

Polignano a Mare

Apulia · Italy

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Polignano a Mare is a small town on the Adriatic coast of Apulia, about 35 km south-east of Bari. Its whitewashed old town sits on top of limestone cliffs, and the sea has cut deep caves into the rock below. The tiny pebble cove between two cliffs, seen from the bridge above, is the town's famous postcard view.

The town suits a short, relaxed stay: one or two nights for the cliffs, the terraces and the seafood, with easy trips to the trulli, the caves of Castellana and the white towns of the Itria Valley. It is also the hometown of the singer *Domenico Modugno*, famous for the song "Volare". Expect big crowds on summer weekends and a much quieter town from November to March.

When to visit

May, June, September and early October are the best months: warm, sunny and good for swimming, with fewer crowds than in high summer. July and August are hot and very busy, especially at weekends, when the old town and the cove fill up. Winter is mild but often wet and windy, and some restaurants and boat trips close.

The biggest local event is the Feast of San Vito, the patron saint, in mid-June. The saint's relics arrive by sea on a decorated raft from the abbey of San Vito, followed by fishing boats, and land at Cala Paura. A procession through town and fireworks over the seafront follow.

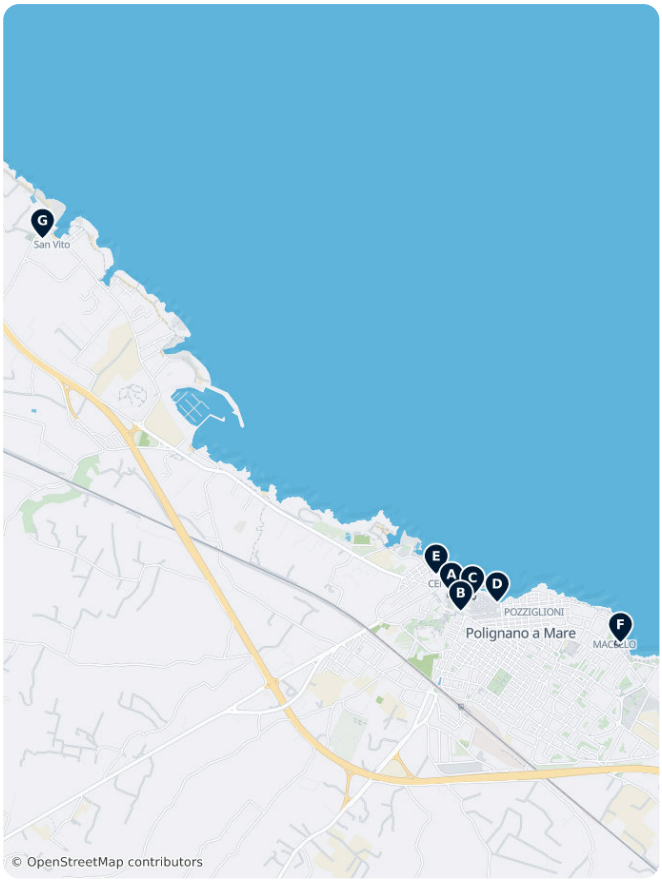
MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Fair Fair for sightseeing	12° / 16° Feels like 8°	8° / 3°	Dry air
February	Fair Fair for sightseeing	13° / 17° Feels like 9°	7° / 3°	Dry air
March	Fair Fair for sightseeing	15° / 20° Feels like 11°	9° / 5°	Dry air
April	Good Good for sightseeing	18° / 22°	11° / 8°	Dry air
May	Great Great for sightseeing	22° / 27°	15° / 12°	
June	Great Great for the beach	27° / 32°	20° / 16°	22 sunny days · Humid air
July	Great Great for the beach	30° / 35°	23° / 19°	27 sunny days · Muggy, humid air · UV 8 (Very high)
August	Great Great for the beach	30° / 34°	23° / 20°	25 sunny days · Muggy, humid air
September	Great Great for sightseeing	26° / 31°	19° / 16°	Humid air
October	Great Great for sightseeing	21° / 26°	16° / 12°	
November	Good Good for sightseeing	17° / 22°	12° / 7°	Dry air
December	Fair Fair for sightseeing	13° / 17° Feels like 10°	9° / 5°	Dry air

Best months: May, June, July, September, October

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights

Most sights are on the edge of the old town, within a few minutes' walk of each other.



