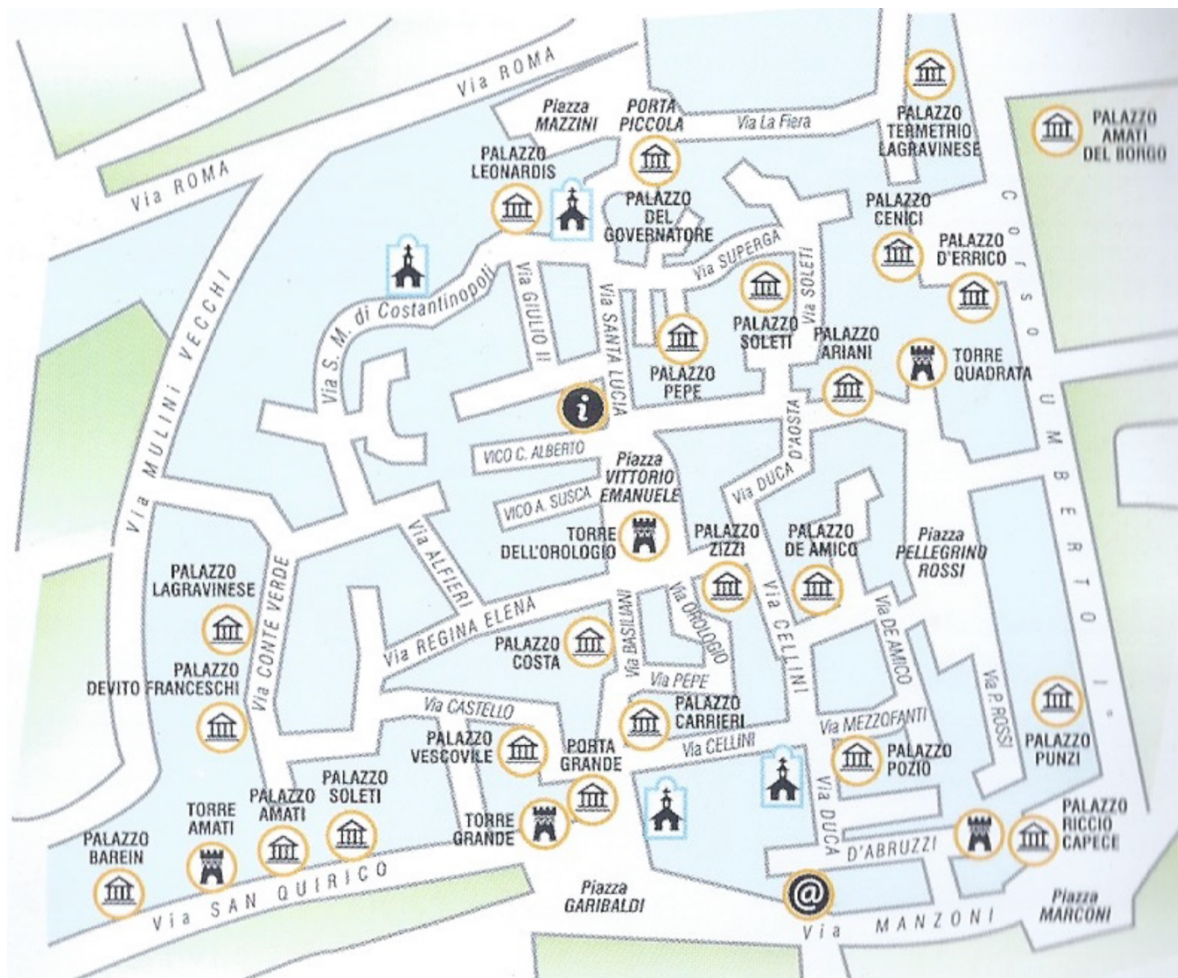


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MAP OF THE OLD TOWN



MAIN AIM OF THIS GUIDE

Two itineraries of the old town are shown - they start from opposite points but they merge into a single itinerary from via Superga onwards. In this way there is no risk of getting lost in the alleys or going along the same itinerary again.

The two itineraries wind along the streets and alleys of Cisternino, which are fragrant with lime and cleanliness, in a sort of ideal path through times. Here each stone recalls the voices, the exertions and the sufferings of ingenious and hard-working people who were able to hand down their works of spontaneous art to posterity.

