



# Bari

## Adriatic delight

Bari is home to in excess of 320,000 inhabitants, is the capital of the Puglia region and is situated at the top of the heel of what might be regarded as Italy's boot. It is the busiest passenger shipping port on the country's Adriatic coast and includes a quaint maze-like old town on a headland next to the harbour. The Murat quarter features 19th-century architecture and pleasant shopping areas, while grand 1930s buildings front the promenade and waterfront. It is also an important point on the

commercial routes between the East and West and has hosted the annual Fiera del Levante (Fair of the Levant) trade fair since 1930 which attracts more than 2,000 exhibitors and 500,000 visitors to the region each autumn. The area is well known in eastern Europe and among the Orthodox community, as it is the final resting place of St Nicholas. Its pleasant modern airport, 5 miles (8km) northwest, was originally known as Aeroporto di Bari Palese, but has recently been renamed in honour of Pope John Paul II, Karol Wojtyła.

Bari, a port on the Adriatic coast in Puglia, is Italy's ninth largest city and boasts a thriving airport that has benefited greatly from the arrival of low-cost airlines. **Luigi Vallero** reports from Southern Italy.

### Simple beginnings

The first airport in the Puglia region dates back to 1934, when a military base dedicated to Crown Prince Umberto di Savoia was constructed close to the northern residential areas of Bari, on the boundary between the suburbs of Palese and Macchie. The new facility soon attracted the interest of airline operators, and was authorised to handle commercial services launched by Transadriatica and SAM (Società Aerea Mediterranea). The carriers offered regular flights to Rome, and also linked the airport to Ancona and Venice in the north of the

► In keeping with the facility's green credentials, solar panels are fixed to some of the exterior walls of the terminal building. (All photos author)

▼ Low-cost airlines including Ryanair, Volotea and Blue Air have made inroads to Bari.



country as well as Tirana in Albania. Over the years these regular routes changed hands, with trips to the capital firstly being taken over by Ala Littoria and then dropped due to low traffic levels.

By 1939 renewed interest from airlines resulted in a runway upgrade and the reinstatement of services from Rome and Milan to Tirana, Thessaloniki, Athens and Rhodes, flown by Savoia-Marchetti SM.75 Marsupiale aircraft. World War Two brought commercial operations to a halt but they resumed in 1947 when Linee Aeree Italiane (LAI - the forerunner of the Italian national carrier Alitalia) was allowed to fly the Rome-Bari-Brindisi route with Douglas DC-3s.

A new passenger terminal was built in 1951, which remained in use for the rest of the decade. By the early 1960s it had become obvious the building was too small to cope with demand, so construction of a larger facility began in 1962 and was completed three years later. At the same time, the airfield's airside areas - runway, taxiway and aprons - were upgraded, and a new air traffic control tower commissioned in 1966. ↘





LAI became Alitalia in 1957, and replaced its elderly piston-engined aircraft with Vickers Viscounts. The airline gradually added to the number of destinations served from Bari to include Catania, Palermo, Ancona and Venice. In 1963 the national airline set up domestic subsidiary Aero Trasporti Italiani (ATI), which gradually added smaller and more efficient Fokker F27s to the network. ATI also reinstated the historical and ethnically important link with Tirana. Jets in the form of ATI Douglas DC-9-32s came to the region too, which prompted further renewal works at the airport including an increase in the length of the runway in 1968, and an extension to the passenger terminal.

◀ ◀ Natural foliage covers the roof and sides of the building.

▶ Passengers board Volotea Airlines Boeing 717-2BL EI-FCU (c/n 55190).

▶ ▶ Check-in takes place on the ground floor, while departures and airline offices are on the level above.

▼ The terminal and air traffic control tower opened in 2005.



By the 1970s ATI's domestic runs were continuing unabated, but the airport had attracted little interest from overseas. However, in the autumn of 1972 Puglia twice made news headlines around the world. On October 6 a hijacker was killed during an attempt to take control of Fokker F27-200 I-ATIS flying between Trieste and Bari. Then at the end of the month, sistership Fokker F27-200 I-ATIR, approaching the airport on flight BM327 from Naples crashed into a hill 1,450ft (442m) above sea level and 22 miles (35km) west-southwest of the airport, close to the town of Poggiorsini. The aircraft was on the centreline for the approach, but it is still not known why it was so low. The accident claimed the lives of all 27 on board.

