

Croatia Coast & Islands 7 nights / 8 days



General Itinerary :

- | | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|
| Day 1 | Arrive in Split |
| Day 2 | Cycle the Island of Brac |
| Day 3 | Cycle the Island of Hvar |
| Day 4 | Loop tour or rest day |
| Day 5 | Cycle the Island of Korcula |
| Day 6 | Rest day or loop ride around Korcula |
| Day 7 | Ride to Dubrovnik |
| Day 8 | Departure after breakfast |

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General Information—Croatia

Croatia

The Republic of Croatia is an European country situated along the Adriatic Sea and its hinterland. It stretches from the slopes of the Alps and deep into the Pannonian Valley to the banks of the Danube and. Thus according to its natural characteristics, as well as its cultural and historical development, Croatia can be divided into three geographically distinct zones: - the Coastal region - the Mountain region - the Pannonian region.

Like many countries in Western Europe, Croatia was founded on the ruins of the Roman Empire. When they arrived in the territory of present-day Croatia, the Croats were politically organized in principalities. In 925, Croatian King Tomislav united the principalities, establishing the first Croatian state. Later, Croatia retained its legal status and autonomy within the framework of the Hungarian empire, and the Habsburg Monarchy.

The main executive power of Croatian state is the government (in Croatian: "vlada"), presided by the Prime Minister. The Croatian legislature is the Hrvatski sabor.



Facts

Area: 56,542 km², with an additional 31,067 km² of territorial waters.

Population: 4.437.460

Capital: Zagreb (779.145 inhabitants - the administrative, cultural, academic and communication centre of the country).

Length of coast: 5,835 km - including 4,058 km of island, islet and reef coastline.

Number of islands, islets and reefs: 1,185. The largest islands are those of Krk and Cres. There are 67 inhabited islands.

Population nationality: The majority of the population are Croats. National minorities include Serbs, Moslems, Slovenes, Italians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, and others.

Official language and alphabet: Croatian language and Latin alphabet.

Religions: The majority of the population are Roman Catholics, and in addition there are a number of those of Orthodox religion, as well as Muslims, and Christians of other denominations.

General Information—Dalmatia

Dalmatia

Dalmatia lies in Croatia and is a historical region on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea.

It stretches from the island of Rab in the northwest to the Bay of Kotor in the southeast. The hinterland, the Dalmatian Zagora, ranges from fifty kilometers in width in the north to just a few kilometers in the south. Dalmatia signifies not only a geographical unit, but is an entity based on common culture and settlement types, a common narrow eastern Adriatic coastal belt, Mediterranean climate, sclerophyll vegetation, Adriatic carbonate platform, and karst geomorphology.

On the coasts the climate is Mediterranean, while further inland it is moderate continental. In the mountains, winters are frosty and snowy, while summers are hot and dry. To the south winters are milder. Over the centuries many forest have been cut down and replaced with bush and brush. There is evergreen vegetation on the coast.

Land cultivation is mostly unsuccessful because of the mountains, hot summers and poor soils, although olives and grapes flourish. The rocky karst that borders coastal areas has been producing wine grapes of high quality, especially in new vineyards being planted in the Dingač region.

The Adriatic Sea's high water quality, along with the immense number of coves, islands and channels, makes Dalmatia an attractive place for nautical races, nautical tourism, and tourism in general.

Dalmatia also includes several national parks that are tourist attractions: Paklenica karst river, Kornati archipelago, Krka river rapids and Mljet island.



General Information—Weather

Croatia's coast and islands from Istra and Kvarner in the north through Dalmatia are governed by a Mediterranean climate although it's usually several degrees cooler in the northern Adriatic than in the south.

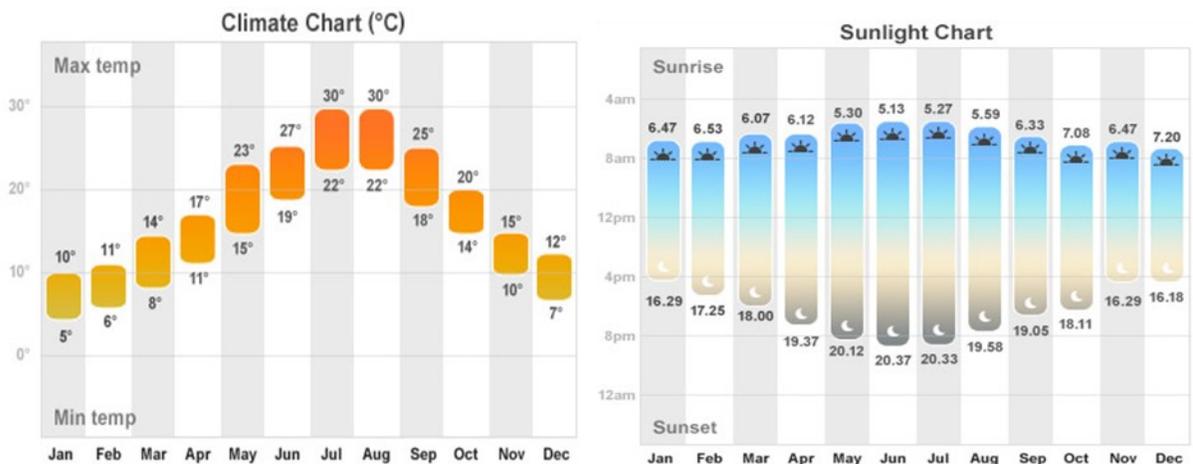
In summer, the mean temperature is between 24°C (75°F) and 26°C (79°F) along the coast. Yet the Istrian interior is somewhat cooler at 22°C. In winter, the coast has a mean temperature of 2°C (36°F) in the north and 9°C (48°F) in the south.

