

THE 20 POINTS OF INTEREST NOT TO MISS  
ON YOUR NEXT TRIP TO MATERA

DISCOVER  
MATERA

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## WELCOME TO MATERA

Whatever season you choose to visit Matera, you'll be charmed as you enjoy a multitude of different atmospheres. Whoever visits Matera in the spring or summer can enjoy the Moors in full bloom, with endless blue skies and breathtaking dawns and sunsets. Those who choose to return during the autumn or at Christmas time can walk around the city center, go shopping, enjoy the natural nativity scene of the Sassi lit up at night and try an array of local seasonal gastronomic delicacies.

The millenary history of the Sassi, with its prehistoric settlements, museums and numerous other attractions, blend well with the food, wine and shopping activities the city has to offer making for a fun and relaxing holiday to suit any taste. The local culinary traditions and baked goods will surprise even the most difficult palates. Let yourself be tempted by spectacular natural scenery and the flavors of a land that will speak directly to your heart through its silence and living traditions.

Here are the 20 things you should not miss on your next trip to Matera. This is obviously not an exhaustive list and is not in order of importance! It is our little guide to condense some of the treats Matera and surroundings has to offer. It would also be our pleasure to guide you on your discovery of any of the other many points of interest within our region. Our professional guides, selected and trained to offer you personalized tours, will guide you through the magic of this area and the whole of Basilicata. But in the meantime, enjoy reading and have fun!

### 01. Enjoy the view from the Duomo (Cathedral) overlooking the Sassi

Climb up the hill of the Civita, the highest part of Matera's Sassi, where the Cathedral stands, allowing you to take a pleasant walk through alleyways and narrow streets, but above all, to reach an incredible panoramic point. Here there is a wonderful belvedere just opposite the main door of the Duomo from which you can enjoy a breathtaking view of the Sassi in all their beauty. From there you can then descend the staircase that takes you right into the heart of one of the ancient districts of Matera, the Sasso Barisano!

#### Piazza Duomo

### 02. Wait for the sun to set from the Belvedere of Madonna delle Vergini

Taking the old state highway SS7 towards Laterza, you can easily reach Madonna delle Vergini rock church and panoramic point, an enchanting spot located just opposite Matera's Sassi ridge. Madonna delle Vergini is one of the rock churches of the Parco della Murgia Materana (The Materan Moors Park) and is a bit more isolated and distant than the other rock churches, but is easily accessible by car. It is precisely for this reason that the church is considered to be more silent and mystical and is still used as a place of worship today. From here you can view Matera from a spectacular vantage point and wait for the sun to set, watching it slowly disappear on the red-skied horizon!

#### Belvedere of the Madonna delle Vergini

### 03. Dine with an original crapiata at La Focagna tavern

For a typical Materan style dinner in one of the most original taverns within the historic center, you can try a truly traditional local dish. The crapiata is a soup of different legume varieties, all stewed in a large pot and is a symbol of a centuries old traditional celebration that took place at the end of each year's harvest. Cicerchie beans, chickpeas, wheat, farro, fava beans, other dried beans and peas, are some of the varieties that you might find between one spoonful and another. Accompany it with a glass of good local red wine and the next thing you know, you'll find yourself in another place and time. And if you happen to be in Matera on horseback between July and August, remember that on August 1st there is a big party not to be missed in honor of this ancient dish!

**La Focagna, via Ridola, 4**

### 04. Enjoy the amazing pork knuckle at the Osteria La Pignata

If you're a meat lover and are convinced that pork is an "essential part of a healthy diet", you'll love this melt in your mouth like butter dish. Bite after bite, your taste buds will not believe the exquisiteness of the flavors and tenderness of the meat, prepared with great care and attention. You may have tried this dish elsewhere, but Osteria La Pignata is convinced it beats all the competitors as the masters of this traditional peasant dish!

**Osteria La Pignata, via Duni, 20**

### 05. Have a contemporary art tour by the staff at MUSMA

Often the word museum is synonymous with the word boredom, but this false myth is dispelled if we talk about the museums of Matera and in particular, the MUSMA, Museo della Scultura Contemporanea (Museum of Contemporary Sculpture of Matera). The staff of the cooperative who run the museum are real experts who will welcome you and expertly guide you on your discovery of the wonderful works on display, on this tour that you'll never want to end. The spaces and building that houses the museum (called the building of "one hundred rooms") is a breathtaking work of art in and of itself. A real sculpted labyrinth where you will lose and find yourself!

**MUSMA, via San Giacomo**

### 06. Experience the mysticism of the Crypt of Original Sin

A Rock Church that is a MUST for visitors is the "Crypt of Original Sin" (also known as the "Grotta dei Cento Santi" or "Cave of One Hundred Saints") and is considered to be the "Sistine Chapel" of rock churches in Southern Italy. We don't want to give anything away, but we'll just say that if you really want understand something about the area's religious history, with its Byzantine settlements, you must book your visit to this rock church now! Here you'll get to see some of the most beautiful rock wall frescoes in the whole of Southern Italy!