A Lama Monachile is the small pebble cove at the end of a narrow inlet between high cliffs. Look down on it from the road bridge above, or walk down the steps for a swim. It has no facilities and gets very crowded on summer afternoons.

B Porta Vecchia is the old arched gate from Piazza Garibaldi into the historic centre. Behind it, white lanes lead to small terraces built right on the cliff edge, with views over the sea and the caves.

C Chiesa Matrice Santa Maria Assunta stands on the main square of the old town. The church dates from the 13th century and was the town's cathedral until the 19th century.

D Grotta Palazzese is a large sea cave under the cliffs. In summer it holds a restaurant inside the cave, open only to guests with a booking. You can also see it from the sea on a boat trip.

E Monumento a Domenico Modugno stands on the seafront promenade north of the old town. The bronze statue shows the singer with his arms open towards the sea.

F Museo Pino Pascali (Ex Macello) shows contemporary art in a former slaughterhouse on the seafront. The museum honours *Pino Pascali*, an important Italian sculptor of the 1960s who grew up in Polignano.

G Complesso monastico Abbazia di San Vito is a quiet abbey complex beside a tiny fishing harbour, about 3 km north-west of the centre. It is a popular spot at sunset.

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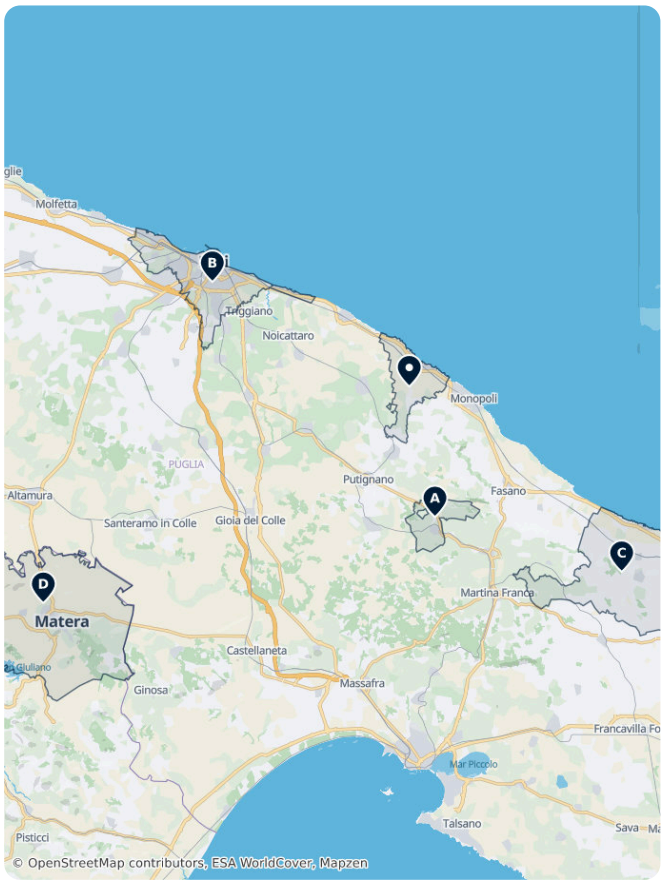
What to experience

Life in Polignano is centred on the sea and the cliffs.

- **See the sea caves by boat**: a boat trip along the cliffs is the best way to understand the town. Boats go into or past several caves, including the one under the old town, and many trips stop for a swim.
- **Watch cliff diving**: Polignano regularly hosts a stop of the Red Bull Cliff Diving World Series, with athletes diving into the cove from a high platform. Local young people also jump from the rocks on summer days. Do not jump yourself unless you know the depth and currents.
- **Swim from the rocks**: away from the crowded cove, locals swim from the flat rocks along the coast north of the old town, near Cala Paura.
- **Sunset at San Vito**: drive or cycle to Complesso monastico Abbazia di San Vito at sunset, when the small harbour is at its quietest.
- **The evening passeggiata**: on summer evenings the whole town walks along the cliff-top terraces and the seafront promenade after dinner.