As a rule, summer is the driest season along the coast and winter the rainiest with twice the amount of precipitation as the summer. Croatia's islands can be dry indeed (sometimes way too dry leading to devastating fires). Generally, the islands further from the mainland are the driest. For example, Vis Island averages only 557mm of rainfall per year while Brac Island averages 952mm. Dubrovnik is one of the rainiest parts of the coast from October through December. Snow is a rare occurrence anywhere along the coast.

The sunniest island in Croatia is Hvar which is sunny over 2700 hours per year .

Split, Vela Luka (on Korcula Island) and Dubrovnik are the next sunniest spots in Dalmatia.

Coastal winds - The coastal climate is defined by its winds. The most frequent wind in Dalmatia is the southeasterly Jugo which blows toward the mainland in autumn and winter bringing warmer and moister air with it. The Bura however, is a cold, dry wind which blows from the mainland in sudden and powerful gusts bringing dry air and cooler temperatures. The westerly Maestral is a pleasant summer wind that blows in from the sea, reaching its peak force in early afternoon. It refreshes the air and chases away any mugginess.



General Information—Food and Drink

Food

The Croatian standard meal is similar to many other central European or Mediterranean countries (pizza, pasta, meat dishes, fish). All food is safe to eat as restaurants are regularly inspected, and there is no problem with drinking water. Unsurprisingly, seafood is a specialty along the Croatian coastline and the islands.

Hotel breakfasts generally include coffee, tea, bread, butter, jam, paté, cheese, and ham. We try to ensure that our hotels provide a substantial breakfast for cycling, and so ask them to include fruit, cereal, milk and maybe yogurt. If you are on your own and need more sustenance, you can always go to the supermarket to buy yogurt or cheese.

You can also find good snacks and pastries at Slasticarna, small pastry shops. Look for apple, cheese or cherry strudel, 'Croatian' donuts with a bit of marmalade inside, Chocolate donut, or "Pasta", a cream based pastry.

For quick lunches on the road, you can go to a Pekara (bakery) and try Burek, a savory pastry filled with cheese or meat and often eaten as a "fast food" item. It may also be eaten with yogurt and is made of thin dough layers that are stuffed and then rolled and cut into spirals. Another famous fast food item in Croatia is Cevapcici. Originally from Bosnia, this is a delicious dish of grilled minced meat, found in the countries of the Former Yugoslavia. Cevapcici may be served on a plate or in a flatbread sandwich (then called a lepinja), often with chopped onions, a local type of sour cream (kajmak), a relish made of bell peppers, eggplant, chili and garlic (ajvar) cottage cheese, and so on.

For sit down meals at dinner or lunch you can go to fancier restaurants or to the local pub/eatery, the "Konoba." Konobas generally have traditionally prepared dishes, made with natural home-grown ingredients and served in pleasant local surroundings. Service may be lower quality than in restaurants, but it is an authentic meal.



Dalmatia is a land where cultures collided bringing together the traditions of Orient and cuisine of Venetian nobility...each with a distinctive personality and history. Along the Dalmatian Coast the cuisine has a definite Mediterranean flavor with world class olive oils superb wines and seafood. Travel a short distance into the hinterland, and you will find meats and vegetables, and even bread baked under the peka – traditional technique dating back millennia. On the islands, cheeses and lamb grilled on a spit are served in family owned konobas or taverns... We invite you to explore the tastes of Dalmatia...a land of thousands of islands, of history, beauty and mystery. And yes, a land with a rich culinary history which many people have yet to discover.

General Information—Food and Drink

Croatia Wine

The grape varieties in use in Croatia can be very confusing to foreigners, not simply because the Croatian names are unfamiliar, but because many of the varieties may not be in use beyond a very limited area. Croatia's long history of wine production has left it with a rich tradition of indigenous varieties, especially in the more out-lying areas, or the more extreme growing conditions. Some of these have been so successful that they are in widespread use within Croatia, yet remain relatively unknown outside the country. One such is Plavac Mali, the foundation of many highly-regarded Dalmatian red wines, such as Postup and Dingač.

The well-known Napa Valley winemaker Miljenko "Mike" Grgich is a Croatian native, and he has argued the case for Zinfandel being descended from the Plavac Mali grape. DNA testing has now demonstrated that Plavac Mali is in fact a child of the true original Zinfandel, which is a little-planted grape from the same area named Crljenak Kašteljanski.

