The Magic of Puglia
Pierpaolo Paterno

Robert: Yeah. I was once on assignment to Greece and I had to go through Bari to get to Brindisi. I was looking out, it looked like pretty country. So I got off the train and stayed a few days.
Francesca: You got off the train because it looked pretty?
Robert: Yeah, I did.

BARI – As the freeport of hospitality and bridge for the commercial and cultural exchanges between Western and Eastern Europe, Bari will host the Women's volleyball World Championship, the most important sport and tourist event of its last 25 years of Bari’s history, from September 23 to October 5. From the Soccer World Cup in 1990 to the Men’s volleyball World League in 2014, time will slow down and then bring us back to the St. Nicholas stadium - named after the saint who has protected the city for a thousand years -, to the Palaflorio, the temple of International Volleyball during these two weeks of tournament. An opportunity to dive, this time in a new net that is no longer the net of a football goal or the one knitted by fishermen of the Levantine city, but it is the net that stands in the middle of the Palaflorio court. This arena, which can hold 5000 people, is located in the heart of Japigia, on the outskirts of Bari (Southern Italy's third largest city after Naples and Palermo).

The capital is the center from which to start an enchanting journey to discover the seven wonders of the Land of Bari.

Starting from the South the first wonder, Polignano: a small fishing village perched on the steep cliff is now one of the most visited and appreciated for its uniqueness; among its lanes the most famous song in the world was written: "Volare".

Continuing west inland Alberobello, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with its many trulli, which were traditional farm houses made of stone, dating back to the Bronze Age with the characteristic shape of an inverted cone.

North of Alberobello, Castellana Grotte opens its doors, especially its "gorges" of caves and underground caverns stretching for about three kilometers and 330 meters below the sea level. Impressive limestone formations - stalactites and stalagmites - create elegant forms that seem to dance on the sides of the tourist route resembling the deep darkness of Dante's Hell.

"And then we went out to see the stars," Bari, the center of the region, where we can see the Romanesque style of the "old town", the Cathedral and the Basilica of St. Nicholas, as well as the monumental Norman-Swabian castle, the walls and the fortress. Not to miss are the many palaces of the Murat district and the Waterfront, which evidence the vividness of the city during the 19th and 20th centuries.
Along the Adriatic coast, heading north, Bisceglie and Trani host evidence of ancient times.

**Bisceglie** first shows the people’s presence in this land since the Bronze Age: the Dolmen of Chianca or "of Bisceglie" is a prehistoric UNESCO Heritage site.

**Trani**, instead, witnesses the famous openness of the Apulian people who are always ready to welcome others. The Cathedral of St. Nicholas the Pilgrim, overlooking the Adriatic sea, is a perfect example of Apulian Romanesque architecture, with strong influences of Arab architecture, dating back to the eleventh century; even then this land was "the gateway to the East."

Finally, heading inward, the famous **Castel del Monte** rises majestically on a desolate hill surrounded by lush vegetation. The structure, typically octagonal with eight octagonal towers, was commissioned and built by Frederick II of Swabia in the XIII century. This is the final UNESCO monument among these 7 wonders found in a small piece of land that spans just 90 km long and 40 km wide.

**GOING INTO HISTORY -** Bari and Apulia attract visitors both for the Romanesque churches, with their charming simplicity, and for the baroque, with their majestic decorations. There are innumerable bastions of story anthologies in the amphitheatres, in the castles, fortresses and fortifications. Not to leave out the vast literature of archaeological sites, with the possibility of admiring prehistoric ruins. Dolmens and menhirs particularly stand out. Start by following the footprints of archaic animals and the extraordinary 'walk the dinosaurs' in the park of Alta Murgia, until being distracted by the pottery, whistles, stone pieces, wood, papier-mâché.

This is the "good wax" Bari and Puglia special magic surrounded by sand dunes that frame crystalline seas. While in the pine forests listening to the chirping of cicadas and crickets singing evening, between long days at the beach, endless nights under the stars and the exultation of atmosphere...

**TIP CITY, CHANGING APULIA** - Bari is like a diamond that shines on the Adriatic coast, a junction connecting the eight hundred miles of coastline with beaches and breathtaking cliffs. From Gargano to Salento, it is the center of gravity in a small land between the Adriatic and Ionian seas. Its boundaries wrap themselves around the whitewashed villages, ideal places to take walks in a warm, full of grace and refreshing for the soul.
“The land that changes colors” offers opportunities for hiking, trekking in the Murgia area or in the ravines of the Taranto area, and visits to Salento or the Foresta Umbra. On the top of that, a rich calendar of festivals, processions and religious ceremonies, pageants, concerts and pizzica music. Gastronomy is centered on the delicacies of the land and sea and is rooted in peasant tradition and in the mastery of bakers and ice cream makers. Wine is consumed more than oil - extra virgin olive oil is the most prominent – as it is a must to visit the wine tours scattered in every corner of the region.

On one hand, the nature, the history, traditions and delicious food and wine of a province and region with few equals in the peninsular territory. On the other hand, the World Championship, with Japan, Belgium, Azerbaijan, China, Cuba and Puerto Rico in the first round, together with Italy, USA, Netherlands in the second stage.