

TOUR CODE

# OACM



## CROATIA & MONTENEGRO

Day Hiking in Adriatica

14 days

Updated 6/4/2008

### Day 1 *Arrival in Dubrovnik*

Today we arrive in Dubrovnik, Croatia, one of Europe's loveliest and best-preserved mediaeval cities, and transfer to our hotel.

PLEASE NOTE: We rate this tour as "moderate" in terms of its physicality. Though all of our hikes are "day walks" and therefore optional, in order to fully enjoy the areas visited, you should be adequately fit in order to safely and comfortably participate in each days' activities. If you think that this trip might be too strenuous for you, we recommend our non-hiking Adriatic trips, codes AD1 or AD2.

Overnight in Dubrovnik. Dinner if required.

### Day 2 *Dubrovnik: Walking Tour*

This morning we begin our walking tour of Dubrovnik's historic center. Our transport will drop us outside the Pile Gate, as all motorized vehicles are banned within the city walls. Dubrovnik has been called "Croatian Athens" and the "Pearl of the Mediterranean" for its astounding beauty, sophisticated history and culture, and prosperity.

Over the course of its tumultuous history, the city had to be extensively reconstructed; the earthquake of 1667 destroyed much of the city; and in recent memory, the town was bombarded by over 2,000 shells in 1991-2. After great international efforts, the city has been restored to its former glory, with its towering fortifications, magnificent medieval architecture, red tiled roofs, winding paved streets and picturesque harbours.

Today we visit the Franciscan Monastery, housing Europe's first pharmacy, the Rector's Palace, the Cathedral and Sponza Palace; en route we will see many famous landmarks including Onofrio's fountain, the Clock Tower, Roland's Column and the Church of St. Blaise, the patron saint of Dubrovnik.

Your afternoon is free to enjoy this memorable place. You may wish to walk the walls of Dubrovnik, considered by many to be a highlight of our stay. The total circuit is nearly 2km / 1.25 mi, and from the bastions you will have magnificent views of the city's monuments, including the Minceta Tower, Revelin Tower, and the mighty fortress of St. Lawrence, with walls 12m / 40 feet thick!

Overnight in Dubrovnik. Breakfast and dinner.

### Day 3 *Dubrovnik, Croatia - Kotor, Montenegro*

Our foray into Montenegro will begin in Boka Kotorska, the only fjord in the Mediterranean, a bay of 32 km / 20 miles cut deep into the stone of the Orjen and Lovcen mountains. We will drive along the coast to Kotor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Kotor was inhabited even at the times of Illyrians and Romans. Its history is also entwined with that of the

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Venetian Empire. On our afternoon walking tour we see a number of the city's fortifications and monuments dating from the time of Venetian rule, including the Cathedral of St Tryphon, which contains a rich collection of artifacts. Older than many famous churches and cathedrals in Europe, the Cathedral of St. Tryphon has a treasury of immense value. In its interior there are frescos from the 14th century, a stone ornament above the main altar in which the life of St. Tryphon is depicted, as well as a relief of saints in gold and silver. The most representative works of Kotor's masters and craftsmen are kept in this Cathedral, making its collection quite unique.

Though the comparisons exist, Kotor is much more than just a poor man's Dubrovnik. Within the walls it has retained a much more mediaeval feel. A map of the old city shows hardly a single right angle; the town consists of a maze of tiny alleys that meet unexpectedly to form "squares" that are anything but square. Overshadowed by both towering cliffs and the high walls of four-storey stone houses, some of these narrow lanes must never see sunshine. One of the great pleasures of Kotor is wandering at random through this little labyrinth.

Overnight in Kotor. Breakfast and dinner.

#### **Day 4**      ***Kotor: Fortress of St. Ivan***

This morning we climb the city walls to the Fortress of St Ivan, passing the Chapel of Our Lady of Salvation along the way. The steps begin at the northwest corner of the city. It's a stiff climb so don't set off without something to drink: there are 1350-1500 steps according to various guidebooks. From the highest point the ground drops away sharply on three sides with the rooftops of Kotor immediately below. To the north you can see the whole inner part of the bay. Look out for a dome near the shore to the west--it belongs to the implausibly large church in the village of Prcanj. When we have finished admiring the view we can scramble around the crumbling ruins with a freedom rarely found in more litigious countries--the only ones likely to challenge you are the goats.

The afternoon is yours to enjoy Kotor. Browse the town at your leisure and discover souvenir, antique and craft shops, boutiques and market stalls.

TOTAL WALKING TIME +/- 3 HOURS.

Overnight in Kotor. Breakfast and dinner.