Following the devastation of the vines by phylloxera at the end of the 19th century, Croatian vineyards were replanted by grafting the traditional varieties on to American root stock. Only a very few pre-phylloxera vines still survive today on a couple of the islands (Korčula, Grk)

Malvazija from Istria and **Posip** from Korčula produce Croatia's most renowned white wines.



Coffee Drinking

In Dalmatia, coffee drinking is an important morning ritual. You'll see people out at cafés drinking coffee and watching the world go by. During weekends, when the weather is nice, at the waterfront (when you have thousands of people passing by in front of you) drinking coffee and chatting and gossiping is a must! Don't be surprised to see a lot of people in the bars at these days. Most people drink a large coffee with milk (*velika kava s mlijekom*; pronounced: velika kava mleeyeko) or you could also order a *kava obična* (pronounced: kava obichna) which is a simple coffee without milk—just an espresso.

Money Matters

Currency

Croatia's currency is the Croatian Kuna (HRK). (1 Kuna = 100 Lipa). There are 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 Lipa coins, 1, 2, 5 and 25 Kuna coins and 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1,000 Kuna banknotes.

1€ = 7,6 KN 1\$ = 6,0 KN

OANDA (<http://www.oanda.com>) is a good online source of currency conversion rates. Knowing the conversion rate will help you plan your budget.

Credit Cards:

All major credit cards, Visa, MasterCard, and American Express are commonly accepted in the larger towns of Croatia. American Express is less common in smaller villages, and Discover Card is even less common.

ATM Cards:

ATM machines are common in airports and in towns. There may be a small service charge, depending on your bank at home.

Cash or Traveler's Check

We recommend that you take an ATM card with you, rather than large amounts of cash. If you decide to take traveler's checks with you, plan to exchange them at your first available opportunity in Dubrovnik, as they are not likely to be accepted in the smaller towns along the way. If you do take traveler's checks with you, you are advised to take traveler's checks in US Dollars, Pounds Sterling or Euros. Banking hours are Monday–Friday, 7:00 a.m. – 7:00 p.m., and Saturday, 7:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Gratuities

All tipping is at your own discretion and you are under no obligation to tip. However, trip members often ask us for tipping guidelines. Typically, individual trip members tip the Trip Leaders 525–750 HRK (or 70–100 Euros, if you prefer) each, depending on the level of satisfaction. You will have 1 guide.



A Few Things to Remember...

Electricity

Croatia is on the 220V system. Sockets are usually the round two-pin variety. If you're planning to use something like a hairdryer or electric shaver, bring a converter and a selection of plug adapters, available in drugstores or travel specialty stores in the U.S.



Laundry

The hotels at which we stay do have laundry service, but this service can be expensive, and can take up to 24 hours. We recommend that you bring travel-sized laundry detergent (such as *Woolite* or *Bio Suds*), and a rubber drain stopper, and plan to hand wash a few items along the way. We like the *Lewis N. Clark* 'Laundry Soap Kit' available at Amazon.com.

Time Zone

Croatia is in the Central European Summer Time zone (CEST), May–October. CEST is two hours ahead of Coordinated Universal Time (UTC), which means that Split and Dubrovnik are both six hours ahead of New York, and nine hours ahead of California during our departures.

Cell Phones

For your cell phone to work in Europe you will need a mobile phone that supports the GSM Wireless system (Global System for Mobile Communications). Most cell phone providers do provide GSM capable phones although you may have to call your service provider to have the technology "turned on". If you have T-Mobile or AT&T you will need to "unlock" your GSM phone. If a service provider does NOT provide GSM capable phones, it is possible to rent or buy a separate phone that is GSM capable. Once you have a GSM capable phone, you will need to have international roaming turned on in order to make phone calls. Remember that you will be charged for both outgoing and incoming phone calls and charges range from \$1 to \$1.70 per minute.

You can buy a Croatian SIM card at newspaper and tobacco stores, small shops and markets for about HRK \$100, which already includes HRK \$100 credit for calls. You can buy additional credits (in HRK \$25, HRK \$50 or HRK \$100 cards) at the same places. The major prepaid package cellular companies are: Vip me, Simpa, Tele2, and Tomato. Approximate costs are HRK \$2.75 for 1 minute of talking within Croatia, HRK \$6.70 for 1 minute of talking to the USA, HRK \$4.40 - \$5.40 for 1 minute to other European countries, and HRK \$0.50 for a text message anywhere. Specific prices may vary according to the company. Please note that you may need a Croatian's help in setting up the SIM card as the first instructions are in Croatian, but can be later be changed to English.

Before you travel with your cell phone please check with your cell phone provider and make sure you know the answers to these questions:

1. Is my cell phone GSM capable?
2. If yes, is that option on and can I use it abroad or can I "unlock" the GSM?
3. If it isn't GSM capable can I rent a GSM phone, or where can I get one?