The starting point for visitors arriving from south-east is the so-called 'Porta Grande', while from north-west is the so-called 'Porta Piccola' or 'Porta S. Maria'.

(An asterisk indicates the places and monuments which are worth while visiting)

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A SHORT HISTORICAL OUTLINE

A prehistoric settlement of inhabitants in the surrounding is testified by the discovery of housing foundations, pottery fragments and lithic finds (stones used as domestic containers). Moreover, the discovery of some Roman coins with the effigy of Emperor Vespasian testifies Roman Rule, too.

The first record in which *Cisterninum* is mentioned as 'Casale' (Hamlet — a residential complex in ancient times) goes back to 1180: it is represented by a Papal bull with which civil government and administration were awarded to the Bishop of Monopoli.

The three extant towers testify the violent rule of the successive foreign powers Cisternino and the entire Puglia had to be subjugated to: the Normans, the Swabians, the French and the Spanish. In the 19th century, it was under the rule of the Austrians and the Piedmontese. Cisternino has been a free municipality since Italian unification (1861).

The coat of arms features a shield with red and yellow stripes and a crown, with a pastoral staff in the centre and two roses on the sides. It represents the temporal and religious power which were both in the hands of the count-bishop of Monopoli.

NAME

The Legendary Hypothesis

According to the seventeenth century scholar Fra Tommaso Angiulli two heroes, who had survived the destruction of Troy — Diomedes and Sturnoi - landed on the coast of Puglia: the first founded Brindisi, the second founded Ostuni (Sturnum). As Cisternino was situated beyond Ostuni, it was originally called *cis-Sturnum*, which later changed into the present name.

The Second Hypothesis

Another hypothesis is that the name might come from 'cisterna', as a cistern was used during Middle Ages to collect rainwater in times of drought.

Some testimonies have handed down that there was a cistern near 'Porta Grande' until the thirties of the last century. However, there is no certainty about its origin.

Historical testimonies of the settlement

The Egyptian historian and geographer Ptolemy (178 A.D.) and Pliny the Elder (79 A.D.) mention this land in their works. The land coincides with the outer reaches of the Murge.

Altitude

About 394 m above sea level

POPULATION

About 12,000, with all hamlets included (Casalini, Caranna, Sisto, Marinelli and numerous inhabited small districts)

TOPONYMY

The Old Town is formed by four quarters: Bére vecchjie, Scheléd, l'Isule, 'U Pandéne.

The fifth quarter is called '*U Burje*': it is situated out of the walls and it includes Corso Umberto I.

ITINERARY A

Porta Grande (Piazza Garibaldi) - Via Castello - Via Conte Verde - Via S. Maria di Costantinopoli - Via S. Lucia - Porta S. Maria (porta piccola) - Via Superga - Via Soleti - Via Tarantini - Piazza Pellegrino Rossi - Corso Umberto I Piazza G. Marconi - Arco nelle mura - Via Duca degli Abruzzi - Via Mezzofanti - Arco della fontana - Via De Amico - Via Cellini - Arco per la Piazza Vittorio Emanuele III - Via Basilian' or Vicolo dell'orologio — CHIESA MATRICE (Mother Church)

ITINERARY B

Porta Piccola (Piazza Giuseppe Mazzini)

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PIAZZA GARIBALDI

'Porta Grande' is the name given to the square between the church and the opposite massive tower. Actually, one of the entry gates to the town started right here. The tower collapsed in the mid 1800s and, as its arch was connected with the tower, the Apulian-Romanesque façade of the church was dragged in the collapse, too (pronaos with side lions). After the collapse, only the façade of the church was rebuilt, as gates no longer had a protective function with the introduction of firearms. At the same time, a church courtyard was created. The present façade is in neoclassical style, while the interior has remained almost intact.

TORRE GRANDE

It was part of the medieval defence system. Unlike the other towers - some of which still extant - which were built by the various rulers over the centuries, its origin is likely to date back to the twelfth century (or perhaps even before). The tower was repeatedly strengthened and reinforced during the various Norman-Swabian and Angevin dominations (fourteenth century). Various plaques can be seen in the interior: they commemorate the governors who lived there and who were delegated by the count-bishop of Monopoly to exercise civil, administrative and criminal powers. The statue of St. Nicholas, who is the patron saint of Cisternino, dominates the massive tower.

