

# Journey to Croatia + Montenegro - With the Truffle Days festival

15 days

Highlighted by the annual Truffle Days festival in Istria, our original journey reveals all the stories and beauty of these enchanting lesser-visited areas of Europe. Amidst soaring mountains, lovely coastal vistas and charming medieval towns, our extensive expertly guided sightseeing is enhanced by genuine personal encounters that reveal the true essences of these remarkable lands.



## Our Distinctive A+R Style

- + Spend time on a family-owned truffle estate on the Istrian Peninsula and join their highly trained dogs in the forest to hunt for truffles.
- + Join in the festivities of Truffle Days where regional wines are showcased along with special dishes devoted to this prized delicacy.
- + Behold the inspiring beauty of Plitvice Lakes and the Bay of Kotor, the only fjord in southern Europe.
- + Embark on a jeep adventure into the glacier formed landscapes of Durmitor National Park.
- + Spend time with farmers and artisans in the Montenegrin Highlands for a genuine experience of daily life.
- + Delve into the dramatic history of the Siege of Sarajevo at the Freedom Tunnel Museum.
- + Fully Escorted with 14 nights deluxe and luxury hotels; 35 meals with wine at lunch and dinner; comprehensive sightseeing; all transfers; and all gratuities except Trip Leader.

Visit 7 UNESCO World Heritage Sites 🌐

### Day 1 – Welcome to Zagreb, Croatia

On arrival, you'll be warmly greeted at the airport and escorted to the *Hotel Esplanade*. Situated in an elegant 1925 landmark building originally constructed to accommodate passengers on the storied *Orient-Express Train*, our deluxe hotel offers a sophisticated welcome in the heart of this vibrant city. This evening, you'll gather with your fellow travelers for a congenial welcome dinner featuring fine regional cuisine and local wine. Meals D

### Day 2 – Discover Zagreb

This morning's guided walking tour through the historic heart of this cultured city includes the National Theater. Built in 1895, this Neo-Baroque landmark continues to offer world-class performances of theater, opera and ballet. You'll also mingle with residents at a colorful local market and ride the city's turn-of-the-century funicular to explore historic Upper Town. Among the architectural highlights here, the twin spires of the neo-gothic Zagreb Cathedral tower over the other fine landmarks that grace Kaptol Square. Dating back to the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a number of restorations over the centuries added unique elements including handsome Baroque altars of wood and marble which were added in the 1600's. Following lunch, your afternoon is at leisure to enjoy more of Zagreb at your own pace. Culinary enthusiasts will want to spend more time at Dolac, the city's lively food market. Meals B+L+D

### Day 3 – Onward to Istria

Leaving the capital behind this morning, we'll travel to the northern shores of the Adriatic where the Istria peninsula sits nestled against the Slovenian border. Here you'll spend time on a family truffle estate that has been devoted to this highly-prized delicacy for generations. On arrival, an informal

talk about truffle hunting and the family's history is accompanied by a tasting of their home-made brandy. Then set out with their highly-trained dogs into the beautiful autumnal woods of their estate for a first-hand experience in truffle hunting! Back at the farmhouse, you'll sit down to a congenial luncheon featuring a variety of truffle-themed dishes.

In the afternoon, you'll visit the Aura Distillery to learn about this family-run enterprise and to sample its delicious products, including brandies and jams flavored with wild herbs and fruits gathered in the forests and mountains of Istria. Then continue to the lovely coastal town of Lovran where you'll check in to the stylish *Hotel Villa Vera* for a 2-night stay near the waterfront.  
Meals B+L

#### **Day 4 – Truffle Days Festival**

This morning's scenic drive southward brings us to Pula near the tip of the Istrian Peninsula. Rich with culture and history, our guided tour through this charming town on the Adriatic reveals its splendid centuries-old architecture, some of it dating back to the Roman Empire. Chief among these highlights is the ancient Arena, completed 68 AD and distinguished as the only Roman amphitheater with its surrounding circular wall completely intact. Next we'll visit a nearby family-owned farm for a tour of its olive groves and a tasting of their fine olive oils.