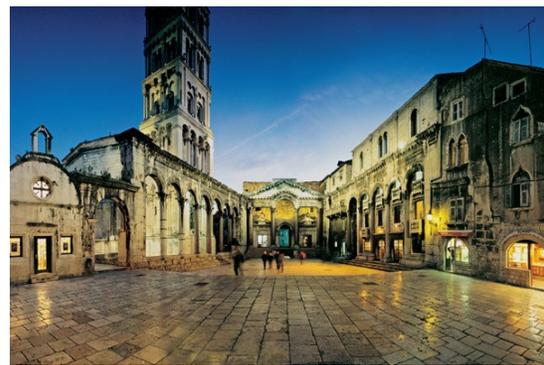
Tap Water is potable everywhere in Croatia

Split

Split is one of the jewels of the Adriatic and is the cultural and economic hub of Central Dalmatia. A city that grew out of the Palace of the Roman Emperor **Diocletian**, built around 300 AD, where nearly 3000 inhabitants have been installed for 1700 years, now a place where ancient times live along side the rhythm of the twentieth century.

Split's centre is a labyrinth of narrow streets and grand squares paved in glossy white flagstones. A magical world offering historical monuments, a gift from the Romans and Venetians, plus chic shops, cafes, bars and restaurants, lively markets, elegant art galleries and vibrant music.

Set in the heart of the city opposite the sea front promenade, with its lively bars, and palm tree walks, *Diocletian's Palace* covers 3.5 hectares of Split's centre and is one of the most unique constructions in Europe. Its 1700 years of history are now protected by UNESCO but it has always fired the interest of visitors and travelers. It is a fascinating city, having as much to offer as Dubrovnik, yet it is different also.



Dubrovnik

It hardly needs introducing, as Dubrovnik is probably the most well known place in Croatia, and not without reason. But there is more to the region; it also includes the Peljesac Peninsula, the islands of Korcula, with the beautiful town of the same name, and Mljet.

Dubrovnik, one of the most beautiful towns in Europe, is surrounded by ramparts that were first built in the 16th century, with churches, palaces, monuments, monasteries and museums that could take a year to discover. But Dubrovnik is far from being a museum city. Inside the old towns ramparts about 5000 people have their homes.

The old town is a labyrinth of streets paved with white flagstones, which, over hundreds of years, have been polished to a shine by people's feet. Long narrow allies with hundreds of steps climbing down from the ramparts, with bars, shops and galleries on either side. Its also a world forbidden to cars. Quite ample parking is provided outside the ramparts but in summer it is advised to park further away to avoid disappointment.

Croatia – Coast and Islands

Day 1: Upon your arrival in Split you will meet our representative for an orientation about the tour, the bikes, and the most important sites and dining suggestions. We will get your bike fitted and explain the bike routes and options and ferry transfer schedules. Free time in Split should be set aside for the Diocletian's Palace, now recognized on UNESCO's World heritage list. The locals have their real homes molded in the old walls of the Palace and inside of it you will find numerous cafes and restaurants serving fresh Mediterranean food! In front of the Palace you might enjoy an evening walk, along its beautiful waterfront promenade. Depending on your arrival, if time allows, you can enjoy easy, car- free 20 km bike ride.

Arriving in Split

- **SPLIT AIRPORT (SPU) <-> SPLIT** (www.split-airport.hr)

Split Airport is located at the very exit from the town of Kastela, towards Trogir. It is at 20 km distance from Split, and at 6 km from Trogir.

- **Direct Bus Line:** Bus leaves upon arrival of every scheduled flight. Bus tickets are not included in the price of the air ticket. Transfer of passengers to/from Split is organized in cooperation with *Pleso prijevoz* company. Information: www.plesoprijevoz.hr

- **Public Transport:** Close to Split Airport there is a bus stop for lines No. 37 (Split – Trogir; Trogir – Split) and No. 38 (Split Airport – Kastel Stari – Split; Split – Kastel Stari – Split Airport). Information: www.promet-split.hr



The history of Split in its early days revolves around a Greek settlement founded in the area between the 3rd and 4th centuries. Its most famous historical development, however, came in 295 AD when Roman emperor Diocletian ordered a residence to be built there for his retirement, as it was close to the nearby large Roman settlement of Salona (present-day Solin, about 5km from Split).

It took ten years to build this magnificent palace and Diocletian lived there until he died in 313 AD. After his death, many Roman rulers continued to use it as a retreat although by the later part of the 6th century it had fallen into disrepair. In the 7th century,

when the Roman colony of Salona (Solin) was abandoned, many of its inhabitants sought sanctuary behind the palace's high walls and their descendants continued to live there over the centuries.

During the 11th century and after, the city of Split grew considerably in the areas around the palace. The city enjoyed a good degree of autonomy between the 12th and 14th centuries before it was conquered by the Venetians in 1420.

After the fall of Venetian rule in 1797, Split was ruled by the Austrians, and briefly by the French, before becoming part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that was formed in 1918. Much of its development occurred after 1920 when Zadar, Dalmatia's official capital, became an Italian enclave, and Split took its place as the main city in the region.