VIA CASTELLO

There is no castle, but the name might derive from the Latin term 'castellum', which referred to fortified settlements during the Middle Ages.

PALAZZO VESCOVILE (THE BISHOP'S PALACE)

It was the palace used by the count-bishop during his pastoral visits. Nowadays only the exterior walls have remained together with some parts on the ground floor and a magnificent Renaissance façade.

- * The trabeation and the pediment are laterally supported by two half columns which rest on an elevated plinth. The round arch is decorated with lateral roses and the count-bishop's coat of arms is placed on the keystone of the arch. The palace was erected on behest of Fra. Ottaviano Preconio, who was then the count-bishop. Some other count-bishops' coats of arms are placed higher up.

Historical Information

According to historical documents, the Bishop O. Preconio was a person of true Christian charity. Actually, he did his utmost and obtained from the Emperor Charles V that jails, which until then consisted of pits dug in the ground, were replaced by masonry prisons.

CASERMA VECCHIA (THE OLD BARRACKS)

This massive building incorporated in the town walls was probably built in the 17th century and It was used as a police station until a few years ago.

Just ahead, top left, a rustic loggia, like others in other alleys, gave the possibility of appearing at the window and of hanging out laundry. Here you can see the back entrance to Palazzo Amati (of which you can admire the south facade from Via S. Quirico).

Just ahead, there is a plaque announcing the entrance to the heart of the district called:

BÉRE VÈCCHJE (BARI - OLD TOWN)

We do not know where the name comes from. Perhaps it was derived from a vernacular deformation of another word or maybe it was given to the town when it marked the border with Bari, to which it was subjected.

- * The floor is made of 'chianche' (vernacular word) obtained from local quarries; the white walls are whitewashed and every family takes care of the cleaning by renewing the whiteness.

VIA CONTE VERDE

It is a narrow street characterized by buildings dating back to the 15th and 16th century or perhaps even earlier. The verticality used in house building was due to the need for space saving since the built-up area was founded within the walls. During the day, the inhabitants of the hamlet used to work in the countryside, where they built small supporting buildings called "lamie". At sunset, they went back within the walls as it was safer. The ground floor premises were used as warehouses or stables; the upper part as a shelter; but some rooms were adapted for family use even at ground level. Today a lot of premises have been modernized and used as dwelling-houses or for other uses.

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The name probably dates back to the population's gratitude to Amedeo 6th Duke of Aosta and Count of Savoy (14th century): he had fought the Saracens, who had brought ruin and death both on the coast and inland with their raids. He used to wear green clothes during tournaments as an auspicious colour of victory and the nickname comes from this custom.

At the end of the path the road forks. On the left there is an arch-passage leading into a room that was once the home of a family and where you can see the interior of a house obtained from the thickness of the old walls, with a large fireplace and some shelves for supporting tools. The adjoining room was probably also used. The outer wall of the house was opened a few decades ago to be used as a gateway to the old town for those coming from outside the walls.

If you take to the previous street again you get into via Santa Maria of Costantinople. On the other side there is via Vittorio Alfieri (a Piedmontese poet - 1749-1803), leading to via Regina Elena of Savoy (princess Petrovic of Montenegro - 1873-1953, wife of King Vittorio Emanuele III). The alley leads to the main square called Piazza Vittorio Emanuele.

Via S. Maria of Constantinople begins in the district called "Scheledde" (tiny stair). The name probably derives from the adoration of the Byzantine Madonna practiced by Basilian monks who had fled from Turkey and had sought refuge in our land because of the persecution ordered by Leo the Saurian, who was a Byzantine Emperor (8th century).

SCHELEDDE

The district called "Scheledde" encompasses several courtyards that served to facilitate mutual aid which was necessary in times when Cisternino was far away from bigger inhabited places. Furthermore, as family ties were frequent, there was an exchange of practical and emotional help. Nearby on the right there is a deep arch that leads to another courtyard.

- * Under the arch on the facade to the right of the vault you can notice the remnants of a painting of Madonna and Child with the Byzantine influence which was frequent at the time.

If you go on you will find a massive square tower of Swabian origin on the left. Nowadays it is almost unrecognizable as it has been transformed into a dwelling-house. It was one of the six towers that were interspersed by the walls and that surrounded the old town. At this point the street takes a sharp turn.

