

Journey to Croatia + Montenegro - *Truffle Season*

15 days

Highlighted by time spent in Istria during truffle season, 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.
- + Discover the beautiful Istrian seaside towns Pula and Rovinj.
- + Behold the inspiring beauty of Plitvice Lakes and the Bay of Kotor, the only fjord in southern Europe.
- + Venture over to the Island of Hvar off the coast of Split.
- + Delve into the dramatic history of the Siege of Sarajevo at the Freedom Tunnel Museum.
- + Delight in various olive oil, truffle, and wine tastings throughout your journey.
- + Fully Escorted with 14 nights deluxe and luxury hotels; 32 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 Museum of Broken Relationships. 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 13th 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, you'll have an informal talk about truffle hunting and the family's history before setting 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 – Pula + Rovinj

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 drive north to Rovinj, a picturesque Istrian fishing port, where you'll embark on a lively walking tour. 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 13th and 15th 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 Cornaro*. 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 3rd and early 4th 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 – A Day Trip to the Island of Hvar

After breakfast, board the ferry for a scenic cruise to the island of Hvar. Enjoy a guided walking tour in this historic coastal town, a strategic harbor for Venice's mighty Adriatic fleet from the 12th through 18th centuries. Learn about Hvar's impressive landmarks including the Cathedral of St. Stephen, built in the early 1600's on the site of an earlier 9th-century church. After some free time to explore the town's ancient, cobbled streets on your own, we'll take you to a vineyard estate for a tour and luncheon. Later this afternoon, board the return ferry to Split and enjoy the balance of your evening to dine and relax as you wish. Meals B+L

Day 8 – 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 16th century and then reconstructed after its near total destruction in 1993. Continue to the inviting *President Hotel*, centrally located in the Old Town section of Sarajevo. This evening, we'll take you to a local restaurant to sample the regional cuisine. Meals B+L+D

Day 9 – Get to Know Sarajevo

Join your guide after breakfast for an enlightening tour starting at the Sarajevo Freedom Tunnel Museum. 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; it's a sobering yet inspiring look at how residents survived the Siege of Sarajevo

Returning to the city center, your walking tour includes the historic 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. After sightseeing, the balance of your afternoon is free to explore and enjoy as you wish. This evening's dinner offers another opportunity to sample Bosnian cuisine. Meals B+D

Day 10 – Onward to Tivat

Leaving Sarajevo behind this morning, we'll venture into the lush mountain landscapes of Sutjeska National Park to visit the Tjentište War Memorial. Erected in the 1970's, this striking and evocative monument pays tribute to the Yugoslavian forces and civilians who lost their lives in the Battle of Sutjeska, one of the bloodiest World War II battles in Yugoslavia. Then continue onward to Trebinje, a pleasant riverside town in the southwest corner of Bosnia & Herzegovina. We'll stop here for lunch

before traveling across the border into Montenegro. Our destination is the inviting town of Tivat, situated on the Bay of Kotor. Check in to the luxurious *Regent Porto Montenegro* for a leisurely 3-night stay. Meals B+L

Day 11 – Kotor and Lustica Peninsula

After breakfast, we'll take you to nearby Kotor. Wedged between rugged forested mountains and the blue waters of Kotor Bay, this handsome 13th-century town is filled with winding cobblestone streets and gracious old architecture. Accompanied by our engaging guide, you'll discover 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 spectacular Luštica Peninsula, known for its artisanal food products and wine. Visit an olive estate to experience firsthand the region's timeless agrarian ways and sample some of the local farm-fresh fare. Then return to Tivat on the Bay of Kotor where you'll have free time to enjoy Porto Montenegro: Home to multi-million-dollar super yachts and a lovely promenade lined with inviting boutiques and cafes, this is one of the most prestigious marina developments on the Adriatic Sea. Later this evening, we'll take you to a local restaurant known for its fine Montenegrin specialties. Meals B+L+D

Day 12 – A Day at Leisure

This entire day is free to soak in the ambience of Porto Montenegro and its idyllic seaside setting. You might explore more of the upscale marina district or indulge in a treatment at the Regent Spa. During the day, we will offer scheduled transfers to Kotor if you wish to explore more of the town's rich history and medieval architecture. This evening, gather with your fellow travelers for another elegant meal. Meals B+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 17th-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 🇭🇷. Check in to our deluxe hotel, perfectly situated just steps away from the old city gate and enjoy a bit of time to relax and refresh. Then join our engaging guide for a walking tour through Dubrovnik's 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 15th century in Gothic style and embellished with Renaissance and Baroque flourishes. 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 13th 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