

A few recommendations for

Matera

Matera is the third oldest continuously inhabited city in the world! Known as the Jerusalem of Europe, it was used in 2003 to film the movie, *The Passion of the Christ* as well as 25 other movies throughout the years. The beautiful cave dwellings known as sassi are 9000 years old! Think about it... It has been continually inhabited since 7,000 years before Christ.

Matera is built on the side of a gorge with yellowish-white stone structures piled on top of each other like a creative child with building blocks. Narrow staircases connect small houses with little piazzas and churches, ranging from convents to cathedrals. Matera has 180 churches for 60,000 residents.

Until as recently as 40 years ago, the Sassi was a condemned hellhole. After World War II, residents lived up to 12 in a cave dug into the tufa (in English, tuff, a light, porous rock formed by consolidation of volcanic ash). They had no running water or

electricity. A pot under the bed was the toilet. They shared their rooms with their goats and chickens, and disease was rampant.

The government condemned the Sassi in the 1950s, but in the early '80s allowed people to return if they refurbished the homes with their own money.

Here's a walking tour I've made for you to follow which will allow you to get a good glimpse and understanding of Matera.

Each number below represents a place you can put into google maps. Choose walking on your map. Hopefully you already downloaded your map in case the reception is bad. This itinerary has 2 miles of walking, not including the hike to the Belvedere viewpoint. With the view point, the total will be 4 to 5 miles. It is best to visit Matera early in the morning or late in the afternoon if possible.

1. **Parcheggio piazza cesare Firrao, Piazza Cesare Firrao, 75100 Matera MT, Italy**

- Try this parking lot. It's a ten minute walk from your first destination and it's not in the ZTL zone. When you pull it up, it will look like this picture. There is also street parking in the area, but I'm not sure of the rules.



2. **Casa Noha, Recinto Cavone, 9, 75100 Matera MT, Italy**

- Walk straight to this little museum that will explain Matera in interesting detail. Open 10AM to 7PM daily, 6 euro entry fee, visit takes 30 minutes or less.

3. **Oi Mari, Via Fiorentini, 66, 75100 Matera MT, Italy**

- I ate at Oi Mari when visiting Matera and had such good pizza and table wine! However, there are lots of little places to eat... pick whatever looks good to you.

4. **Ponte Tibetano della Gravina, Via Madonna delle Virtù, 27, 75100 Matera MT, Italy**

- Ponte means bridge in Italian. The name translates, Tibetan style bridge of the ravine. Walk to this bridge to get the most amazing views of Matera. This is a must-do! Another must-do (if possible) is taking the short trail to Belvedere. See number 5.

5. **Belvedere Murgia Timone, Contrada Murgia Timone, 75100 Matera MT, Italy**

- Belvedere Murgia Timone is a view point to see Matera in all her glory. Follow signs for trail **406** as you walk from the Tibetan bridge to the viewpoint. You can also, most likely, load it on your phone. As you walk around, look for some of the churches built into the rocks. There are more than 100! Bring water! This hike is a little over 2 miles and is best done early in the morning or late in the afternoon.

6. **Locanda San Martino Thermae, Via Fiorentini, Matera, Province of Matera, Italy**

- Need to cool off and relax? This is a total splurge, but something to think about. Stop by Hotel Locanda San Marino and see if they have any spots available for the spa. For about 25 euro you can swim in a beautiful, underground, cave pool. They also offer massages and treatments. If you think you want to do this, you can contact the hotel ahead of your visit and reserve space, otherwise, just drop by and see if you can take a swim. You'll need a swimsuit (and hair ties for women).

7. **Parcheggio piazza cesare Firrao, Piazza Cesare Firrao, 75100 Matera MT, Italy**

- Ready to head back to your car? This is the address. Or perhaps you'd like a gelato? Hope you enjoyed Matera!