



AN ANCIENT VILLAGE THAT, LIKE A WHITE BALCONY, OVERLOOKS VALLE D'ITRIA

LOCOROTONDO

Locorotondo, one of the finest Italian towns, dominates the Murgia, the region of the "trulli", where the provinces of Bari, Brindisi and Taranto meet each other. Over the time, the simple and essential character of its historical centre, made with stone and whitewashed dwellings, has survived, together with the flowers and the warm welcome of its population.

Locorotondo lies along the farthest strip of the province of Bari, on the plateau of south-eastern Murge, overlooking the karst hollow of Valle d'Itria that is bordered by the white hilly villages of Martina Franca, Cisternino, Ceglie Messapica and Ostuni.

Its historical centre lies around its heart and is enclosed by a vast terrace overlooking the valley.

Locorotondo differs from the surrounding villages because of its grey stone sloping roofs - over the time covered by lichens and surmounted by short chimneys - that meet together to let the rain water flow over them.

Here the buildings, different from one another even if with similar wall structures, are compact grouped and bordered by narrow lanes, small squares and cleaned flights of steps; if you raise your eyes, you can see flowered balconies as well and tiny curtained windows.

*Posato sulla cresta
di un colle rotondo,
giace “u Curdun”,
una corolla di petali bianchi.*

*La Valle d'Itria s
i perde lontano,
casupole bianche
con i tetti a cono,
grappoli di trulli
seminati nel verde,
tra viti e ulivi
come in un presepe.*

Paolo De Meo

LOCOROTONDO HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The remains of a necropolis preserving various tombs with Apulian vases and with red figures, found in Contrada Grofoleo, bear witness to the ancient settlement of a natives' village taking part to exchanges with the nearest towns of Magna Grecia. The origin of its name has sometimes been connected to Locros or Tionos, identifying as “Locrese Fort” the first settlement of Locorotondo. But the presence of a “locus qui dicitur rotundus”, a farmers' village under the authority of the Benedictine Monastery of Santo Stefano di Monopoli, can only be found in documents dating back to 1195. Locorotondo was ruled by the Balzo Orsini (end of 14th century) and later by other powerful clans of the area. In 1645 it was bought by the Caracciolo from Martina Franca that held its possession up to the 19th century. The churches and palaces of its historical centre, built in different epochs, are the evidences of the noble estates and the religious spirit that feature the roots of this town's history.

LOCOROTONDO: ITS HISTORICAL CENTRE

The “borgo antico” (ancient hamlet) is characterized by whitewashed buildings, bordered by paved, winding and cleaned lanes leading to the small rectangular square of the Chiesa Matrice. Here and there, almost unexpected, you can enjoy a view of the Valle d'Itria, vast and windy and dotted with “trulli” and “casedde”, vineyards and olive groves, under a bright blue sky. How amazing it is to wander this historical centre that displays a range of precious architectural works, all of them deserving to be seen.

It is well worth visiting the Chiesa Matrice di San Giorgio, the main worship place. Actually the presence of a rural small church dedicated to this Saint Martyr can be found in an ancient document of Locorotondo dating back to the 12th century, but the present structure of the cathedral dates back to the late 18th century.

The Greek-cross interior has a nave and side aisles with pillars. An impressive portal and a big polychromatic stained-glass window are on the façade and its campanile is an example of the 19th-century architecture.

Among the churches we would mention the Chiesa dell'Annunziata and the Chiesa di San Nicola, both of them standing nearby the cathedral, the Chiesa di San Rocco (the Patron Saint celebrated on 16th August), with a Greek-cross layout, and the 17th-century Pieve della Vergine del Soccorso with a dome-campanile.

You can also admire the neoclassic Chiesa dell'Ad-dolorata, standing near the Villa Comunale, the Chiesetta dello Spirito Santo, with both the façade and the interior simple and charming, and the Chiesa della Madonna della Greca. The last, a gem of the Christian art, Romanesque in style with a rose-window on the façade - a local artist's work of art - dates back to the 12th-13th centuries but underwent various alterations, including the Renaissance portal with a lunette.

The interior, with a late-Gothic nave divided from the side aisles by pillars with classical capitals, hosts a remarkable ancient fresco of the “Madonna with Jesus Baby”, probably going back to the former church, and the sculptural group of San Giorgio brought here from the Chiesa Matrice.

On the right you can see a precious bas-relief depicting the “Deposition of Christ”.

Among the palaces you can see Palazzo de Bernardis, that in the 19th century used to host the Law Courts, and Palazzo Conti, home to the Scuola Elementare since 1861.

One of the most beautiful palaces is Palazzo Morelli that features a significant portal and some Baroque balconies, enriched with coloured flowers standing out against the white colour of the façade.

VILLAGES AND SURROUNDINGS

Beyond the historical centre and going past Porta Napoli, from the fresh Public Gardens you can enjoy a view over the “trulli” of Valle d’Itria up to the frontal Baroque town of Martina Franca: the country of Locorotondo, whose charm has survived over the time, in spite of the man’s big intervention, extends in front of you.

A dream place, as mentioned by D’Annunzio.

If you like immersing yourselves into the past, go cycling around the ancient Contrade Iannelle, Marziolla, Ventura and San Marco at sunset!

The dwellings, simple and tidy, divided by short dry-grey stone walls, small terraces and ancient sheep-tracks are connected with the rural activities, and consist of “masserie”, “trulli” or “casedde” with cone-shaped roofs made of “chianche”, local stone slabs. Often grouped together, they are rural homes, essential for the tiring but profitable growing work in the area.

Holidays in the “masserie” or “trulli” of Valle d’Itria, off the beaten tracks, is not only a way of restoring yourselves but is also rich in charm, traditions, clean sea water, art and culture.

MADONNA DELLA CATENA

At the end of Via XX Settembre, close to Piazza Aldo Moro, you can visit the Chiesa della Madonna della Catena.

This elegant church, built outside the town centre, used to have a special relationship with the surrounding rural environment.

It was built at the beginning of 1600 on the site where an image of the Madonna with the Child holding a chain was found.

This Greek-cross church, with a unique room, the apse and the dome, leans on a chapel-cave preserving the remains of the ancient church, such as some stoups and some frescoes' traces.

On the wall of the façade, a round bas relief depicts the God's Mother. From the Chapel you can enter the communicating grottoes unearthed in 1790.

Cuisine

THE CUISINE AT LOCOROTONDO

Dinner at Locorotondo is an unforgettable experience not to be missed; the regional dishes derive from very old traditions, with local flavours and accompanied by the wine of the place: white, ruby and rosé Locorotondo DOC.

Every lane of the historical centre offers set tables welcoming you with bread, “taralli” and fresh wine together with the dishes of the day. The menu offers a good choice of tasty food flavoured with the local olive oil.

The first courses include the “paste fresche” that go with “pomodoro e ricotta” or “ragù di braciolo”, and the “ciallédde” and the “macco con le verdure”, traditional dishes maintaining the typical features of the local way of cooking.

Among the second courses you can taste lamb, roasted meat, “gnumeredde suffuchète” or “involtini di trippa stufati”.

The quality of fresh cheese is excellent: “ricotta”, “scamorza” and “caciocavallo”.

Getting to Locorotondo

By car: A14 Motorway, exit Bari Nord. SS 16 to Brindisi, exit Fasano, then drive towards Taranto.

By train: Fasano FS Station - Locorotondo FSE Station.

By plane: Bari Airport or Brindisi Airport (about 65 km).

PROLOCO ED INFORMAZIONI TURISTICHE

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