- * On the left wall you can see a coat of arms of a noble residence. A little further to the right there is a pretty courtyard and then on the left a massive little loggia, which is lightened by the artistic notch of the stone into a slotted rib and stylized flowers of refined elegance. They were uncovered after the removal of layers of lime.
- * Top front above the underpass, there is a French door with an artistically carved frame. Flowers and flourishes of baroque influence had the function of relieving the massive construction that rests above the arch of the Madonna of the carpenter. The place is very nice: flowers and plants bear witness to the love and pride of the people for their environment.

ARCH MONSERRAT

The name comes from the image of the Madonna and Child that recalls the famous French shrine. It is also known as the Madonna of the carpenter because the Infant Jesus holds a cutter in his little hand which was a tool certainly used by St. Joseph and probably by the Infant Jesus, too.

- * The tender and sweet expression of the Madonna seems to be veiled in melancholy and it contrasts with the cheerful little face of the Infant Jesus. The painting on wooden board dates back to the eighteenth century. The recent restoration emphasizes the harmony of colors and the expressiveness of the figures.
- * On the right beyond the arch you can see the entitling of the street to Julius II. It probably testifies the historical period of construction. Perhaps the dedication was placed shortly after the death of the Warrior Pope, born Giuliano della Rovere, who commissioned Michelangelo to paint the Sistine Chapel.

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VIA SANTA LUCIA

The street leads to via S. Lucia, which takes its name after the small church dating back to the eighteenth century. In the lunette above the door you can see the image of Saint Lucy in a painting by Virgilio Malni. The interior is constituted by a single small room; the vertical momentum of the building is supported by elegant and slender pillars, which support the ribbed stone vaults by means of beautiful capitals - pillars protruding from the supporting walls. The notable verticality suggests that it was intended as a charming and inspiring spiritual element rather than for reasons of space. The altar was originally situated in the hemisphere section; some remains of frescoes representing Christ Blessing and an angel are still visible.

PORTA SANTA MARIA (Saint Mary Gate)

It is commonly called "Porta piccola" (small gate) to be distinguished from the Porta Grande (large gate) which used to close the opposite end of the town within the walls, near the civic tower. It marks the entrance to the main street that runs through the central square and divides the town into two definite parts. The massive and simple construction of the gate highlights the contrast with the elegant palace nearby, which was the home of the ancient rulers.

PALAZZO DEL GOVERNATORE (The Governor's Palace)

Since 1180 onwards, following the Papal bull that had decreed their right and except for some brief periods, the town was ruled by the delegates of the Bishop of Monopoli, who had sovereign rights over the territory. Before this beautiful palace was built in the sixteenth century, the governors used to live in the great tower.

- * The palace has three levels: at the top of the portal there is the coat of arms of one of the Governors (probably Benedict Zappuilo); the entrance is a large round arch opening with two columns at the sides formed by embossed stones with diamond processing; the two upper vertical openings, on the first and second floor, are round arches and they serve as a skylight. At the sides they are limited by fluted columns with carved capitals; the inner and outer arch is finished with panels in embossed flowers. In the last arcade you can see two small half columns that contribute to create a harmonious whole.
- * Opposite the governor's palace there is a beautiful building with a stone staircase, a pretty loggia and a sloping roof.

From Via S. Lucia, through an arch, you can enter via Superga, an alley that leads to the Rione Isola. In ancient times the town was detached from the context and it was later joined to it by buildings.

From here onwards the two itineraries become a single path.

VIA SUPERGA

The street commemorates the Superga air disaster of the entire Torino football team which occurred in 1949. On the left, after a few meters, there is the narrowest alley in the town, leading to a delightful courtyard. As already said, it is very common to find small courtyards which are used for social relations, mutual aid and for the management of family needs.

- * On the right there is a short vico where a plaque commemorates the noble Pepe family whom Ignazio Ciaia came from on his mother's descent. He was an eminent jurist, a politician, a convinced patriot; he was executed in Naples after the fall of the Neapolitan Republic.

An underpass, in which there were some stone rooms used for storage and stables, leads into a square where Via Soleti begins.

VIA SOLETI

The street was dedicated to the lords James and Anthony Soleti to remember their commitment to improve the structures of the town and the living conditions of the inhabitants over the centuries when the population lived in poverty, as the rocky terrain could not meet the essential needs of the inhabitants.