To cope with steady traffic growth, a cargo shed was converted into a new passenger building in 1981. Further improvements were made later in the decade, with many facilities upgraded prior to Italia '90, the FIFA World Cup finals that took place in Italy in June and July. This work included runway and terminal upgrades, which in turn encouraged airlines to launch new international links to the region.

### Bari today

Today's modern airport is managed by Aeroporti di Puglia and has recently been renamed Aeroporto Internazionale Bari Karol Wojtyła Airport (BRI), commemorating Pope John Paul II. Alongside Brindisi, Foggia and Taranto, BRI has supported economic growth in Puglia, which has become an increasingly important industrial and agricultural centre. The region has also seen a rapid growth in tourism due to its pristine beaches, historical cities and towns and fine cuisine.

The clean and bright terminal, opened in 2005 and spans five levels. The airport's management team has placed a particular emphasis on environmental issues, ▶

with efforts being made to reduce the facility's visual impact. The building's double-skinned facade was designed to allow natural foliage to cover parts of the structure and a roof garden has recently been completed. Dimmable lighting has been installed to reduce electricity consumption, while emissions and energy use are closely monitored, with the results displayed to passengers, employees and visitors on screens around the terminal.

Surrounding parkland contains hundreds of mature olive trees and local flora and bush vegetation that limit the visual impact of the buildings and the air traffic - it also offers an escape from the bustle of the terminal, and features a Fit Track that provides employees with an opportunity to take some exercise during breaks. Close by, a kindergarten run by the airport is available to all, underlining BRI's social commitment to the locality.

To keep pace with rapid increases in traffic, work began in 2011 to improve the terminal's facilities. The building was originally designed for 3.6mppa which was achieved at the end of 2014, and the extension included a longitudinal addition that increased the floor area from 312,153 to 516,668 sq ft (29,000m<sup>2</sup>-48,000m<sup>2</sup>). The number of gates with airbridges were also doubled to eight, and the retail and dining space grew from 58,125 to 77,500sq ft (5,400m<sup>2</sup>-7,200m<sup>2</sup>).

The renovations were officially unveiled on February 21, 2015. The new sections were designed to reflect the local art, culture and nature of Puglia, with waves providing the main theme throughout the hall. On the floors there are representations of wavy sandy tracks incorporating shells and starfish, while octagonal columns inspired by the architecture of Castel del Monte in Andria - a fortress erected in 1240 AD by Emperor Frederick II - add historical context.

The centrepiece of the extension is a large skylight topping out an atrium that links each section of the building. Underneath it, passengers can gaze at features such as the Thundering Cloud artwork, a Deconstructed Boat wall (a wooden boat dismantled to create a fresco exhibit), or the interactive Drop Fall sculpture that incorporates a digital display of a waterfall showing the faces of its audience reflected in the droplets of water.

Although much has been made of the terminal, other facilities have also been updated including a 220,875sq ft (20,520m<sup>2</sup>) multi-storey car park, and a railway station connecting to the Ferrovie del Nord Barese network. Over the last few years, the runway, taxiways and aprons have been refurbished as well.

### Robust growth

Up to the mid-1990s, BRI was primarily a domestic airport with a very limited network and traffic levels that were growing steadily, but slowly. Although Alitalia and ATI had monopolies in many markets, the Italian flag carrier and its associated company started to withdraw from regional routes and were gradually replaced by Air One and

low-cost carrier Volare (later Volareweb). These changes signalled the start of a rise in throughput and by 2001 the airport was handling 1.2mppa. Three years later the total had risen to 1.8mppa, but dropped again in 2005 following Volareweb's bankruptcy. That year was also marred by the crash of a Tuninter ATR 72 while on a charter service between Bari and Djerba, killing 16 people.

Traffic levels rebounded again in 2006, thanks to the arrival of a new low-cost airline, MyAir. Additional routes brought the airport's passenger count up to 2,825,456 in 2009, but by the end of the year MyAir had been declared bankrupt. The following year, Ryanair burst onto the scene with two based Boeing 737 800s, with which it opened a network of new services. The arrival of the Irish carrier provided a catalyst for growth over the next few years and in 2012 3,765,181 passengers passed through the facility, approximately two thirds travelling