In 1941, the city was occupied by the Italians and a very strong resistance movement soon evolved with the city first being liberated in 1943, after the capitulation of Italy. Although then becoming occupied by Germany, it was finally in the October of 1944 that Split was liberated again when the first people's government of Croatia was formed. As part of Yugoslavia after World War II, Split experienced substantial growth as government investment in the city saw factories built for a number of different industries. Split had a large ship-building industry that saw Yugoslavia become one of the top countries in the world in that field; the city also became an important port. Split did not suffer much damage during the war that broke out in 1991, despite the Yugoslav Navy and the Yugoslav Army's coastal district being based there. Since Croatia's independence, Split has suffered as its once strong industry entered into decline although it has recovered somewhat in recent years.

Croatia – Coast and Islands

Day 2: Cycling the Island of Brac; Riding 35km with 80km option

Today you depart for island Brac, the biggest and highest of all central Dalmatian islands which will give you plenty of riding choices. Coastal roads, climbs to 780 meters, coastal or inland villages and towns, art galleries, local restaurants, stone masons workshops or even visit to the stone mason school.... Whatever you choose you will have great views on the mainland and a ride along olive groves and vineyards!

Diocletian's Palace (UNESCO heritage site)

The historic centre of Split is built around the remains of this Roman palace. You only need to wander around to experience it but you can also pay to visit the excavated remains of the basement of the palace. The palace has well preserved main streets *cardo* and *decumanus*. Roman palace is enriched with some gothic and renaissance buildings which makes a perfect match. Palace has 4 monumental gates *Porta Aurea* (Zlatna vrata, Golden gate), *Porta Argenta* (Srebrna vrata, Silver gate), *Porta Ferrea* (Željezna vrata, Iron gate) and *Porta Aenea* (Mjedena vrata, Bronze gate). It is probably the best preserved Roman palace in general.



ISLAND BRAC

The largest island of the central Dalmatian group of islands, the third largest among the Adriatic islands, Island Brac is separated from the mainland by the Brac Channel, from the island of Solta by the so-called Splitska Vrata (Split Gate) and from the Island of Hvar by the Hvar Channel. The highest peak of the island, Vidova Gora (Vitus' Mount) (778 m), is also the highest peak of all Croatian islands. The limestone part of the coast is rocky and steep, while the rest is rather low and sandy (on the southern side from Farska to Bol, and on the northern side from Sutivan to Supetar).

The island landscape is dominated by a karst limestone relief, with numerous gullies, crevices, cavities, round valleys and coves. Milder forms of the relief, with brown Primorje soils (the most fertile on the island), are found mostly in the interior (especially between Lozica and Nerezica, as well as between Selca, Novo Selo and Sumartin).

Composed primarily of limestone and dolomite, the quarries of the island of Brac have been a source of stone for building decorative stonework for centuries. The old Romans have known its quality and used this very stone to build cities, amphitheatres, temples, palaces and graves all over Dalmatia.

Major quarries, where the famous Brac building stone is excavated, are located near Pucisca, Selca, Postira, Splitska and Donji Humac (this kind of building stone was used in the construction of the White House in Washington and the Palace of Diocletian in Split).



The largest places are Pucisca and Supetar. Major farming products are olive oil, wine and fruit (sour cherries and almonds); chief occupations include also livestock breeding and fishing. Fish canneries are located in Postira and Milna.

Croatia – Coast and Islands

Day 3: Cycling the Island of Hvar; Riding 20-40km with added 20km option

After the ferry ride from Split to Hvar, for the morning ride we suggest easy ride around the UNESCO site of Stari Grad. Stari Grad (Old town) is an ancient Greek colony dating back to 400 B.C. Besides historical sites you will discover some very charming towns and roads where you will be cycling next to gardens, olive groves, or along the coast. For the afternoon bike ride, take the famous and probably most beautiful road along the lavender fields to reach the town of Hvar.

The Dominican monastery of St. Petar Mučenik (St. Peter the Martyr) was founded in 1482 by a venerable gentleman from Piacenza. At the end of the 16th C., following the Turkish attack on the island of Hvar, it was fortified with two rounded turrets. In the church, which was rebuilt in 1896, there is the tomb of the famous Croatian poet Petar Hektorović and his mother Katarina. Hektorović's lines in the Croatian language, from the 16th C., are carved into the stone over the church's entrance from the side of the cloister. This monastery's numerous works of art can be found on the altars (the most beautiful being a big, painted, wooden renaissance crucifix on the main altar) and in the monastery's museum. Undoubtedly the most valuable painting is the "Oplakivanje Krista" (The Mourning of Christ) by the Venetian master, Jacopo Tintoretto (1518–1594) that was once was in the Hektorović alter in the church. The oldest inscriptions to found in Croatia are preserved in this museum - written in Greek, they are testimony to the tempestuous life of the Greek town, Faros, from the 4th to the 2nd centuries B.C. There is a large library in the monastery with manuscripts and incunabula (the first printed books) and a part of that book's heritage is exposed in the monastery's museum.