- * On the left you can see Palazzo Cenci, after the name of a noble and extinct family. The arched entrance is quite massive and is enhanced by a frame of sculpted panels with different motifs; It was surmounted by a coat of arms that was stolen some years ago. On the sides there are two vases with stone flowers. The carved stone portal is a fine example of Baroque style which can be found in the town, while the wooden door is of recent workmanship. The other exit of the building, where once there were the stables and warehouses, opens in Corso Umberto and it is enriched with a large prospect in Baroque style, long wrought-iron balconies and a courtyard. In the facade of the opposite building you can see some big supports rounded to three dentils from

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which the top of the building widens up to the terrace. These supports also have an ornamental function and through empty and filled intervals they break off the massive construction.

- * Further to the right there is another main building of the same period, with iron on the initials of the last defunct owner. The portal, bordered by raised stones, is closed by a key-shaped flower. A series of columns terminate on the terrace. Note the verticality of the houses

VIA TARANTINI

The itinerary leads into the next alley, via Tarantini (the name does not come from the city of Taranto, but from some Taranto families who sought refuge here during WW II).

The verticality of the buildings is clearer in this short street. If you turn left, through the underpass you get into a pretty little square, in the district `U Pantén.

- * In the underpass, in a pretty dusty and faded niche, you can admire a Madonna dressed in nineteenth-century style, which denotes the ancient devotion of this town to the Virgin Mary

RIONE PANTANO: `U Pantén

The district is called `U Pantén because in the past the slope of the terrain favoured the stagnation of rainwater and the formation of mud, as it was not paved.

PIAZZA PELLEGRINO ROSSI

Historical information - The square is dedicated to the jurist Pellegrino Rossi. He was a politician and the Prime Minister of Pope Pius IX during the Italian Risorgimento. He was killed by the extremist called Ciceruacchio, who saw in him an enemy of Italian unification.

- * Facing north, you can see a still existing Swabian tower with a square shape. The supporting dentils protrude from the last part of the tower and repeat a recurrent and supporting pattern over the centuries. The buildings situated between the two arched underpasses, which were carved into the walls and that open at both ends of the square, were obtained by exploiting the stone blocks of the walls and by incorporating them. This outside-the-wall area was built long after the heart of the town, when the walls were no longer needed as a defense. The "chianche" paving the square are the original ones and they were retained even after the twentieth-century sewer works.

The opposite high arch, which opens among the more recent buildings, leads to Corso Umberto I. It is part of the second outside-the-wall district called U BURIE, il Borgo.

IL BORGO

This district begins just before the crossing where there is the Church of St. Cataldo. The buildings, while preserving the same spontaneous style as the centre, were built much later, between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some buildings were even built in more recent years.

CHIESA DI S. CATALDO (St. Cataldo Church)

It was built in the eighteenth century. The facade is divided into three blocks, with lighting coming from its sinuous architecture and with the statue of the saint inserted at the top. The interior reveals the baroque style in its full expression which, though very elaborate, does not diminish the refinement and the fascinating whiteness of the altars (1789). The slender pillars with artistically carved capitals, the little angels and the various ornaments contribute to make it a pleasant and harmonious church. Under the small right aisle, there are four wooden statues of exquisite workmanship representing moments of the stations of the Cross.

(Before you take Corso Umberto I, another corner can be explored: via La Fiera - a short street where once the fair was held during the holy festival of the "Bominella" (little girl)' on 8th September, the Nativity of Mary. On the left, beyond the great underpass-vault, you can see the Lagravinese Palace whose coat of arms adorns the handsome oak portal. The noble family gave birth to two Founding Fathers: Pasquale and Nicola. The buildings that prolong the Governor's Palace, always in via La Fiera, is the consequence of the enclosing walls; opposite there are some eighteenth and nineteenth-century elegant buildings.

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CORSO UMBERTO I (il Borgo)

If you follow the underpass again, you turn into Corso Umberto I.

Historical information - Umberto, son of Vittorio Emanuele II (1844-1900) the first king of Italy, was crowned king in 1878. His reign was brief: he was killed by an anarchist in 1900.

The main street is lined with buildings dating back to various periods. Some date back to the eighteenth century, others even earlier.

- * Halfway, you can admire two elegant houses which face each other and are very similar in their decors. Although a larger column, on the right, is dated 1507, they were influenced by the new trend of the next century, the Baroque style.
- * Two shells decorate the sides; they reveal the religious character of the inhabitants, as the shell is a symbol of baptism.