Day trips

Polignano sits between the coast and the hills of central Apulia, so many good day trips are less than an hour away. A car makes most of them easier.



- Monopoli: about 5 to 10 minutes by train. A larger old town with an old harbour full of blue fishing boats, and good small beaches south of town.
- Conversano: about 20 minutes by car. A quiet hill town with a castle and a Romanesque cathedral.
- Castellana Caves: about 20 minutes by car. A large show cave with stalactites, visited on guided tours.
- A Alberobello: about 30 minutes by car. The UNESCO town of trulli, the white houses with cone-shaped stone roofs.
- B Bari: 25 to 45 minutes by train. The regional capital, with the Basilica of San Nicola and a lively old town.
- C Ostuni: about 40 minutes by car. The "white town" on a hill above olive groves. Locorotondo and Cisternino in the Itria Valley make good stops on an inland route.
- D Matera: about 1 hour 10 minutes by car. Famous for the Sassi, old cave houses carved into a ravine.

Where to explore

Polignano a Mare is on the Adriatic coast of Apulia, south of Bari.

- **Nearby towns**: Alberobello and its trulli are inland, and Ostuni is further down the coast. Matera lies just across the border in Basilicata.
- **Cities**: Bari is the regional capital and main gateway. Trani has a cathedral right by the sea. To the south are Brindisi, the Province of Taranto and Lecce Province, home to Baroque Lecce.
- **The Gargano in the north**: the seaside towns of Vieste, Peschici and Vico del Gargano, and the Isole Tremiti offshore.

Getting there

- **By air**: Bari Karol Wojtyła Airport is the closest, about 50 km away. Take the airport train (Ferrotramviaria, separate ticket) to Bari Centrale station (about 20 minutes), then a regional train to Polignano. By car or taxi it takes about 35 minutes. Brindisi Airport is about 80 km away, roughly 50 minutes by car.
- **By train**: Polignano a Mare is on the Adriatic railway between Bari and Lecce. Regional trains from Bari Centrale run often and take 25 to 45 minutes. The station is about 10 minutes' walk from the old town. Trenitalia
- **By car**: the coastal SS16 dual carriageway passes the town, with exits for Polignano. Bari is about 40 minutes away.

Getting around

- **On foot**: the old town, the cove and the seafront are close together and best explored on foot. The old town has some steps and uneven stone lanes.
- **Public transport**: you will not need buses within town. Use the train for Monopoli, Bari and other towns along the coast. Buy tickets in the Trenitalia app or at the station machines before you board, and validate paper tickets on the platform. Trenitalia
- **Boat trips**: in the warm months, small boats take visitors along the cliffs to see the sea caves from the water.
- **Cycling**: the coast road is fairly flat, and bikes and e-bikes can be rented locally, but summer traffic is heavy.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

High

The old town, the cove and the seafront are compact and walkable, with some steps and uneven stone lanes.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Moderate

The coast road is fairly flat and bikes can be rented, but summer traffic is heavy.

Driving

- **Do you need a car?** Not for Polignano itself, which is walkable and well served by trains to Bari and Monopoli. A car is very useful for the Itria Valley, Alberobello and the caves.
- **Parking**: use the paid car parks and blue-line street parking around the edge of the centre. Pay at the machines or the attendant. Yellow lines are for residents only. Spaces are hard to find on summer weekends, so arrive early.
- **Restrictions**: the old town behind the Arco Marchesale is a limited traffic zone (ZTL) with camera enforcement. Do not drive in unless your hotel has arranged a permit.

Food & drink

Seafood is the focus here. Look for crudo di mare (raw local fish and shellfish), octopus, and orecchiette pasta with turnip tops or fish sauces. Apulian street food is also easy to find: panzerotti (fried pastries filled with tomato and mozzarella), focaccia barese and taralli.