ISLAND HVAR

Hvar, the island in Adriatic Sea, is the longest and the sunniest Croatian island and one of the most beautiful islands in the world. It is a part of the central Dalmatian archipelago. The island of Hvar was populated already in the prehistoric times and later inhabited by the Illyrians, who came into conflict with the Greek colonizers in the 4th century BC. In Oglavak and Košćak (near Sućuraj on the east cape of island) was the position of the Illyrian queen Teuta place. Numerous tumuli on the island are of Illyrian origin. Hvar accepted the Greek settlers but was the only one that had an Ionic settlement (Pharos, today Stari Grad). Hvar played an important role in the Roman-Illyrian conflicts, when its rulers (Demetrije Hvaranin) tried to preserve its independence. In Roman times Hvar lost its earlier importance. In the 7th century island Hvar came under the Principality of Croatia (Kingdom of Croatia since 925 till 1102). In the following centuries Hvar recognized the sovereignty of the Croatian-Hungarian ruler, the Bosnian King Tvrtko, the Split Duke Hrvoje, the Dubrovnik Republic, Venice, France, Austria, Italy, Yugoslavia and, finally, Republic of Croatia (since 1991). In the 16th and the 17th centuries Hvar was a prominent center of the Croatian literature (Petar Hektorović, Hanibal Lucić). The town of Hvar and other towns and villages on the island have numerous architectural and cultural monuments, which bear witness to outstanding artistic traditions of the island, the economic prosperity of its population and the relations Hvar used to maintain with cultural centers of the past centuries.

Croatia – Coast and Islands

Day 4: Cycling Hvar Island, Boat trip, or Day off; ride option 20km

This is a very difficult day (not really!), as you have to decide for the best option, and all of them are great! Do you want to head for the beach, or have a short bike ride, or just chill in the town in one of its many cafes and watch the world go by? You can also take a sailing or sea kayak trip to some of the islands around, maybe sunset sail, discover some great places followed with great lunch and swim; but these are extra and not included. You will find all of these options described in your road book.

The Fortress

Located in Hvar town, the Fortress is perched on a hill above the old town was built at the beginning of the 16th century (in the time of Venice). In 1579 it was restored after explosion of powder-chamber. Its final appearance came after many reconstructions. During French rule some additional reinforcement building was done. The barracks and observation post were built during Austrian rule. It hosts a prominent collection of amphorae and other objects from the ancient times and the Middle Ages. From the fortress toward the town square lead the city walls, built in the Middle Ages. This fortress dominates over the city. There is a beautiful panorama view of the town of Hvar and Pakleni Islands from the fortress.



SUCURAJ

The church of St. Anthony in Sućuraj (left) was built in 1663. During Venetian rule Sućuraj was at the point where three borders met; the Venetian, the Turkish and the state of Dubrovnik. Many of refugees came to Sućuraj from the coast in the 15th century, fleeing from the Turks. Refugees become inhabitants of Sućuraj and built this church. It has a distaff-styled baroque bell tower. The church has an archaeological collection of Sućuraj.

The lighthouse in Sućuraj (right) on the east cape of the island of Hvar was built in 1889. Close to this lighthouse there was the oldest one (from the beginning of 19th century), destroyed in the Second World War.

Grapčeva cave in Humac, near Jelsa (right) was the cultish place of a Neolithic Islander (5000 - 4000 years BC). The cave consists of a small hall and a larger one surrounded by hallways and chambers.



Croatia – Coast and Islands

Day 5: Bicycling the Island of Korcula; 46km riding + 20km option

After the boat transfer, start with your bike ride on island Korcula, about 46 kilometers to the town of Korcula. The island has long been populated; even before Greek times and evidences can be seen on your ride! During the history it was chosen by Venetians as a spot to build their important walled city on the northern shores of the island. Therefore, nowadays, thanks to that, we have the most magnificent walled old town of Korcula still preserved and almost intact for centuries; and where you sleep for next 2 nights. Enjoy the scenic south side of the island, with amazing views on beautiful hidden beaches and coves, and ride to the small villages and hamlets and stop in some of the few great local konoba (taverns) for the most amazing locally prepared food!



KORCULA TOWN

Korcula Old Town is the main attraction of Korcula Town - a medieval walled city positioned on a oval-shaped swelling of land pointing deep into Peljesac Channel. The Old Town itself is grooved with a succession of narrow streets that branch off the spine of the main street like the fish bone. Fish bone shape was used in Korcula Old Town design to reduce effects of wind and sun and provide citizens with sheltered and comfortable accommodation. The architecture in the Old Town is mainly influenced by Venetian Renaissance. The Old Town center is dominated by the splendid **St Mark's Cathedral** built in the Gothic-Renaissance style, completed in 15th century at the place of other church from 13th century.

There is a local legend that **Marco Polo** was born in Korcula Town and Marco Polo's alleged house of birth is worth visiting. Despite its rather featureless interior, the houses' tower (loggia) allows for a panoramic vista of Korcula, stretching from east to west. The house is under the protection of the Korcula Town Hall and it will soon be turned into a Museum of Marco Polo.

The **Korcula Town Museum** is also interesting to visit as it gives insights to Korcula's history, as it displays Korculan stonecarvings, Lumbarda Psephism and Ancient Greece artefacts, shipbuilding historical items, Renaissance Architectural Carvings and Coats of Arms Exhibits etc..