Historical information - The first Christian priests used shells to sprinkle water on the baptized. The same significant and ornamental design can be found in the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament in the Mother Church.

At the end of the main street there is the little piazza Marconi.

PIAZZA G. MARCONI (G. Marconi's Square)

Historical information - Guglielmo Marconi (1874-1937) was a scientist, a physicist and an inventor known for his pioneering work on long-distance radio transmissions, wireless communications and other inventions. He won the Nobel Prize in 1909.

The small square overlooks the charming Itria Valley. From the parapet you can see the valley and in the distance the towns of Martina Franca, Locorotondo and Ceglie Messapica.

CHIESA DI CRISTO O CHIESA NUOVA (Christ's Church or New Church)

This nice church was built in 1860. The facade presents a simple neoclassical style, typical of the tendency of the late nineteenth century. The interior consists in a large chapel topped by a rounded dome. It is characterized by a simple, yet elegant, simplicity.

- * You can see some papier-mâché statues of art from Lecce of the nineteenth century and a crucifix of the mid-twentieth century.

TORRE DEI VENTI (Tower of the Winds)

The North of the square is dominated by the Tower of the Winds or Capece Tower (the former owners' family). The massive roundness testifies its Angevin origin (14th century). Palazzo Capece is next to the tower with a beautiful terrace bordered by elaborate columns and an important Baroque-style portal (17th century). Next to the tower there are a few stairs leading to an opening that, through the walls, leads back to the old town. The depth of the gate gives an idea of the consistency of the ancient walls.

VIA DUCA DEGLI ABRUZZI

Historical information - Luigi Amedeo of Savoy (1898-1944) was an explorer of the collateral line of the rulers, Duke of Abruzzi. He was viceroy of Ethiopia at the time of Italian colonialism. He died a prisoner of the British during the World War II.

It is a narrow and shady street where you still can see the old tiled chianchie. It is bordered by massive seventeenth century buildings.

- * On the left, a few meters from the end, there is a mask, representing a small human figure sculpture that receives the flow out of the rain from the terrace; It is not the only example with this function.

VIA MEZZOFANTI

To the right there is a short street that ends, after a wide and low underpass, to the arch called of the fountain, which communicates with P. Rossi square.

Historical information - The street was named after a cardinal from Bologna: he was a polyglot (he knew 55 languages) and probably lived in the eighteenth century. The reason of the dedication is unknown.

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VIA GAETANO DE AMICO

It is a short but picturesque street characterized by simple and charming buildings, which have never been renovated with all those changes that often alter their historical authenticity. The street was dedicated to a local notary of exemplary honesty (1780-1808). The street leads to the right into via Benvenuto Cellini (1500-1571), who was a goldsmith, a sculptor and a Florentine writer. Then, through an underpass, on the left you enter Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II.

- * The facade of the last house on the right shows the date of construction of the massive body on the corner (1626). The three words - "Iesus et Maria" - represent a dedication that testifies to the faith of the ancient owners. In the corner there are a few decorative masks.
- * The masks with their different expressions and sometimes with a naughty grin, had a threefold function: they were used with a decorative function, against the evil eye and as a rain drainage channel.

PIAZZA VITTORIO EMANUELE II

The square, which is the heart of the old town, can be called "the living room" of Cisternino because all the meetings and the political, social and cultural events of the town are held right here. Some buildings of the 1960s unfortunately spoil the harmony of the square.

- * You can see a pretty little loggia on the corner of Via S. Lucia and the clock tower dating back to the nineteenth century.

VIA BASILIANI

The short street recalls the Basilian monks, who probably landed here, as well as in many other parts of southern Italy. They fled from the Byzantine Empire because they were persecuted by Leo the Isaurian in the eighth century. The street leads to the Mother Church and to the oldest tower.

CHIESA DI SAN NICOLA OR CHIESA MADRE (Mother Church)

It was built between the twelfth and the thirteenth century on what is now the hypogeum, the remains of which can still be visited. It is located on the hill once known as "the forks", the highest point of the town and where maybe death sentences used to be executed. The present simple façade in neo-classical style replaced the previous Apulian Romanesque style in the nineteenth century. It was badly damaged by the fall of the big door. The top is flanked by two stone statues: the Immaculate Conception and Mary Magdalene.