Polignano has its own coffee drink, the caffè speciale: espresso with lemon zest, sugar, cream and a dash of amaretto. It was created at the bar of the Campanella family, Il Super Mago del Gelo, near Piazza Garibaldi, which also sells gelato. Pescaria, a seafood sandwich shop that started here and is now known across Italy, has long queues in summer. For a sit-down dinner, the restaurants in the old town lanes and along the cliff terraces have the best views. Book ahead on summer weekends.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Pizza Margherita
Thin-crust pizza topped with tomato, mozzarella, and basil, invented in Naples and still best there.

DINNER

Spaghetti alla Carbonara
Pasta with egg, cured pork cheek (guanciale), pecorino cheese, and black pepper, a Roman classic.

Risotto alla Milanese
Creamy saffron-infused rice dish from Milan, often served alongside braised veal shank.

Lasagna · Lasagne al Forno
Layered baked pasta with ragu, bechamel, and cheese, a staple of Emilia-Romagna cooking.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Prosciutto and Cheese · Prosciutto e Formaggio
Cured ham paired with regional cheeses, a common antipasto plate found nationwide.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Gelato
Dense, slow-churned Italian ice cream, traditionally lower in fat and air than American-style ice cream.

Tiramisu · Tiramisù
Layered dessert of coffee-soaked ladyfingers and mascarpone cream, dusted with cocoa.

DRINKS

Espresso · Caffè
A short, strong shot of coffee drunk quickly, usually standing at a bar counter.

Wine · Vino
Italy is one of the world's largest wine producers, with regional styles from Piedmont's Barolo to Tuscany's Chianti.

Aperol Spritz
A bittersweet orange aperitif mixed with prosecco and soda water, a staple of the early-evening aperitivo.

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Safety & health

Polignano is a safe town. The main risks are crowds and the sea, not crime.

- **Crowds**: on summer weekends the old town and the cove get very busy. Keep an eye on bags and phones in crowded spots.
- **Sea and cliffs**: do not jump or dive from the cliffs unless you know the depth and the currents. The water near the cliffs gets deep quickly, and the sea can be rough when the wind blows from the north. Stay away from the foot of the cliffs, where rocks sometimes fall.
- **Sun**: there is little shade on the rocks and the pebble beach. Bring water, a hat and sun cream, and water shoes for the rocks.

History

The old town grew on a limestone spur above the sea, protected by cliffs on three sides. The main route into it on land was through Porta Vecchia, which still leads into the maze of lanes today. The ancient Roman road Via Traiana, which connected Rome to Brindisi, crossed the inlet at Lama Monachile.

In the Middle Ages Polignano was a bishop's seat, and Chiesa Matrice Santa Maria Assunta served as its cathedral. Tradition says that the relics of Saint Vitus came here by sea, and the Benedictine monks of Complesso monastico Abbazia di San Vito kept them on the coast north of town. Coastal towers such as Torre Incina were built later to watch for pirate raids.

In the 20th century the town gave Italy two famous names: the singer *Domenico Modugno*, born here in 1928, and the artist *Pino Pascali*, who grew up here. Their memory lives on in the statue on the seafront and in Museo Pino Pascali (Ex Macello).

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Italy at a glance:

CURRENCY
EUR €

EMERGENCY
112

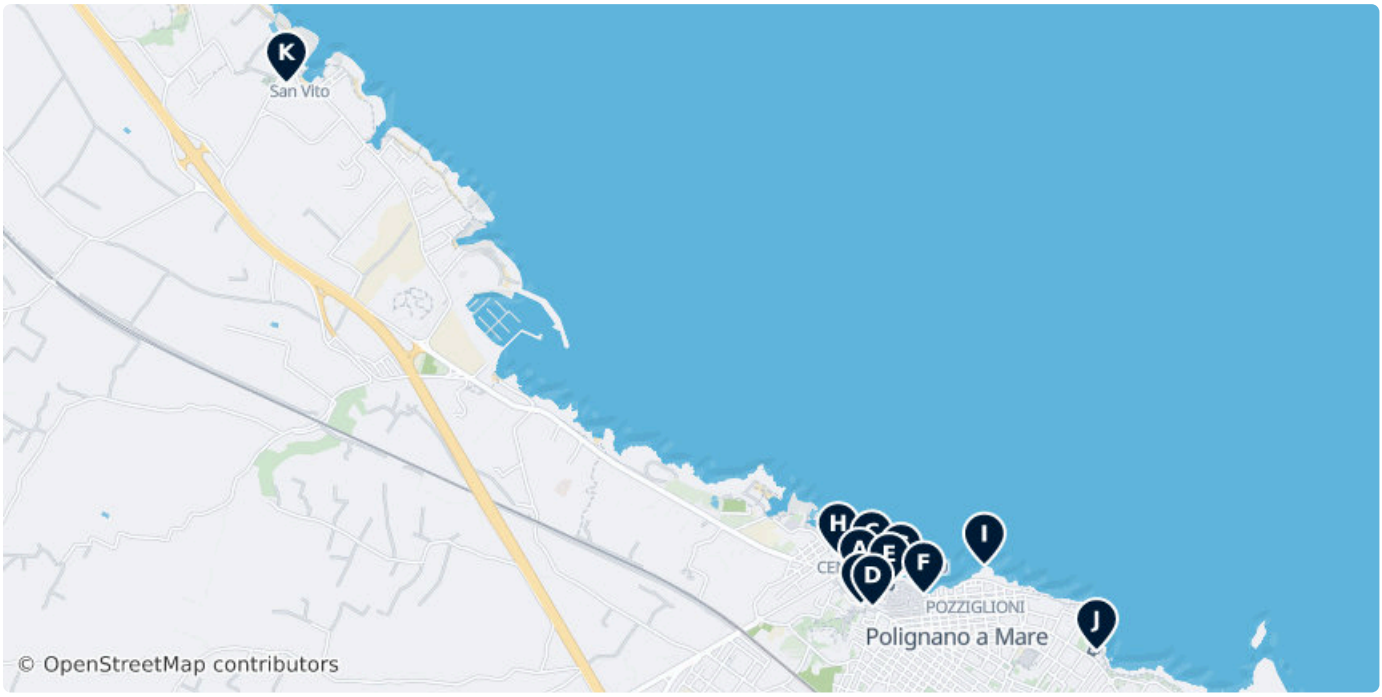
ELECTRICITY
Type C / Type F / Type L
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Italian

TAP WATER
Safe to drink

Polignano a Mare: Absolute Must-Sees

Polignano a Mare is defined by its limestone cliffs and the deep inlet of Lama Monachile. This selection covers the cove and the bridge above it, the cliff-top terraces of the old town, the famous Grotta Palazzese sea cave, the Chiesa Matrice and the statue of singer Domenico Modugno, plus the seaside Abbey of San Vito and the Pino Pascali contemporary art museum.





A Lama Monachile

A pebble beach tucked between two high limestone cliffs at the end of a deep coastal inlet, right below the old town.

13 Via Comite Fanelli, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99639, 17.21810)



B Cala Monachile dal ponte

The view from the bridge that crosses the Lama Monachile inlet, looking down on the pebble cove and out to sea.

7 Via San Vito, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99556, 17.21816)



C Balconata Lama Monachile

A stone terrace in the historic center with the classic view over Lama Monachile beach and the cliffs.

47 Via Porto, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99698, 17.21866)



D Porta Vecchia

The old arched gate that leads from Piazza Garibaldi into the historic center.

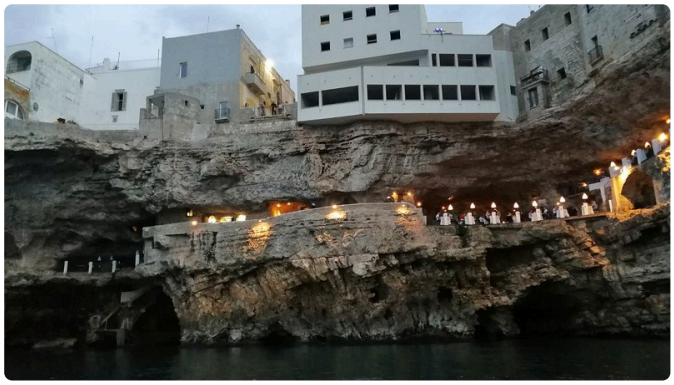
(40.99550, 17.21869)



E Chiesa Matrice Santa Maria Assunta

The mother church of the old town, with a Romanesque core and later Baroque additions.