At night well known **Moreska Sword Dance**, a colorful, choreographed sword dance is also worth seeing. It is one of the many proud traditional sword dances that are performed on the island. It arrived in Korčula around the 16th century. Korčula also has a rich musical history of Klapa groups. Klapa is a form of a cappella style of singing. The tradition goes back centuries, but the style as we know it today, originated in the 19th century.

Croatia – Coast and Islands

Day 6: Loop bike ride on Korcula; 36km with 20km option

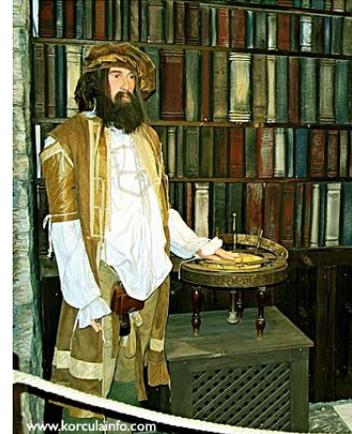
As you stay for another day in Korcula take a chance to explore the island of Korcula; its hidden coves, beautiful old towns, unique small villages and dark pine forests that cover the island. There are few loop options today. Whatever you choose, you will be making your way past vineyards, olive groves and along beautiful coast of the island. Taste the traditional food; like home made gnocchi, homemade macaroni, pasticada....and other meals which have been traditionally prepared by the locals for centuries.... Some of the best Croatian white wines are produced on this island, which will just add flavor to your lunch or dinner.

MARCO POLO BORN IN KORCULA?

Marco Polo is reputed to have been born in Korcula itself, although there is no real evidence to support this thesis .

Notwithstanding, Korcula town still boasts Marko Polo's alleged house of birth. The house itself is nothing special, but the tower (loggja) offers a great panoramic vista of Korcula, stretching from east to west. The house is under the protection of the Korcula Town Hall and it will soon be turned into a Museum of Marco Polo.

If Marco's place of birth is somewhat ambiguous, it is certain that he was taken prisoner by the Genoese in the naval battle of Korcula, between the Venetian and Genoese states. Having been captured and taken to a Genoese prison, he wrote his book Million about his travels to China.



Pasticada

As the traditional recipe, passed down through generations guides, the key to this dish is the careful preparation of the beef meat, even before the cooking starts. After tenderising and marinating the meat, the beef is slowly stewed in a rich wine gravy with vegetables. Served with gnocchi or traditional pasta "makaruni"; this is a delicious hearty meal.

A cartoon illustration of an elderly woman with grey hair, glasses, and a blue dress, holding a bowl of Brodet di Nonna. The background is a large, stylized leaf shape containing the recipe details.

BRODET di Nonna

— INGREDIENTS —

1/2kg grouper • 1/2kg sea eel • 1 frogfish • 3-4 small black fish/calamary • 2-3 scampi • 1-2 crabs • 1dl olive oil • 1 onion
4 cloves of garlic • 1 peeled plum tomato • 2 bay-leaves • rosemary, parsley, 5 grains of pepper • salt, flour, 1-2dl white wine

— PREPARATION —

Clean fish well and cut it in chunks (not too small) • Clean black fish/calamary also and cut them bite size • Roll the fish in the flour and fry it quickly both sides in hot oil (just until it gets that nice golden colour) and then place onto a plate • Place chopped onion, parsley and garlic onto that same hot oil and when nicely fried add black fish/calamary, scampi and crab • Fry some more then add chopped tomato, bay-leaves, rosemary and place back fried fish from the plate • Carefully add some water, some salt and grains of pepper, cover and cook for another 15-20min (med. fire)
Add white wine and cook for 20min • Always SHAKE the pan NEVER stir!

Best served with POLENTA!

Brodet

Another must try, but rarely served in the mainstream restaurants has to be 'brodet'. This is a regional fish dish that will certainly get your taste buds tingling. Made up of fresh white or blue fish, cooked with juicy tomatoes, parsley, garlic and white wine then served with either polenta or rice. This startling simplicity creates a culinary masterpiece.

Croatia – Coast and Islands

Day 7: Cycling Peljesac peninsula (60km) and Dubrovnik

Today, for your final ride, you will be cruising along Peljesac peninsula. You will be riding along vineyards of Dingac and Postup, made from the Plavac Mali vines, close cousin to Zinfandel of California and Primitivo from Calabria. There are many wineries which can be visited along the ride. Enjoy the great views that Peljesac offers: Mljet and Korcula islands on your right and the mainland on your left. The ride today has a couple of hills, coastal riding, vineyards... Your final bike destination is Ston, from where you will be transferred to Dubrovnik. Ston, a salt producing village on Peljesac peninsula was built in the 14th century and is a town that has with the longest fortified walls in Europe – 5.5 km. Ston was important town of the Dubrovnik Republic, which was strongest and most prosperous in the 14th century.