**Cripta del Peccato Originale, SS 7 Via Appia**

### 07. Abandon yourself to a relaxing five-star afternoon in the Palazzo Gattini SPA

Whether it's cold and rainy or you just want to enjoy a moment of total peace and quiet to restore your energy and wellbeing, you can have the "hammam experience" accompanied by a massage or do a combination of other options the spa offers. By



pampering yourself at the Palazzo Gattini SPA, you'll take away the pleasure of knowing you had a real journey of relaxation while in Matera!

**Palazzo Gattini SPA, Piazza Duomo, 13**

### **08. Sottozero's panzerotto will steal your heart away**

For a quick break, when hunger calls and you don't have a lot of time, there is always the Sottozero bar, where you can choose from an array of local street food. One of the bar's cornerstones to be crossed off your list is - without doubt - their original panzerotto. Delicious, boiling hot fried dough pillows filled with mozzarella and tomato that will invite you to seconds if not thirds!... (but perhaps not consecutively, on the same day). A warning above all, to the most ravenous: Beware of the extreme heat of the dough as you bite into it as strikes without warning!

**Sottozero, via XX Settembre, 51**

### **09. Live the summer nightlife on via Ridola**

If it's a pleasant spring or summer evening you'll want to stay out late and enjoy the magic of Matera's night life. Seeking out events or other forms of entertainment isn't necessary when all you have to do is immerse yourself in the festive atmosphere of the nightlife enjoyed by much of Matera's youth. Choose a trendy cocktail from Shibuya or Bonacchi and discover the pleasure of chatting for hours without thinking about your alarm clock the next day. Before you know it, you'll be making friends and chatting with members of Matera's local young crowd in no time!

**Via Ridola**

### **10. Hike down into the canyon of the Gravina and up the other side, opposite the Sassi**

If you love adventure, hiking or a bit 'more challenging kind of walking which allows you to immerse yourself into uncontaminated nature, you cannot miss this tour. Work your way down into the Gravina gorge and observe the Sassi first from below, and then from up higher as you slowly ascend the other slope of the canyon, amongst rock churches, until you reach the Belvedere on the other side of Matera. This is sure to be one of the most beautiful and spectacular experiences you'll have in this area. You can take advantage of the new wooden suspension bridge to cross the creek and once you reach the top of the other side, you'll feel alive and in awe of the majestic beauty of the canyon and the Matera moors! But we do not recommend venturing out alone ... For those unfamiliar with the area, this excursion should absolutely be done with a guide!

**Access from Madonna delle Virtù road near the parking lot of Porta Pistola**

### **11. Lunch with terracotta baked, tomato focaccia at the Castle Park**

If you want to take a break from the city and are looking for a hidden corner tucked just a little further away from the center's chaos and Sassi, you can easily take a break at the park of the Tramontano Castle. Here you can admire the wonderful place where the Count of the same name lived and maybe you'll discover the truth about his bloody end! To add a little substance to this poetic break, you should first pass by Pauluccio, one of the oldest and most well known bakeries in town, to buy a nice piece of terracotta



baked tomato focaccia. You'll discover how little the delicious flavors of traditional local baked goods cost! Enjoy your meal!

**Parco del Castello, via Castello**

## **12. Discover the "Pillars of the Earth" within the Church of San Giovanni Battista**

Hidden away, just a stone's throw away from the central square, is one of the most characteristic little piazzas in the historic center, where you can visit the Church of San Giovanni Battista. Its façade and the main door alone will captivate you and tell of the church's centuries old history. However, as you cross the threshold of the small door, you'll be transported back to the Middle Ages. Your gaze will be inundated with soft, suffused light as your careful observations take you on a discovery of the many different details in this characteristic and original church which speaks of Romanesque, Gothic, Arabic as well as other styles. The silence that surrounds you will so quickly give you a sense of inner peace that you'll feel like you've come to a magical place!

**Chiesa di San Giovanni Battista, via San Biagio**

## **13. Find out how ten people lived in a cave together with their livestock up until the 1950's**

If you think this is a memory of a distant past, you're wrong: up to the 1950's many still lived in the Sassi in Matera, in largish caves, where an entire family, with at least five children and maybe even grandparents in tow, shared a living space, without toilets, heating or light. Here also housed their own livestock and working animals. I know this sounds incredible to you, but it's the truth and you can witness this piece of real life for yourself with a visit to the "Casa Grotta". The history of Matera is truly unique and I'm sure it will leave a lasting impression!

**Casa Grotta, the little Vico Solitario neighborhood**

## **14. Fall in love or make someone fall in love with you, with a typical Cucù**

If you want to take a truly original memento of the local tradition home with you, you can choose one of the spectacular terracotta Cucùs made by the master Nigliò, which you can find for sale at Geppetto, in piazza Sedile. The Cucù is a whistle representing a rooster, which is a sign of good luck when placed outside the house. Above all however, it was the gift that a man would give to a woman as an expression of love. If the woman did not accept it, it was equivalent to rejecting his proposal of courtship. The larger and more elaborate the Cucù presented was, the greater the love interest. Do you already have someone to give your next Cucù away to?