17 Vico Caverna, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99622, 17.21944)



F Grotta Palazzese

A large sea cave under the cliffs, best known for the summer restaurant set inside its vault.

Via Tritone, 70044 Polignano a Mare BA, Italy
(40.99592, 17.22100)



G Grotta dell'Arcivescovado

A natural sea cave carved into the limestone cliffs beneath the historic center.

7 Vico Canangella, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy (40.99655, 17.21998)



H Monumento a Domenico Modugno

Bronze statue of the Polignano-born singer of 'Volare', standing with open arms on the seafront promenade.

Lungomare Domenico Modugno, 70044 Polignano a Mare BA, Italy (40.99725, 17.21713)

I Piazza Ardito

A cliff-top square at the edge of the old town with wide views of the coast and its sea caves.

Largo Grotta Ardito, 70044 Polignano a Mare BA, Italy (40.99690, 17.22374)

J Museo Pino Pascali (Ex Macello)

Contemporary art museum in the former slaughterhouse on the seafront, dedicated to the sculptor Pino Pascali, who grew up in Polignano.

46 Via Parco del Lauro, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy (40.99398, 17.22881)

museopinopascali.it



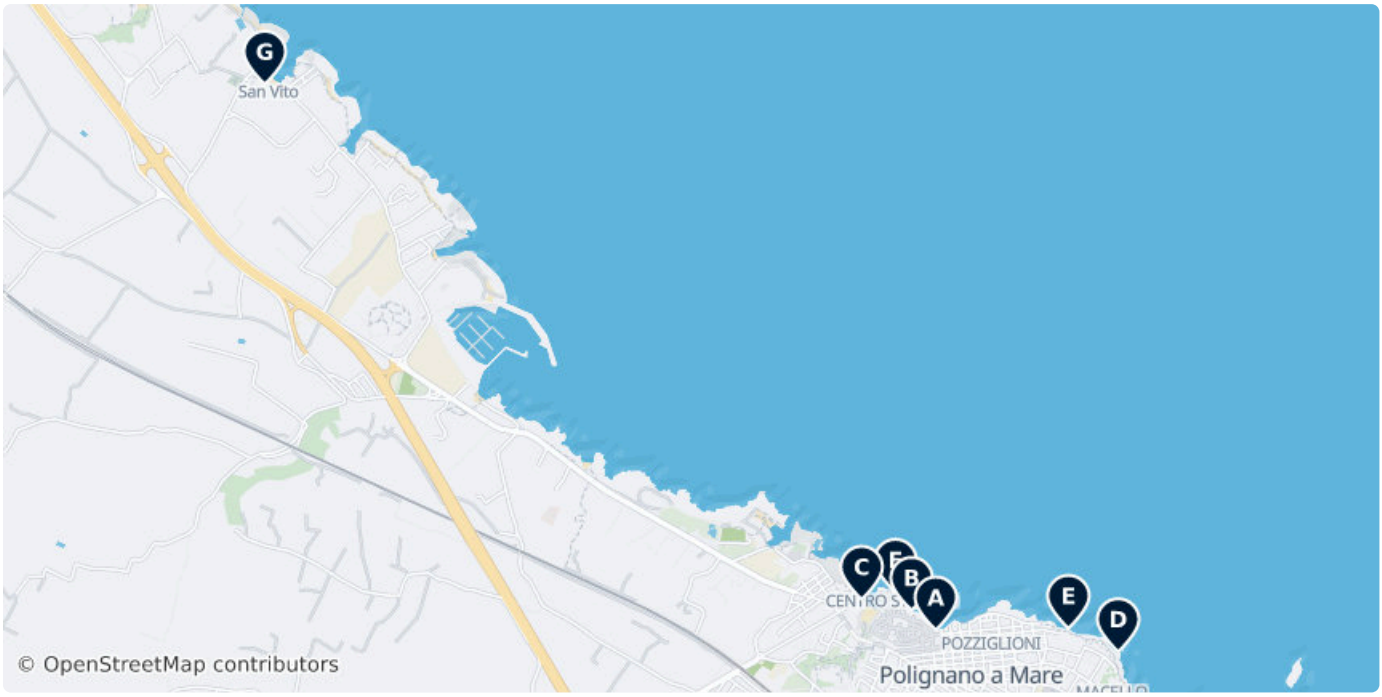
K Abbazia di San Vito

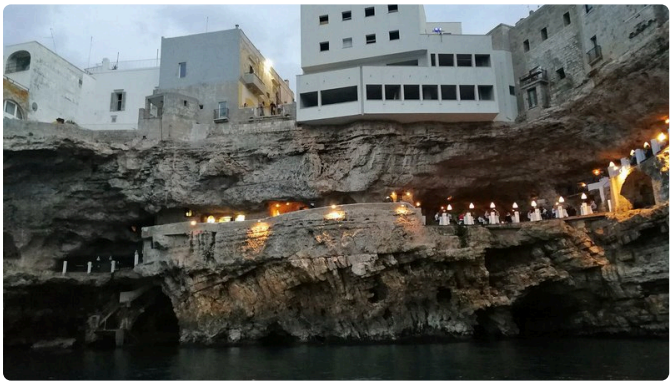
A seaside abbey complex beside a small fishing harbour, a short drive north of the town.

San Vito, 70044 Polignano a Mare BA, Italy (41.01332, 17.19220)

Spectacular Sea Caves

Polignano a Mare stands on limestone cliffs that the Adriatic has hollowed into dozens of sea caves. This selection covers the caves right under the old town, including Grotta Palazzese with its summer restaurant, and a few quieter grottoes along the coast. Most are best seen from the water on a boat trip.





A Grotta Palazzese

A large sea cave under the old town, known for the summer restaurant set inside its vault.

Via Tritone, 70044 Polignano a Mare BA, Italy
(40.99592, 17.22100)



B Grotta dell'Arcivescovado

A sea cave in the cliffs directly beneath the historic center.

7 Vico Canangella, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99655, 17.21998)



C Grotta piana - Grotta del basso porto

A low-ceilinged limestone cavern located near the old port area of Polignano.

(Unnamed Road), Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy (40.99690, 17.21786)



D Grotta delle monache

A secluded grotto along the cliffs south of the old town.

Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy (40.99523, 17.22870)

E Grotta Frascina

A natural karst formation carved into the high cliffs south of the town center.

(Unnamed Road), Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy (40.99597, 17.22660)

F Grotticella di Santo Stefano

A small natural opening in the cliffside near the Santo Stefano area of the old town.

(40.99712, 17.21929)