#### **Day 5**      ***Kotor, Montenegro - Korcula, Croatia***

Today we travel by ferry back to Croatia and the breathtaking island of Korcula.\*

The approach from sea to the town of Korcula is truly stunning, located on a peninsula and brilliant red tiled roofs. The water here is clear to a depth of 21m! Korcula was settled by the Greeks who called the island "Korkyra Melaina", or "Black Corfu" because of the dark appearance of its densely wooded forests. Today the island is covered with olive groves and vineyards; cereals, carob, citrus and vegetables are all grown on this island, as well as an array of wild herbs. The island is also proud of its heritage: it is the legendary birthplace of Marco Polo, the home of traditional shipbuilding and stone masonry, and also the center of Croatian folk traditions of costume and dance.

Later this afternoon we will have a walking tour of the old town. The street plan of the town is unique and often compared to a fishbone pattern: the north-south streets allowed the defenders of the town to reach the walls and towers, and the east-west lanes were designed to capture the pleasant maestral winds and minimize the force of the cold "bora." The Venetian Cathedral of St. Mark is an architectural delight, squeezed into a small square. Tucked into a narrow lane nearby is the small house where it is believed Marco Polo was born. We will also visit the Treasury and Town Museum with fascinating exhibitions of Korcula's history and traditions, from prehistoric times to the present. (If ferry schedules

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dictate, we may have our walking tour of Korcula town tomorrow afternoon).

\* NOTE: Regional ferry schedules tend to be rather changeable, often without notice. In the event that there is no ferry from Kotor today, we may travel by road back to Dubrovnik and ferry to Korcula from there.

Overnight in Korcula. Breakfast and dinner.

**Day 6      *Korcula: 'Napoleon's Road'***

Today we transfer to the town of Dubovo, located below the highest peak on Korcula (Klupca 569m / 1,880 ft) with magnificent coastal views. We make a scramble to the summit before descending and continuing our walk to Pupnat via 'Napoleon's Road' all the way back to Korcula, visiting St. Anton's church en route.

Pupnat is a village in the interior eastern part of the island of Korcula, located on the regional road running along the island. The population of Pupnat is about 500 making this the smallest village on the island. The name Pupnat, according to some interpreters, derives from "pampinata," which means vine leaves. The Illyrian lived around Pupnat, in the area of Mocila, where remains of Illyrian graves were found. The location of the village of Pupnat was chosen by its settlers, in the hilly part of the island invisible from the sea and passing pirates.

From Pupnat, the road climbs up almost to the top of the island from where a wonderful panorama stretches as far as the island of Mljet to the southeast and the island of Lastovo directly the the south. On the way we visit the village of Zrnovo, one of the oldest settlements on the island. The prehistoric life that existed in the area was found in Jakasove Spila (cave). Zrnovo has numerous small churches that one can see walking along the road from east to west.

We continue to Korcula via a prehistoric walking path. Balance of the day at leisure in Korcula.

TOTAL WALKING TIME +/- 3 or 4 hrs; elevation variation +/- 100m / 330 ft.

Overnight in Korcula. Breakfast.

**Day 7      *Korcula - Hvar: Walking Tour***

Today we travel by ferry to Hvar, "Queen of the Dalmatian Islands," considered one of the ten most beautiful islands in the world.

The island of Hvar receives 2,724 hours of sunshine per year, more than anywhere else in Croatia, and is thus called the "Island of the Sun". Greeks from Paros first settled on the island in the 4th century BC in Pharos, the modern town of Stari Grad. In the 13th century, the capital of the island was transferred to the town of Hvar (a mutation of Pharos in Slavic) and prospered during the 3.5 centuries of Venetian rule. This picturesque town and marina is alive with the constant hum of activity.

This afternoon we have a walking tour through narrow streets to the 15th century Franciscan Monastery, visit the Renaissance cloister, the old rectory that today houses a collection of lace, manuscripts and books; and the church with its remarkable collection of paintings. We visit St Stephen's Cathedral, the Arsenal, a thick walled fortress overlooking the harbour. Europe's oldest community theater, opened in 1612, is located inside the Arsenal.

For those interested, there is an excellent hike up to the Venetian castle above town.

Overnight in Hvar. Breakfast and dinner.

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**Day 8      *Hvar: St Nikola Hike***

This morning we have a stunning hike through olive groves and vineyards following ancient paths to the peak of St. Nikola. Our hike takes us through olive groves and vineyards following ancient paths treaded by locals who still cultivate their land in the same way as their ancestors. The trail takes us along the old stone road that was once the only communication between the south and north of the island. At the peak of Sveti Nikola we have a wonderful view of all the surrounding islands.

On the way down we will stop at a cave with remains of an Augustinian monastery that stood here from the 15th century until 1787. Before they obtained their present church, the villagers used to worship in the old monastery church in the cave.