The Interior

The Latin cross plan is composed of three naves. The round arches mark the way towards the apse, towards the Crucifixion of Jesus.

- * The columns rest on a square plinth carved with worn-out stone vegetal motifs. They have a cylindrical form and support some capitals of composite style, between the Ionic and the Corinthian style. They are inlaid with different motifs and they give rise to the arches supporting the walls that reach the wooden ceiling trusses. The last arch on both sides rests on a columnar bundle formed by a half column and pillars. The naves end in the transept which has different stylistic characteristics from the Romanesque body. Actually, the last part was built years later, after a long interruption of the works, because of the threat represented by the Hungarian armies in transit towards Naples.
- * The pointed-end arches of the transept and the rib vaults details clearly show the influence of the Gothic style which replaced the Romanesque style. The side arches instead retain the Romanesque round arch and are enriched by three bands of ledge stone. The contrast between the rough stone and the whiteness of the upper wall is very beautiful.

The Right Nave

To the right of the portal, there is the first chapel dedicated to Our Lady of the Rosary, whose present structure is not the original one. It was built in a simple and unadorned way in the fourteenth century and it was used as a stopping point by the pilgrims travelling to the Salento sanctuaries, in particular that of Santa Maria de Finibus Terrae. It was subjected to renovation works to thank the Madonna after the battle of Lepanto, which was fought against the Saracens (1571). However, the present structure was the consequence of subsequent works which show the Baroque influence in every detail.

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- * In the centre of the half altar there is a large canvas by an unknown artist. It depicts the Virgin of the Rosary with the Child Jesus, with St. Dominic and St. Catherine worshipping him. The mysteries of the Rosary in 15 squares represent the setting: it is a seventeenth-century work which can be considered contemporary with the painting of the sanctuary of Our Lady of Pompei for their relevant similarities. At the sides you can see St. Dominic and St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, crowned with roses. To the right of the altar there is a small niche between two angels; above the niche there is a small sculpture representing the bust of the dead Jesus. The intense suffering expression (*imago pietatis*) excites and moves as it is highly expressive. The small sculpture is supported by three bars, a symbol of the Trinity which is assumed to be a work by Stefano from Putignano. The baptismal font is a sixteenth-century work. The left half altar ending with the head of Christ "Pantocrator" is very harmonious.

If you go over you can admire a sculptural jewel, a work by the famous sixteenth-century artist Andrea from Putignano, who left his mark all over Apulia: the Madonna of the Goldfinch. The Madonna, with a sweet and sad expression, is holding Jesus in one hand who is holding in his turn a bird while pointing at the Holy Trinity with the other little hand. The set is a masterpiece of pure harmony as you can see from the folds of her dress and the perfect proportions, from the facial expressions to the side ornaments. At the sides there are the two client priests of the work, the Longo brothers. The relief is between two pilasters with foliage working; at the top of the two sides there are two fish holding an acanthus leaf with their mouth. Two more dolphins and two cherubs are holding up the emblem of the Longo family, of Neapolitan origin. It was once painted in colour.

Below, you can see a statement in Latin and the work date (1517). This work of art has always collected the admiration of art critics and connoisseurs.

- * The bird in the hand of Jesus may not be a goldfinch, but a sparrow or any kind of bird: it represents a fragile and helpless creature, symbol of the persecution suffered by the helpless just (Lamentation 3.5 from the Old Testament)

The Blessed Sacrament Chapel

It was built in 1696 and it has the imprint of the late Renaissance style in the trabeation crowned by the beautiful triangle; both the trabeation and the triangle that surmounts it are adorned with refined decorations that extend to the flat pilasters ending with graceful capitals. Some biblical scenes are represented in the arch leading to the altar.

- * To the sides, under two volutes, there are two shells which are the symbol of baptism of the first Christians. These sculptures were frequently found in the past centuries. On the walls there are two large paintings representing "The Last Supper" and "The Descent into Hell". On some small oval paintings, "The Good Shepherd", some phases of the "Martyrdom of Jesus," and "St. John the Baptist" are represented. The works are attributed to the painter Barnabas Zizzi from Cisternino and they were painted at the end of the eighteenth century.