The Great Wall of Croatia

Ask any one to name a great wall and the chances are that the word *China* will appear somewhere in their answer. However, a small town in Croatia has a well kept secret – a wall hundreds of years old which is the longest complete fortress system around a town in Europe –and the second in the world. Yet very few seem to have heard of the Walls of Ston. It is a little isolated, on the Peljesac Peninsula which is situated 60 km away from Dubrovnik. Ston and its neighboring village of Mali Ston have a secret which is visible to all. Connecting the two is a simply amazing wall, more than five kilometers in length. The walls circle the village of Ston and then climb up the hill to reach the Pozvizi Fortress. When they were built, starting in the 15th century, they were heavily fortified – there are 30 rectangular towers and 10 round ones dotted along the 5-kilometer stretch. What was it that they were built to protect? Apart from serving as a first line of defense for the fairly distant city of Dubrovnik they were constructed to protect a precious commodity – salt.



Although they have not been used militarily for centuries they are still a sight to behold. In the middle ages the area became a center for salt mining which continues to this day. Before falling in to disrepair the walls that surrounded to town were to protect the then Dubrovnik Republic – a city state of the Venetian mode. The walls form an irregular pentagon and took around two centuries to build.

Peljesac peninsula

Peljesac is a peninsula in southern Croatia, in the Dubrovnik - Neretva county, just about an hour and a half drive from Dubrovnik. It is around 70 km long and is connected with Croatian Mainland at Ston. The Peljesac Channel divides the peninsula from the island of Korcula. Scattered like breadcrumbs across the foothills of the dolomites, the hamlets and villages of southern Peljesac evoke an ancient past. The rocks, the vegetation, the groves of pine and cypress - everywhere a sense of timelessness prevails. On the hills above the sea, abandoned villas and gardens, stone walls and columns lie crumbling in the sun. Lemon, fig and almond trees, herbs and wildflowers surround the villages gardens and fields. The historical sea captains' town of Orebic - with its shops, market, cafes and restaurants is on the bottom of the Sveti Ilija Mountain. A footpath into the mountains to the summit of Sveti Ilija begins near Viganj too - Croatia's windsurfing capital. There, seaside restaurants and pebbly beaches attract a lively crowd in summer months. The island of Korcula and Mljet are just across the channel.



Croatia – Coast and Islands

Day 8: Departure on your own after breakfast

Today after breakfast the tour ends. You might want to extend your stay in Dubrovnik and explore the historical sites along with the magnificent wall that surrounds the old town!

DUBROVNIK

The Croatian name of Dubrovnik is derived from the word dubrava (forest), while the Latin name Ragusa - Ragusa originated from the name of the island where the first settlement was established (Lave, Lausa). Dubrovnik was probably founded in the first half of the 7th century, upon the fall of the nearby Epidaurum (today's Cavtat) during the Avaro-Slavic invasion on Dalmatia. Opposite of that location, at the foot of Srđ mountain, developed a Croatian settlement under the name of Dubrovnik, after which, in the course of time, the entire town was named. Having been granted the entire self-government (bound to pay only a tribute to the king and providing assistance with its fleet), from that moment Dubrovnik started its life as a free state that reached its peak in the 15th and the 16th centuries. A crisis of Mediterranean shipping and especially a catastrophic earthquake in 1667 put Dubrovnik in a very difficult economic position. During the period of independence of Dubrovnik, the state administration was in hands of the aristocracy. The head of the state was the Duke, elected for a term of office of one month. In the course of several centuries Dubrovnik grew into the most powerful economic centre on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, trading both in the Orient and the Occident, developing a powerful fleet of merchant and war ships and maintaining diplomatic relations with a number of countries and cities. Dubrovnik had its Statute as early as 1272, which, among others, codified the town-planning and hygienic regulations (organization of quarantines). Dubrovnik was an outstanding literary centre in the Renaissance (M. Držić, I. Gundulić); the centre of the local painting school in the 15th-16th century; the birth-place of several world-famous scientists, such as the physicists Marin Getaldić and Ruđer Bošković, the economic theoretician Benedikt Kotruljić, the composers Lukša Sorkočević, Ivan Mane Jarnović and other. Dubrovnik was the cradle of humanism and Latinism on the Croatian coast of the Adriatic.

Must do in Dubrovnik

- Walking around the **city walls of Dubrovnik**; this can take up to 2h. Make sure it is not too crowded, if there are 2-3 cruise ships in the town, the walls can be packed
- Walking or taking lift to **Srđ** (mountain above the city). There is a war museum up there. If you are interested in last war which happened in the area, might be worth visiting.
- Having a **sunset drink at Buža** : this is a bar, located outside of city walls. You have to find a whole in the south wall of city, and then you will be at most amazing aperitif spot in Dubrovnik with overview on the ocean and islands in front of the town.
- **Vsit**: Rector's palace, Jewish synagogue and museum, memorial of fallen fighters, St Blaze's church, Dominican and Franciscan monastery (Old Pharmacy) and city harbor
- **Stradun** – main road in the old town. You won't be able to miss it. This street joins two entrances to the old town; Ploče and Pile.



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After your tour, if you could share some pictures and videos with us, we would really be grateful! Your snapshots and short films are always appreciated, and we love seeing our clients have fun on tour since we rarely get to see you in person!

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