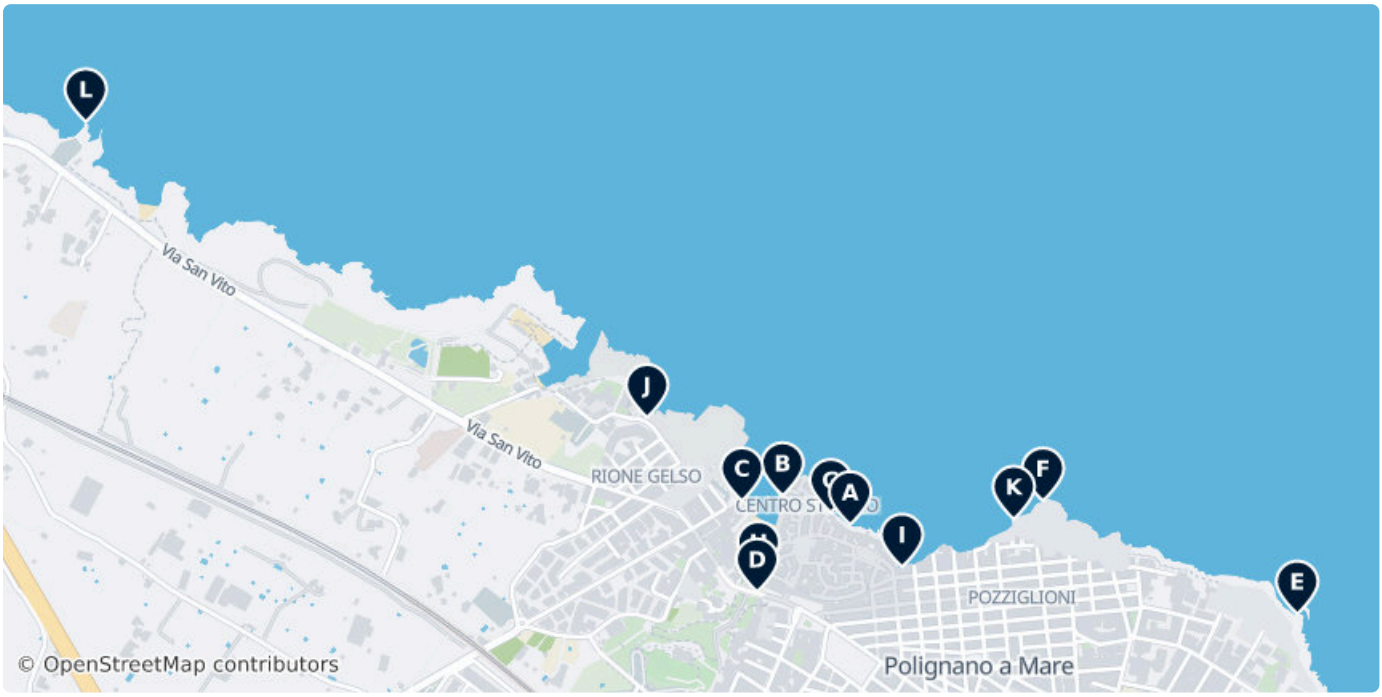
G Grotta di San Vito

A sea cave next to the seaside abbey complex of San Vito, north of the town.

(41.01332, 17.19264)

Coastal Viewpoints and Caves

Polignano a Mare is built upon 20-meter-high limestone cliffs, carved by the Adriatic Sea into a complex network of over 70 sea caves and natural arches. This selection features the town's iconic 'balconate' (balconies), including the famous vantage points overlooking the Roman-era bridge at Lama Monachile and the expansive Piazza Ardito. These locations highlight the karst geology of the Apulian coast and provide direct views of the white-washed historic center perched over the water.





A Grotta dell'Arcivescovado

Sea cave located beneath the historic center, historically linked to the Bishop's Palace.

7 Vico Canangella, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99655, 17.21998)



B Balconata Lama Monachile

Panoramic terrace offering the classic view of the white pebble beach and the cliffs of the old town.

47 Via Porto, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99698, 17.21866)



C Grotta piana - Grotta del basso porto

Shallow sea cave located near the lower harbor area, accessible by sea.

(Unnamed Road), Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99690, 17.21786)



D Cala Monachile dal ponte

Vantage point from the 15-meter-high Bourbon bridge overlooking the ancient Via Traiana and the beach below.

7 Via San Vito, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99556, 17.21816)



E Grotta delle monache

Secluded coastal sea cave named after local legends, characterized by its narrow opening.

Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy (40.99523, 17.22870)

F Piazza Ardito

Large public square and promenade serving as a primary viewpoint for the southern coastline.

Largo Grotta Ardito, 70044 Polignano a Mare BA, Italy
(40.99690, 17.22374)

G Balconata Vico Gualdella

Secluded cliffside viewing terrace located at the terminus of a narrow historic alleyway.

(40.99673, 17.21960)

H Santa Candida

Coastal viewpoint offering perspectives of the rugged limestone cliffs and the Adriatic horizon.

11 Vico Santa Candida, Polignano a Mare 70044, Italy
(40.99581, 17.21819)

I Grotta Palazzese

The largest sea cave in the area, used for banquets since the 18th century and now housing a restaurant.

(40.99592, 17.22099)

J Grottone

Large natural opening in the cliffside providing a shaded rocky platform used for swimming and views.

(40.99813, 17.21601)

K Balconata Piazza Ardito

Specific viewing platform on the edge of Piazza Ardito overlooking the sea caves to the south.

(40.99663, 17.22317)

L Arco Cala Di Luna

Natural limestone arch formation situated along the rugged coastline near Cala Paura.

(41.00248, 17.20505)

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