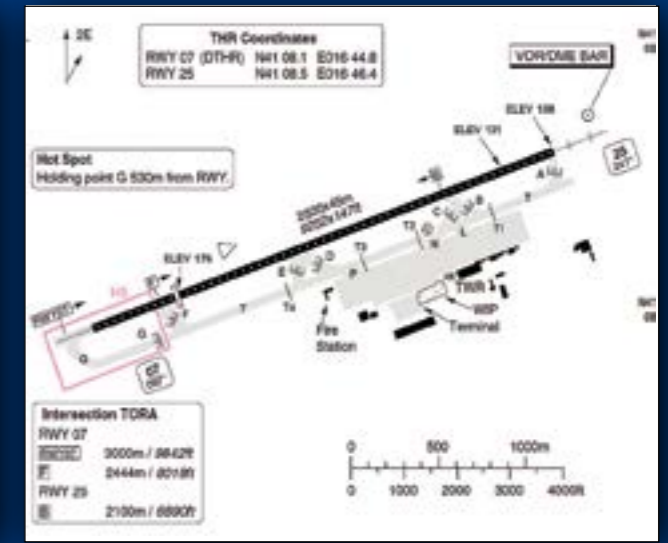
### Airport Statistics

ICAO:	LIBD
IATA:	BRI
Coordinates:	41°08.21'N 16°45.57'
Elevation:	184ft (54m)
Runways:	07/25 2,820 x 45m (9,251 x 120ft)
Frequencies:	Approach: 119.50, 122.10
Tower:	118.30, 122.10
Website:	www.aerortidipuglia.it

domestically and the rest internationally. During the mid-2000s BRI hosted seasonal scheduled long-haul Airbus A330 flights to Toronto flown by Skyservice, and by Eurofly Meridiana to New York John F Kennedy via Bologna. In 2014 BRI handled 3,668,115 passengers, a 2.1% increase over the previous year. The positive trend continued in 2015, with major carriers - including Swiss and Turkish Airlines - launching services from their main hubs.

▼ The departure lounge has a typical profusion of shops, bars and restaurants.

▼▼ Floors include representations of wavy sandy tracks.



▲ Local art has been applied to the walls in the departure lounge.

▲▶ (Not for airborne/operational use - Navtech Aerad)

▼ Wizz Air provides flights to a number of eastern European destinations. The walls in the departure lounge.

### Bari's airlines

The prominence of Italian airlines in the air travel market of Puglia has declined in recent years, exemplified by the ongoing financial difficulties at Alitalia. Today the national carrier retains its historical links with Rome Fiumicino and Milan Linate served by Airbus A320s, and also plies the long-standing international route to Tirana. Lufthansa-owned Air Dolomiti links the airport with the Munich hub using its modern Embraer fleet and Meridiana, having unsuccessfully tried to run services to Milan Linate, Cagliari and Verona, has maintained only a seasonal service to Olbia, Sardinia. Finally Air Vallée has recently launched Fokker 50 links to Tirana and Naples.

Although traditional airlines have maintained a presence at BRI, today it is the low-cost carriers that deliver the majority of the traffic. Two Ryanair 737s remain based at the airport, serving a

range of domestic and international destinations, including Bergamo, Berlin, Brussels Charleroi, Bologna, Cagliari, Dublin, Frankfurt Hahn, Genoa, Karlsruhe Baden-Baden, Kos, London Stansted, Malta, Paris Beauvais, Pisa, Rome Ciampino, Rome Fiumicino, Trieste, Turin, Valencia, Venice Treviso and Weeze.

Extending the airport's network, Spain's Volotea, now provides year-round service to Catania, Palermo, Venice and Verona, as well as seasonal routes to Athens, Chanea, Ibiza, Majorca, Mykonos, Santorini and Skiathos with 717s. Other low-cost airlines that have found opportunities in Puglia include Rumanian carrier Blue Air which flies domestically to Turin with 737-400s, easyJet to London Gatwick and Milan Malpensa, and Germanwings running A320 services to various destinations in Germany. Transavia has introduced services to Amsterdam, Vueling offers

Florence and on a seasonal basis Barcelona, and Wizz Air has launched trips from a number of Eastern European markets. Other regular users include airberlin (to Berlin Tegel), airBaltic (seasonal to Riga), British Airways (London-Gatwick), Brussels Airlines (Brussels), Luxair, Turkish Airlines (Istanbul-Atatürk) and Swiss (Zürich).

Charters and semi-regular operations are flown by Blue Panorama, Mistral Air, Montenegro Airlines and Tunisair to Marsa Alam, Sharm el-Sheikh, Lourdes, Mostar, Palma de Majorca, Preveza, Rhodes, Sofia, Zakynthos, Podgorica and Monastir.

Bari has come a long way since its humble beginnings, a testimony to the local government's commitment to putting the region on the European map, balanced by a responsible environmental approach to air travel. Today the airport offers a pleasant gateway to a region that has a great deal to offer throughout of year. ✕

