

THE DALMATIAN COAST**with Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina & Montenegro****13 days**

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Day 1 *Arrival in Croatia*

Arrival in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia.

Overnight in Zagreb.

Meal Plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 *Zagreb: City Tour*

Today we have a sightseeing tour of Zagreb, including Governor Jelacic Square, undoubtedly the very heart of the capital of Croatia. Located in Zagreb's center, the Square is dominated by the Statue of Josip Jelacic, who became the Imperial governor of the triple Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia on the 23rd of March, 1848.

We continue to Tkalciceva Street. 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.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Zagreb.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 *Zagreb - Varazdin Region*

This morning we depart for the Varazdin region, famous for wine production. As we travel through the region we will stop at one of the local wineries for a tour and tasting. We also discover the ancient Croatian capital of Varazdin, an old town of rich tradition and bourgeois elegance, famous for its Baroque architecture, flower-filled alleys, parks and greenery.

Our intended accommodation is Dvorec-Bezanec Castle, a private estate that has been converted to receive guests. Originally built by Count of Kegleviae in 17th century, Bezanec Castle was subsequently owned by a series of Barons. Due to its architectural features and landscaped gardens, Bezanec Castle is one the finest, privately owned stately homes in Croatia.

Overnight at Dvorec-Bezanec Castle.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 *Valentinovo - Plitvice*

This morning we depart for Plitvice where 16 lakes, each at a different level, join each other in a series of cascading waterfalls. 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.

We will follow wooden paths on our walk around the Lower and Upper Lakes. Look for wildlife --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.

TOTAL WALKING TIME +/- 3 hours (leisurely, easy)

Overnight at Plitvice.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 ***Plitvice - Zadar - Trogir***

Today we travel to the coast via Zadar, the ancient capital of Byzantine Dalmatia.

This large city has its historic center crowded on a small piece of land jutting into the Adriatic. When it was occupied by the Germans in 1943, Allied bombings destroyed about 60% of the city. Zadar was rebuilt one more time, as it had been many times over its tumultuous history; it is for this reason that one can find a variety of architectural styles, from Roman Corinthian columns to Romanesque churches. We enter the city through one of the Venetian gates and proceed to the Roman Forum, the Church of St. Donatus and Cathedral of Anastasius, and visit the Archaeological Museum, with a fine collection of artifacts dating from Roman and medieval times. NOTE: In the event that the Archaeological Museum is closed, due to erratic opening hours, the Museum will be replaced with a visit of the Treasury, a collection of relics attended to by the order of Benedictine nuns in the Church and Nunnery of St. Mary.

We continue on 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.

This evening is free to stroll and dine at your leisure.

Overnight in / near Trogir.

Meal Plan: Breakfast

Day 6 ***Trogir - Split - Hvar***

This morning we travel to the island of Hvar via 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. Split usually has a lively morning market.

Later we take a short ferry ride to the island of Hvar. En route we will pass the island of Brac, which provided the lustrous white stone for the construction of the Cathedral of Sibenik, Diocletian's Palace at Split, the Cathedral of Liverpool, and the White House in Washington, DC.

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.

Overnight in Hvar.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 *Hvar: Walking Tour*

This morning 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 also visit St Stephen's Cathedral.

The afternoon is free for independent exploration on this beautiful island. For those interested, there is an excellent hike up to the Venetian castle above town.

Overnight in Hvar.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 *Hvar: Vis & Blue Grotto Cruise*

Today we get out onto the water and enjoy a full-day cruise to to the island of Vis and the beautiful Blue Grotto on the island Bisevo.

It is about a two-hour sail to Vis, the outermost of Croatia's inhabited islands. Here we stroll though the enchanting seaside town of Komiza and visit one of the two best wineries on the island. After a seafood lunch (non-seafood alternatives available), we continue to the nearby island of Bisevo and into the entrancing Blue Grotto, where water-filtered sunlight shines in to bathe the cavern in an eerie, shimmering blue.

Return to Hvar in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Hvar.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Lunch

Day 9 *Hvar, Croatia - Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina*

Today we depart Hvar by ferry to Drvenik from where we drive along the coast to Opuzen where we turn inland to the border crossing at Metkovic. After crossing into Bosnia, we drive to Pocitelj where we have a chance to stop and discover the exquisite blend of Mediterranean and Oriental architecture. From Pocitelj we will continue our drive to Mostar arriving in the afternoon.

Despite great damages suffered in the last war, the city on the emerald green River Neretva has preserved a great part of its authentic Oriental architecture and the way of life conceived on the boundaries of civilizations.

Overnight in Mostar.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 *Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina: Walking Tour - Dubrovnik, Croatia*

We begin our day with a walking tour of Mostar. Our tour will include a visit to the ancient city dating to the 16th/17th centuries, a visit inside a traditional house dating to this period, and a visit to the recently rebuilt Mostar Bridge, the emblem of the city. After our tour of Mostar, we will begin our journey to Dubrovnik. En route we will stop at the historic, fortified town of Ston. We arrive into Dubrovnik in

the late afternoon.

The history of Dubrovnik, or ancient Ragusa, begins in the 7th century, when it was under the protection of the Byzantine Empire. In the 12th century Ragusa, formerly an island, merged with mainland settlements and the channel between was filled in with carted-in material. Today this area is the main street of the old city named the Placa or Stradun. After shaking off the yoke of Venice in 1385, Ragusa became an independent republic. It remained one of the most powerful maritime powers in the Mediterranean for over four centuries (until 1808). Ragusa was the link between the Mediterranean and the Balkans and hence developed into an important centre of trade and shipping. Dairy products, wax, honey, timber, coals, salt, silver, lead, copper, wine, oil, fish and slaves were all traded. During the "Golden Age" of Ragusa in the 16th century, she had the 3rd largest merchant fleet in the world and consulates in over 50 countries. After changing hands a number of times, the city was finally ceded to Croatia (former Yugoslavia) and in 1918 the Slavic name of Dubrovnik was officially adopted.

Overnight in Dubrovnik (just outside Old Town).

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 *Dubrovnik: Walking Tour*

This morning features a walking tour of Dubrovnik's historic center. 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 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.

We also walk the walls of Dubrovnik, considered by many to be a highlight of our visit. 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!

Your afternoon is free to enjoy this memorable place.

Overnight in Dubrovnik.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 *Dubrovnik - Montenegro - Dubrovnik*

Our encounter with one of Europe's newest countries begins in Boka Kotorska, the only fjord in the Mediterranean, a bay of 32 km / 20 miles cut deep into the stone tissue of the Orjen and Lovcen mountains. We then visit the town of Perast where we see the two small islands of St. George & Our Lady of the Rocks. We take a boat from Perast to Our Lady of the Rocks before continuing our drive along the coast to Kotor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, where we visit the cathedral and Maritime Museum.

Return to Dubrovnik in the evening.

Remember your passports for today's excursion!! Border delays are possible and are taken into account when planning the content and pacing of today's programme.

Overnight in Dubrovnik.

Meal Plan: Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 *Departure*

Departure from Dubrovnik.

SRETAN PUT!

Meal Plan: Breakfast