the municipality)  
Aliano (by the municipality)
- Day 6** | Aliano (by the municipality)  
Pisticci (by the municipality)
- Day 7** | Pisticci (by the municipality)  
Bernalda (by the municipality)



## A JOURNEY TO REMEMBER

Galloping from Venosa to Bernalda with the disabled guests from the Trinitarian Fathers' Center



**Istituto Padri Trinitari**  
Centro di Riabilitazione e Formazione Professionale



As emphasized in the introduction to this booklet, the role of animals in people's lives has acquired a new significance over the years. They have always been considered excellent companions, capable of filling emotional voids; in some cases, they are even regarded as family members. Since the end of the 18th century, however, they have played a significant role as part of complex therapeutic cycles aimed at treating diseases and disorders of various kind.







It is certainly no surprise that building connections with animals can bring great benefits, especially if such connections are established in a natural environment. Horses, in particular, naturally evoke a strong sense of freedom and power and are therefore the perfect partners for an outdoor experience with a difference.

The Trinitarian Fathers at the Rehabilitation Center of Venosa wanted to put into practice the principles of pet therapy and hippotherapy, giving their guests the chance to experience a new challenge. A challenge that is already a victory.

The route described below has been studied, designed, and tested (after a year of training) taking into account the many be-

nefits that the guests' muscle and nervous system would gain from a long horseback ride, not to mention the extraordinary effects that this journey would have on their psyche.

Indeed, the initiative proved to be a great success and attracted the attention of journalists and medical experts. A fact that made the guests of the Center even prouder of being undisputed protagonists of this programme.

An admirable initiative with a great reward: the enthusiasm and interest with which the guests of the Center faced every single moment of the journey, treasuring all the small difficulties and rediscovering the beauties of nature.







The route below can be completed in 7 days and goes from Venosa to Bernalda. The level of difficulty sometimes gets a bit harder so as to make the riders experience the thrill of conquest and the adrenaline of the long-awaited victory.

### THE JOURNEY

The Trinitarian Fathers have chosen a striking start for their guests.

The group sets off from the Center with 15 horses, and after riding by the towers of the castle of Pirro del Balzo, near the statue of Cardinal Giovanni Battista De Luca, leaves the town of Horace behind, heading towards Acerenza, where it is possible to have the first break.











The girls and boys are enthusiastic in their technical clothing and ready to cover 230 km in 7 days accompanied by a squad of Carabinieri.

After a well-deserved rest, the group sets off again towards San Chirico Nuovo.

The long training period allows the riders to

tackle even the most challenging stretches with ease.

Between Castelmezzano and Aliano, the landscape becomes more rugged and the paths climb up the steep Dolomites, until they turn into white clay as you approach Aliano. The difficulties increase, and so does





between animals and nature awakens and strengthens the senses, giving the right energy and motivation to anyone willing to challenge themselves and become part of an amazing experience.

**Centro Ippico Padri Trinitari**  
 Piazza Don Bosco, 3  
 85029 Venosa (PZ)  
 Tel. 0972 34 211 (6 linee)  
[www.trinitarivenosa.it](http://www.trinitarivenosa.it)



the enthusiasm and the desire to reach the finish line.

There is a lot to talk about and share during the stops or the lavish banquets: impressions, typical dishes, and the feeling of being part of an exploration that is one of a kind, a travel like no other. There are no limits or problems, only the desire to reach the goal and say: we made it all by ourselves! The staff from the Center, who diligently accompanied their guests throughout the 7-day journey until Bernalda, are happy and amazed at what the group was able to achieve.

A unique experience, which leaves a deep impression on those who experience it firsthand but also on those who witness it from the outside. The magical combination





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Tel. +39 347 94 50 167  
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www.hotelsanmarcorionero.it

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85018 Trivigno (PZ)  
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Tel. +39 0973 87 17 16 +39 0973 87 17 60  
www.mararanch.it

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85054 Muro Lucano (PZ)  
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www.agriturismo-santagata.it

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www.villadellerose.basilicata.it

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www.agriturismovignola.it

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www.oasisulpollino.it

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### Scuderia Pascale

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### ASD Equestre Cascate Sentieri e Cavalieri

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agri@massericampolero.it  
www.massericampolero.it

### Agriturismo Il Cascinale

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caputo.domenico24@libero.it  
www.ilcascinalepollino.com

### Agriturismo Alle Roverelle

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Tel. +39 346 30 11 362  
www.alleroverelle.it

### L'Antica Fontana B&B/Casa Vacanze

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casavacanzelanticafontana@gmail.com  
www.lanticafontanacasavacanze.it

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### Affittacamere Emme

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www.lecinquecime.it

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### Casa Vacanza San Nicola

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### Casa Vacanza Tana Libera Tutti

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