**Geppetto, piazza del Sedile**

## **15. Have your own personalized bread-stamp made**

You will discover an authentic kind of bread with an unmistakable taste in Matera. This bread is the result of a centuries old tradition in which the neighborhood families would share an infinite "mother yeast" or starter, with which they produced these large "croissant" shaped loaves every day. These were then taken and baked in large wood-fired ovens. The question is, how could you distinguish between one loaf belonging to one family rather than another? With a special wooden stamp (sometimes in iron) that branded the bread, like a signature of authenticity or a symbol of the family to whom the loaf belonged, often accompanied by their initials. If you



would also like your own family stamp with personalized initials, (or if you'd just like a special memento, as more of a decorative object) you can check out two of Matera's most skilled, artistic wood workers: on Via Ridola you will find Massimo's showroom and workshop at Casiello; and in Viale Europa that of the antique furniture restorer Alessandro Castano.

**Massimo Casiello, Atelier del legno, via Ridola, 40**  
**Alessandro Castano Ebanisteria e Restauro, viale Europa**

### 16. Find your own image in a WOOD

If you believe that great things can be found even in the smallest of places in the world, the artisan showroom of Tommaso Schiuma is the right place for you. When you enter (or better to say, when you look in from outside), you will be struck by the beautiful post-modern design productions by the visionary artist Tommaso Schiuma. Objects made of wood or other materials, such as recycled products, and small gadgets will capture your attention! The real gem however, is to have a personalized WOOD (or a wooden statuette) made with your likeness on it (or that of a loved one you want to give it to). A mix between a realistic reproduction and a caricature, the WOOD will give a nice accent to your home, as a demonstration of how the fusion of contemporary design and craftsmanship are able to produce objects of inestimable value. Can you recognize yourself in your WOOD?

**Schiuma Post Design, piazza San Francesco**

### 17. Let yourself be filled with fear in the Cave of Bats

A few kilometers from the city center, along the rocky canyon ridge that greets Matera from the South-East, you will come across one of the most interesting caves in the area with the dark name of "La Grotta dei Pipistrelli", or "Cave of Bats". If you are afraid of these innocuous animals, you can test your courage as you venture into this gaping cavity, where light gives way to the dark to discover who resides in this ancient place. If accompanied by a professional guide (highly recommended) you can hear all about this archaeological complex which was discovered by Domenico Ridola. Ready to take the challenge?

**Grotta dei Pipistrelli, Contrada Agna Le Piane**

### 18. Do some trekking to reach the settlement at Cristo La Selva

Looking at the Moors and canyon with their characteristic rocks and ruggedness, you will also observe small paths which take you to various points of interest in this natural reserve. You might have already guessed that hiking on this type of terrain requires a minimum of technical effort and experience, as well as comfortable walking shoes and sports equipment. If you are also a true lover of trekking, then you can choose those trails that are a little more difficult, such as the complex of Cristo La Selva for example, which will allow you to fully immerse yourself in the local flora and fauna on a suggestive and exciting itinerary. Of course, once again we recommend that you rely on expert guides that will allow you to enjoy these wonders more fully, but in complete safety. If you're interested in organizing this tour with us, consider us at your disposal. Have a



great adventure!

**Cristo La Selva**

### **19. Read the poems about the Lucania (Basilicata) of Sinisgalli, Scotellaro, Trufelli and Pierri**

Read the lovely words of the great poets from the past who painted the indelible features of Matera and Lucania, giving life to this land through their intimate knowledge of every remote corner of the terrain – with its gorges, rocks and crags, the arid and distinctly scented lands, the cricket's song and the birds of prey in flight, as well as Basilicata's history of human civilization. There are many readings able to enchant you for hours: Sinisgalli, Scotellaro, Trufelli, Pierri and Levi are just some of the names that will guide you on this journey of discovery – a journey made of words and emotions, perhaps while you're sitting and enjoying one of these extraordinary landscapes.

### **20. Horseback ride to the San Giuliano Lake**

The San Giuliano Nature Reserve is a protected natural area that is linked to the artificial lake of the same name. Today this is a habitat that has been repopulated by flora and fauna that allows Matera to boast being able to offer a corner of wild nature just a few kilometers from the city. Here you can do bird-watching, sports fishing (with a license), have a romantic walk or a picnic with friends. For horse lovers we recommend contacting one of the stables in the area to book a pleasant ride!

**San Giuliano Lake**

**We hope this short "map" of some of the major points of interest (not to be missed) in the city of Matera will be to your liking. We invite you to join us at our office in via delle Beccherie, 19 in Matera, just a stone's throw away from the Vittorio Veneto central square, where you'll be able to get a map and other promotional material useful in planning your next trip to Matera and Basilicata.**

**If you'd like, you can choose Discovery Matera for guided tours within the city and throughout Basilicata, For transfers to the airport, station, or other locations or for rentals of convenient means of transport, such as scooters or bikes, or for any other need, consider us at your disposal!**

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MATERA is waiting for you!**

**Rosa e Daniele  
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