

## Probus Overseas Holiday 2010.

The ten days spent in the Apulia (Puglia's Latin name, meaning land without rain) region was thoroughly enjoyed by all those 32 of us fortunate enough to have put our trust in Robert Horner's recommendation.

The mix of those present on the Tour was the all-important ingredient for a happy, contented and highly successful holiday. It did not take long for everyone to get to know the others and it was wonderful to see how supportive of their fellow-passengers everyone was. There were quite a few who had one form of disability or another in various stages of advancement but not once did anyone flinch or show signs of being beaten. Steps, awkward slopes, cobbles, narrow passages were all negotiated with determination so as not to miss out on the treasures about which we were to learn and be shown. These efforts were sure indicators of the enthusiasm of all on board the coach to hear what our excellent guide, Rachele, had to impart to us. Her importance on this trip cannot be over-emphasised.

The Countryside in which olive trees, some ancient and some new, cherry trees, a number of oak species, eucalyptus gum trees amongst many others seemed to thrive in the absence of a single River. Limestone dry-walling was evident throughout and the chippings of this limestone were mixed with the dark brown soil for the agricultural crops so as to release, slowly, any moisture they might somehow gather.( Irrigation or dew, for examples). There were wild flowers of every type coming into bloom; wild fennel, lavender and poppies to mention but a few. Globe Artichokes were fast reaching marketable maturity but, Alas, we were early for those!

Lovely clean, white-washed villages and towns such as Putignano, Ostuni, Martina Franca and many more, all spotlessly clean with no litter anywhere to be seen, left an abiding impression of pride in their inhabitants' surrounds.

Then there were the Trulli Houses, constructed entirely with the region's ubiquitous limestone. With their attractive conical shaped roofs and thick walls, these trulli houses have the ability, afforded by the limestone, to enable the Temperature extremes of 40+ C in summer to near Zero in winter to be held to a range between 16 C in winter, and 21 C in summer. Quite remarkable. The whole of the Alberobello "county" in which our lovely Hotel, La Chiusa di Chietri, was situated, was declared a World Heritage Site in 1996 for its having no fewer than 1500 of these dwellings. This is what makes the area so unique. Our daily outings afforded us good viewings of these fascinating structures.

Our excursions by coach visited old ports, Cathedrals, Churches, Castles, a Family's Bread Making establishment, a typical well-to-do family's farm (a Masiera) for an organic meal from their farm products, a small pottery and

many Italian Gelaterias. Ice-creams proved a favourite purchase at our "peepee" stops and at any other given opportunity!

All of our newly-found Probus friends would have them join me in congratulating *Roberto* on his outstanding leadership on a trip that will hopefully remain long remembered by us all. No doubt we all hope we'll be able to accompany the next trip to wherever it might go.

Doug Beynon.