To the right there is a chapel leading to the sacristy, which houses some statues of the Madonna

- * "The Immaculate Conception" is a wooden statue by Giuseppe Sarno: it is a valuable work of art dated 1793.
- * The transept that precedes the apse has the dome supported by pointed ribs like the arch of the apse; they were influenced by the Gothic style and this confirms that the last part was built much later, because of the threat coming from the Hungarians.

The Apse

The apse opens at the centre of the nave. It is made up of a modern marble altar and a wooden choir, which is a valuable work of local craftsmen of the seventeenth century. Some Gothic arches cut the back wall adorned with two beautiful paintings attributed to the famous Neapolitan painter Luca Giordano and representing St Peter and St Paul. At the centre there is the wooden statue of St. Nicola who is the patron saint: it is a valuable work of Neapolitan art. The wooden crucifix is a late Gothic sculpture with an intimate and intense expression. The small heads peeping out from the left capital have given rise to a romantic legend. According to the legend, Frederick II, returning from Jerusalem, stopped in Cisternino and was a guest in the tower which was the home of the governor. The emperor became wildly infatuated with the governor's beautiful daughter. The stonecutters, who were working in the Church, decided to immortalize the fact with two juxtaposed small heads.

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The Left Nave

Two niches emerged during the restoration works in 2000: a sinopite of a Madonna with child and a fresco representing St. George crushing the dragon; and St. Catherine of Alexandria leaning against a wheel - the symbol of her martyrdom, which occurred in the first century A.D. At the top you can see a Madonna, perhaps a work of the thirteenth century.

VIA SAN QUIRICO

Leaving the church, take Via S. Quirico below the Madonnina bridge, so called because there is a statue of Virgin Mary in a niche. Above the bridge there is the ancient Amati palace, a beautiful building overlooking the valley. It was renovated in the late nineteenth century but it still retains a Renaissance style, even though the inside has older sections.

- * Some round arches open onto a large terrace surmounted by a flight of columns. It is set against the Angevin tower (fourteenth century).

We continue up to the church dedicated to the patron saints of the town, mother and son, holy martyrs of the early days of Christianity, who are celebrated in the summer.

CHIESA DI SAN QUIRICO and GIULITTA

The church was built in the early seventeenth century outside the walls which have today disappeared because they have been incorporated by the houses. Inside, next to the church, there is still a trace of the wheel where the infants born out of wedlock were secretly put and welcomed by the religious. Their custody was later entrusted to an orphanage.

- * The facade is very simple, with an arched portal surmounted by a stone triangle and with a rose window above; it ends with five pointed arches. Inside, the simplicity of the environment is enhanced by an elaborate baroque altar with angels, fish, fruits, leaves and reliefs which represent a triumph of the imagination and of the style of that age.

CHIESA DI S. ANNA o del cimitero vecchio (the old graveyard)

Along the road that leads down to Martina Franca, there is a church dedicated to St. Anne dating back to the seventeenth century. The stone church used to have a southward entrance which was walled up. The present entrance is preceded by a masonry-fenced yard. It is also known as the church of St. Maria of Constantinople, but more commonly it is also called the church of the old graveyard, because the dead used to be buried there until the edict by Gioacchino Murat in the nineteenth century, which forbade burial under churches. The interior is a single room with a wonderful altar dated 1734 and made with local stone. Its spiral columns, its artistic arabesques and angels are a clear example of the redundant baroque style. It was the work of Master Pasquale Simone from Lecce.

- * The altar on the right is part of an aedicule with a fresco in the lunette representing the image of St. Mary of Constantinople, to whom Cisternino was very devoted.

CHIESA DI SAN GIUSEPPE

When it was first built in the countryside in 1596, it was the church of the Capuchin Friars. It was long used as a hospital. The portal, which was reconstructed, is worked on carvings topped by a stone semicircle.

The Interior

There are two naves: a broad nave and a side narrow nave. In the right nave you can see a baroque half altar which is dedicated to St. Anthony. In the inside choir there are some frescoes of folk-art angels dating back to 1600.

ITINERARY B

If you come from Piazza Giuseppe Mazzini (or Small Gate), the itinerary starts in via St. N/laria of Constantinople. Then you go along via Conte Verde, via Castello, Piazza Garibaldi, the tvOther Church, via Basiliari, Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II, via S. Lucia, via Superga (which is a side street of the main street). From this point onwards the itinerary is the same for both starting points. Therefore, all the information about the itinerary can be found in the itinerary A.

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