

## HYSTORY OF BARI AND MONUMENTS

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### History of Bari

#### Ancient and Roman Era

- **Origins:** Bari's origins date back to ancient times, originally a small Messapian settlement.
- **Roman Period:** The city was later absorbed into the Roman Empire as **Barium**. It became a significant port on the Adriatic Sea, contributing to trade and military operations.

#### Early Middle Ages

- **Byzantine Rule:** After the fall of the Western Roman Empire, Bari became part of the Byzantine Empire around the 6th century. It served as a strategic outpost guarding the Adriatic.
- **Lombard and Saracen Influence:** In the 9th century, Bari experienced Lombard control and was even briefly an independent emirate under Saracen rule between 847 and 871.

#### Norman Conquest and Middle Ages

- In the 11th century, the Normans captured Bari and incorporated it into the Kingdom of Sicily.
- Bari flourished as a commercial hub, benefiting from its strategic Adriatic position.
- The city became a center for pilgrimage due to the **Basilica of Saint Nicholas**, built in the 11th century to house the relics of Saint Nicholas (the inspiration for Santa Claus).

#### Renaissance to Modern Era

- Bari continued to develop under various rulers including the Angevins and Aragonese.
- In the 19th century, Bari became part of the newly unified Kingdom of Italy.
- It expanded rapidly with the growth of its port and industries.

### **World War II and Contemporary Bari**

- Bari was heavily bombed during World War II due to its strategic port.
- Post-war, the city rebuilt and modernized, becoming a regional economic and cultural center.
- Today, Bari is the capital of the Apulia region and a vibrant city known for its historic old town, university, and port.

### **Key Monuments in Bari**

#### **1. Basilica di San Nicola (Basilica of Saint Nicholas)**

- Built in the 11th century, this Romanesque church houses the relics of Saint Nicholas (the inspiration for Santa Claus).
- A major pilgrimage site for both Catholics and Orthodox Christians.
- Stunning architecture with crypts and beautiful frescoes.

#### **2. Castello Svevo (Swabian Castle)**

- A fortress built in the 12th century by the Normans and later modified by Emperor Frederick II (Swabian dynasty).
- Served as a military stronghold and royal residence.
- Now a museum hosting exhibitions and cultural events.

#### **3. Bari Cathedral (Cattedrale di San Sabino)**

- Constructed in the 12th century on the site of earlier churches.
- Known for its Romanesque architecture and intricate façade.
- Contains important religious artifacts and beautiful interior decorations.

#### **4. Petruzzelli Theatre (Teatro Petruzzelli)**

- The largest theatre in Bari, opened in 1903.

- A key cultural landmark for opera, ballet, and concerts.
- Rebuilt after a devastating fire in 1991, it stands as a symbol of the city's resilience.

### **5. Church of San Gregorio Armeno**

- One of the oldest churches in Bari, dating back to the 8th century.
- Known for its unique blend of Byzantine and Romanesque styles.
- Contains relics and mosaics of great historical significance.

### **6. Piazza del Ferrarese and Piazza Mercantile**

- Historic squares in Bari's old town.
- Surrounded by medieval buildings, cafés, and shops.
- Popular social and cultural hubs with lively street life.

### **7. Norman Tower (Torre Normanna)**

- Remains of the ancient Norman fortifications.
- Offers panoramic views over the old town and Adriatic Sea.