The village of Sveta Nedjelja is approached along a winding path which runs through a small pinewood. This charming village is a famous centre for the production of the best types of Hvar red wine (plavac). We can pause here for lunch at one of the traditional restaurants. On the route home we can stop for a refreshing swim in one of beautiful bays along the coast. We return to Hvar in the mid-late afternoon.

TOTAL WALKING TIME 4.5 hrs

Overnight in Hvar. Breakfast.

**Day 9      *Hvar - Hike to Milna - Brac Island***

This morning we walk a coastal path to the charming fishing village of Milna, past isolated beaches, through fragrant pine forests, with Mediterranean vistas galore. Milna is a wonderful and fairly undiscovered 17th century fishing village. The town appears frozen in time with well-preserved architecture serving the existing residents. Beautiful paths connect the hillside homes, with shuttered windows and brilliant bougainvillea. Residents are out and about, strolling down to the sea or walking their dogs.

We shuttle back to Hvar to board our ferry to nearby Brac Island, the highest and third largest island in the Adriatic. Pine forests, olive groves, and vineyards are plentiful. Seaside charm can be found in the numerous bays, sandy and gravel beaches that form the long and well-indented coast.

Overnight on Brac. Breakfast and dinner.

**Day 10      *Brac: Island Tour - Split***

After breakfast we'll explore Brac with its stone landscapes, olive groves, and sheep dotting the hillsides. Brac is home of the most beautiful beach on the Adriatic coast, the Golden Horn. Our tour starts with a long but gradual climb to the ridge of the island, across Brac to the village Pucisca and its famous quarry of Brac marble. From a point already well above sea level, we walk to Vidova Gora (778m / 2,567 ft), the highest point on the island offering spectacular views. We continue to Bol, a typical Brac village where we can stop for lunch.

Later we travel to Split, located on the mainland.

TOTAL WALKING TIME +/- 2.5 hours

Overnight in Split. Breakfast and dinner.

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**Day 11     *Split - Trogir - Plitvice***

This morning we tour Split (ancient Spalato), the second largest city of Croatia. The historic city center actually lies in the walls of the enormous retirement Palace of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, built between 295-305 AD. The palace served as a palace, military fortress, and later, a fortified town. The city is enclosed by huge walls, pierced by 4 main gates, one on each side of the rectangular plan.

We continue to the medieval town of Trogir, one of the most beautiful and popular towns of the Dalmatian Coast. The heart of this Venetian walled town is Narodni Trg, with its white stone paved square, Cathedral, Communal Palace and Loggia. We visit the Cathedral of St. Lawrence, built between the 13th and 15th centuries by Slavic masters. The entire town has been preserved as yet another UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Our final destination is Plitvice, where 16 lakes, each at a different level, join each other in a series of cascading waterfalls.

Overnight at Plitvice. Breakfast and dinner.

**Day 12     *Plitvice Lakes National Park***

We have the whole day to enjoy this special place. Travertine terraces have been continuously reforming themselves over 10,000 years as calcium carbonate dissolves and settles, forming barriers and cascades. Imagine Niagara Falls diced and sprinkled over a heavily forested Grand Canyon. This lush valley of terraced lakes is laced together by waterfalls and miles of pleasant wooden-plank walks. Countless cascades and strangely clear and colourful water make the Plitvice Lakes National Park a misty natural wonderland. The ever-changing fluid landscape -- created by water, gravity, limestone and time -- is mesmerizing.

Look for wildlife as you hike. The park is home to deer, wolves, wildcats, wild boar, and more than 160 species of birds (from eagles to herons to owls). The lakes (and local menus) are full of trout. The entire area is protected as one of UNESCO's Natural World Heritage Sites. We will follow wooden paths on our walk around the Lower and Upper Lakes, ending with a short boat ride across the largest lake.

TOTAL WALKING TIME +/- 4 hours (leisurely, easy)

Overnight at Plitvice. Breakfast and dinner.

**Day 13     *Plitvice - Zagreb: City Tour***

Today we travel by road the short distance to Zagreb, the capital of Croatia.

We have a city tour on arrival, including Governor Jelacic Square, undoubtedly the very heart of the capital. Located in Zagreb's center, the square is dominated by the statue of Josip Jelacic who became the governor of the triple Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia on the 23rd of March, 1848.

In the District of Graced, we take a funicular from the Lower town to the Upper, which has connected, for centuries, the old part of town with Ilica Street, the main shopping area. We will then stroll back down to Kaptol, St Catherine's Cathedral, Church of St Mark, St. Stephen's Church, and Burglar's Tower. We continue our stroll along the promenade on the side of the tower to enjoy a view of the city.

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Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Zagreb. Breakfast and dinner.

**Day 14**    ***Departure***

Departure from Zagreb.

Breakfast.

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