This afternoon, we'll spend our time at the Truffle Days festival. Well known to the ancient Greeks and Romans and revered by the wealthy during the Austro-Hungarian Empire, truffles are only found in certain regions of Europe – including here in Istria. October is the prime season for white truffles and this much-anticipated festival is devoted to this rare delicacy. With our engaging guide, you'll enjoy all the fun and enrichment offered by this popular festival – from a truffle tasting menu and truffle hunting demonstration to meeting local wine growers and tasting their fine vintages. Back at the Hotel Villa Vera in Lovran, the evening is free to dine where you wish. Meals B+L

#### **Day 5 – Plitvice Lakes National Park + Trogir... Then Onward to Split**

This morning, you'll discover the breathtaking beauty of Plitvice Lakes National Park 🌍. Over thousands of years, flowing waters over limestone and chalk have left behind travertine barriers. These natural dams have, in turn, created a remarkable series of 16 terraced lakes that tumble down the hillside. Ranging in hue from azure and emerald to steely grey, they're connected by rushing cascades that continue the geological processes that originally created them.

Today, well maintained trails and unobtrusive wooden walkways allow you to behold and experience the majestic beauty of these pristine lakes and their beautiful forest setting. You'll also enjoy a short cruise across the largest of Plitvice's lakes before continuing to Trogir 🌍 for a guided stroll including St. Lawrence Cathedral – the showpiece of this charming medieval town. Built between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, its triple-nave style and grandly carved portal reflect Venetian influences.

At a local winery, we've arranged for a tasting of the region's wine and brandy followed by dinner. Then continue to Split and check in to the *Hotel Luxe*. Meals B+L+D

#### **Day 6 – Ancient Wonders of Split**

Your tour of Split's ancient landmarks begins with the magnificent palace of Emperor Diocletian 🌍. Built between the late 3<sup>rd</sup> and early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries, the outlines of this vast palace form the heart of the Old City today. A startling portion of the palatial complex is remarkably well preserved, and it is the most valuable example of ancient Roman architecture on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. Your tour also includes Peristil Square; now the city's popular main square, this was in Diocletian's time the entry hall to his palace, and it was here that the Emperor would address Roman citizens.

After sightseeing, enjoy lunch on your own and a free afternoon to continue exploring at your own pace. Outside the Palace, you will find charming piazzas and a beautiful waterfront with inviting restaurants and cafes. This evening you'll dine at one of our favorite restaurants here in Split.  
Meals B+D

### **Day 7 – Mostar + Sarajevo**

Leaving Split behind, you'll journey this morning across the border into Bosnia & Herzegovina to explore the historic town of Mostar. Set against a rugged mountain backdrop along the meandering Neretva River, Mostar grew from a simple riverside crossing into an important settlement and provincial capital of the Ottoman Empire. Delve into the region's complex and often turbulent history as you explore the town's historic quarter, graced with finely restored Ottoman-era buildings including the 500-year-old mosque.

You'll also see the celebrated Stari Most (Old Bridge) 🏰, originally built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and then reconstructed after its near total destruction in 1993. Continue to the inviting *Bristol Hotel*, set along a riverside promenade in Sarajevo. Meals B+L+D

### **Day 8 – Get to Know Sarajevo**

Join your guide after breakfast for a guided city tour including the Latin Bridge, also known as the Princip Bridge. Built by the Ottomans, it was here that Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated by Gavrilo Princip in 1914. This of course sparked a war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia which then escalated into World War I.

You'll also see the Emperor's Mosque, built in 1457 after the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia, and the Franciscan Monastery of St. Anthony. The Sarajevo Freedom Tunnel Museum offers a sobering yet inspiring look at how residents survived the Siege of Sarajevo. Originally extending for nearly 900 yards, this hand-dug tunnel supplied arms and food during the 3-year siege. Much of the tunnel has since collapsed, but this fascinating museum includes a 65-foot section of the original tunnel as well as the shell-pounded house that hid the tunnel entrance. Meals B+D

### **Day 9 – By Jeep through Durmitor National Park**

Depart Sarajevo this morning and embark on a jeep expedition into magnificent Durmitor National Park 🏞️, recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its breathtaking landscapes. Formed by glaciers and traversed by rivers, the park is covered with dense pine forests interspersed with clear pristine lakes. This stunning Alpine region is also home to no fewer than 48 peaks which soar to altitudes over 6,500 feet.

Enjoy lunch amidst this scenic beauty and then behold Tara Canyon; reaching depths of more than 4,200 feet, this is the deepest river gorge in Europe. Continue to Kolasin, a charming town cradled by forests and mountains. Arrive in time for dinner at the *Bianca Resort & Spa*, where you'll enjoy two wonderful nights surrounded by the chalet ambience and casual sophistication of this deluxe mountain retreat. Meals B+L+D

### **Day 10 – Into the Highlands of Montenegro**

Enjoy breakfast at your mountain resort before traveling by jeep into the Highlands, learning about the region's unique cultural traditions and taking in sweeping vistas of the virgin forests that cradle Biogradsko Lake. Experience a slice of daily life as you meet with farmers who live simply in their cottages – making crafts and tending their sheep in the picturesque mountain pastures.

