

Croatia: Jewel of the Coast



9 days Itinerary. Limited to 15 - 25 max guests

Explore Croatia, the gem of the Adriatic, with visits to ancient Zagreb, the scenic island of Brac and the Adriatic Coast, enjoying a private tour of Split's Meštrović Gallery and a tasting of freshly harvested oysters in Ston, followed by three nights in Dubrovnik.

DAY 1 ARRIVE ZAGREB, CROATIA

On arrival, transfer to your historic Art Deco hotel, set within a gracious building dating back to 1925. Gather for a welcome dinner tonight. Esplanade Zagreb Hotel | Meals: Dinner

DAY 2 ZAGREB | THE STATELY CAPITAL

Zagreb is Croatia's capital and largest city, and its history stretches back to Roman times. This morning take a panoramic tour of the city. Drive past the National Theater, Mimara Museum, and Academy of Arts and Sciences, and then walk among the loveliest parts of Zagreb, including St. Mark's Square, where you can view the Parliament building and charming St. Mark's Church. Ride a funicular built in 1889 to reach the charming Upper Town quarter from Lower Town. Visit the Ban Jelačić Square, which divides the old and new regions of the city. Its two prominent landmarks — the clock at the west end of the square and the statue of Count Josip Jelačić on horseback — have passed into the Zagreb lexicon, with locals often making plans to meet each other “under the clock” or “under the horse's tail.” Take the rest of the afternoon to explore the capital.

Esplanade Zagreb Hotel | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3 ZADAR | ALONG THE SCENIC ADRIATIC

Drive to the coastal city of Zadar, the oldest city in Croatia and one of the most scenic along the Adriatic Sea. Enjoy lunch and a maraschino liqueur tasting — unlike its namesake cherry, maraschino has a more sour flavor, and is a key ingredient in the Hemingway daiquiri, one of the legendary author's favorite drinks. Then take a short walking tour that introduces you to St. Donat's Church and the Sea Organ, an art installation designed by local architect Nikola Bašić, which converts the movement of the waves into music. Continue to Split, where you check in to your boutique hotel in the heart of the city. Cornaro Hotel | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Croatia: Jewel of the Coast

DAY 4 SPLIT | THE EMPEROR'S PALACE

Begin the day with a private tour of the Ivan Meštrović Gallery with its curator, marveling at the 86 bronze, marble and wood sculptures he fashioned. Anyone familiar with Chicago's Grant Park knows Meštrović's bronze masterpieces, The Bowman and The Spearman. Afterward, set off on a walking tour of Split, starting with the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian. This massive complex takes up around half of Split's Old Town and has been immaculately preserved and restored, giving visitors a palpable sense of life in the days of the Roman Empire. Visitors who find its basement oddly familiar may recognize it as the location for Danaerys' throne room on the hit TV series Game of Thrones. Other noteworthy sites within the palace are Peristil Square, where the emperor gave speeches, and his mausoleum, now a church. Afterward, explore more of captivating Split at your leisure. Cornaro Hotel | Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5 BRAČ | RUSTIC VILLAGE VISIT

Board a ferry to Brač, a Dalmatian island famous for its stone, used in Split's Diocletian Palace and the White House in Washington, D.C. Visit Skrip, the oldest village on the island, and the Museum of Brač. While short on people (with a population of barely 200), its location provides jaw-dropping views of the coast and mainland. Stop at a traditional restaurant for lunch, sampling local specialties of lamb, cheese, olives and wine before returning by ferry to Split.

Cornaro Hotel | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 6 DUBROVNIK | THE CULINARY ROAD

Set out for Dubrovnik, stopping at Ston, world-renowned for its oysters. Meet a local fisherman and sample one of these tasty delights paired with a local wine for a true taste of Croatia. Complete a superb lunch at a local seafood restaurant before continuing on to Dubrovnik. During the Middle Ages, Dubrovnik was a center of maritime trade, and its wealth and skill in diplomacy enabled it to become the only Adriatic city-state to rival Venice. Centuries later, the city emerged from the chaos of the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s with refurbished monuments and a welcoming, forward-looking spirit that has made it one of the most-visited on the continent. With its jumble of old buildings topped with brilliant terra cotta tile roofs, Dubrovnik looks like no other city in Europe, and is doubly familiar to Game of Thrones viewers as the city of King's Landing. Grand Villa Argentina | Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7 KOTOR, MONTENEGRO | SEASIDE CHARMS

Spend the day in marvelous Montenegro, which was finally established as a fully independent state in 2006, following the dissolution of Yugoslavia. With its rugged mountains that sweep down to the glittering blue Adriatic Sea, Montenegro features dynamic topography dotted with picturesque villages and fortified towns. Begin with a drive to Boka Kotorska, Europe's southernmost fjord, where precipitous mountains rise from azure waters, and where you take a boat to the Baroque Church of Our Lady of the Rocks, built on an artificial island created by a bulwark of rocks and the remains of old shipwrecks. Local legend has it that the island was created over the centuries by fishermen dropping rocks into the sea, a tale reenacted every year on July 22, when locals sail to the island to attend church and deposit more stones along the shore. Visit the city of Kotor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site surrounded by fortifications that date back to the era when the region lay under Venetian rule. Explore its 12th-century Cathedral and Maritime Museum, before returning to Dubrovnik. Grand Villa Argentina | Meals: Breakfast

DAY 8 DUBROVNIK | THE CITY MUSEUM

Enjoy a morning tour of Dubrovnik. Proclaimed a "city museum" by UNESCO, the Old Town is surrounded by impressive stone walls and towers that make it one of the best-preserved medieval cities in Europe. Mingle with local traders and craftspeople in its markets. Then, listen as a survivor of the Balkan War shares memories of the conflict that secured Croatia's independence from the former Yugoslavia, a victory that cost more than 20,000 Croatian lives. Spend the afternoon at leisure, followed by a memorable farewell dinner accompanied by a traditional klapa (a cappella choir) performance, arranged just for you. Grand Villa Argentina | Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 9 DEPART DUBROVNIK

Transfer to the airport for your flight home