Sit down to a hearty lunch of traditional fare in one of these rustic wooden cottages or, weather permitting, enjoy a delightful picnic in a mountain meadow. This evening's dinner at your hotel features regional cuisine and Montenegrin specialties. Meals B+L+D

### **Day 11 – Through the Moraca Canyon to Kotor**

Check out from your hotel after breakfast and journey through the beautiful mountain scenery to visit the historic Moraca Monastery. Founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and surrounded by a lovely courtyard garden, this important Orthodox Monastery is home to magnificent ancient frescoes and painted icons from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Continue across Mount Lovćen to Cetinje, the old royal capital, to visit the National Museum of Montenegro. Situated in a complex of historic buildings, this renowned institution traces the history, culture and art of the country from ancient times through the World Wars and the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

Stop in the charming village of Njegusi for a light lunch of the region's specialties - locally smoked hams and cheeses. Then descend from the highlands via a serpentine road with breathtaking views of Europe's southernmost fjord. Reaching the coast, you'll check in to the stylish *Regent Porto Montenegro*; nestled on palm-fringed shores along the Adriatic in the heart of Porto Montenegro village, our luxury resort evokes the grandeur of an Italian palazzo. You'll have free time before dinner to enjoy the idyllic setting and amenities of this outstanding hotel. Meals B+L+D

### **Day 12 – Kotor + Budva**

After breakfast, we'll take you to nearby Kotor 🇹🇷. Wedged between rugged forested mountains and the blue waters of Kotor Bay, this handsome 13<sup>th</sup>-century town is filled with winding cobblestone streets and gracious old architecture. Accompanied by our engaging guide, you'll discover its mighty medieval ramparts and tour the Cathedral of St. Tryphon, an impressive landmark that traces its history to 1166. You'll have free time to experience Kotor's charms at your own pace; active travelers may wish to ascend the old city walls that wind their way up the surrounding slopes. Even if you don't go very far, the views are rewarding!

From Kotor, continue along the Luštica Peninsula, beloved for its spectacular coastal landscapes and known for its artisanal food products and wine. Here in this beautiful setting, you'll visit an olive estate to experience firsthand the region's timeless ways – where enduring agrarian traditions blend harmoniously with the most up-to-date and sustainable farming and production methods. Of course, you'll sample some of the local farm-fresh fare before returning to your luxury resort. With some free time this afternoon, you might indulge in a treatment at the *Regent Spa* or explore along the beautiful waterfront. This evening we've made special arrangements for our intimate group to dine in the home of a local chef. Meals B+L+D

### **Day 13 – Bay of Kotor to Dubrovnik**

Check out from the *Regent* to embark on a guided cruise onto the tranquil waters of the Bay; it's the perfect way to take in the surrounding landscape of steep, forested slopes, colorful marinas and charming medieval villages. On a small island in the Bay of Kotor, you'll step off to visit Our Lady of the Rocks, a lovely 17<sup>th</sup>-century Baroque Church rich with colorful stories and legends.

After a delightful lunch in the seaside town of Perast, you'll continue onward to Dubrovnik 🇹🇷. Enjoy a guided walking tour through its beautifully preserved Old Town, set within impressive ramparts on a stunning stretch of the Dalmatian Coast. Among the landmarks you'll admire is the Rector's Palace, built in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century in Gothic style and embellished with Renaissance and Baroque flourishes. Then check in to the *Hilton Imperial*. Our deluxe hotel is perfectly situated just steps away from the old city gate. This evening is free to dine when and where you wish. There are many inviting cafes and restaurants in Old Town, and our in-the-know guide is happy to offer personalized suggestions. Meals B+L

### **Day 14 – A Day at Leisure**

Hailed as the "Pearl of the Adriatic," Dubrovnik was an important Mediterranean sea power from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Although heavily damaged by an earthquake in 1667 and again during the 1990's by armed conflict, the city has been meticulously restored. Today it is one of Europe's most beautifully preserved walled cities and it boasts a wealth of Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque churches, monasteries, palaces and fountains. With a prime location near the medieval city gate, our deluxe hotel makes it easy for you to step out and explore this celebrated gem at your own pace. In addition to exploring the architectural monuments that grace the cobblestone lanes of the Old Town, you'll want take some time to enjoy its galleries, boutiques, cafes and restaurants! This evening, you'll gather again with your fellow travelers for a congenial farewell dinner. Meals B+D

### **Day 15 – Depart Dubrovnik**

After breakfast, we'll take you to the airport for your onward journey. Meals B