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An Insider's Guide to Where to Stay, Eat & Go in Croatia

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Travel Advisor

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Image courtesy of Villa Dubrovnik

Traditionally one of Europe's most underrated destinations, Croatia is having a moment. And with its sparkling coastline, delicious local flavors and rich history, it's clear to see why. Discover the country's intriguing regions, each with its unique personality, and experience everything from island hopping on a catamaran to stepping back in time among ancient ruins.

Read on to discover some of my favorite sites, activities and restaurants, plus my top choices for where to stay in Croatia. Discover why the allure of the Dalmatian Coast is at the top of so many bucket lists and why it should be on yours. Connect with me to plan your ideal Croatia getaway, and learn how I can unlock VIP perks at partner hotels.

Need to Know

- **Currency:** €, Euro (EUR)
- **Languages:** Croatian (official), Italian (common in coastal areas), English (increasingly understood in tourist areas)
- **Airport:** Several options depending on your final destination (Dubrovnik Airport (DBV), Split Airport (SPU), Zagreb Airport (ZAG), Rijeka Airport (RJK))
- **Transportation:** Ferry between coastal towns and islands, private boats for faster connections, private car rentals for exploring the mainland, taxis readily available in major cities.
- **Best time to visit:** Shoulder seasons (April–May, September–October) offer pleasant weather and fewer crowds. Peak season (June–August) boasts sunshine and warm waters but can be crowded.
- **Ideal length of stay:** Minimum of 7-10 days to experience different regions. A two-week stay allows for more relaxed exploration, including island hopping.
- **Signature dishes:** Black risotto (crni rižot), peka (stew baked under coal), buzara (seafood stew), pašticada (beef slowly cooked in red wine sauce), fresh truffles (in Istria)
- **Key phrases:** Dobar dan (hello), hvala (thank you), molim (please), ne razumijem (I don't understand), doviđenja (goodbye)
- **Dress code:** Croatia is generally casual, but pack comfortable shoes for exploring. Opt for slightly dressier attire for nicer restaurants in the evenings, especially in Dubrovnik and Hvar. Pack light layers for unpredictable weather in spring and fall months.

Dubrovnik

Known as the Pearl of the Adriatic, Dubrovnik is a picturesque coastal city renowned for its ancient city walls, stunning architecture and azure waters. Immerse yourself in the city's rich

history as you stroll through its enchanting Old Town, and don't miss the gourmet dining experiences, some with stunning sea views.



Images courtesy of Hotel Bellevue and Sun Gardens Dubrovnik

Where to stay in Dubrovnik

Sun Gardens Dubrovnik: A picturesque seaside resort with an airy beachy vibe and a host of on-site activities. Book with me to receive LHW Leader's Club perks like daily breakfast for two.

Villa Dubrovnik (Closed for renovations until late summer): A majestic clifftop hotel with sea views and a stellar reputation for exceptional service and luxurious design. Book with me to unlock Virtuoso perks, including daily breakfast, a hotel credit, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

Hotel Bellevue Dubrovnik: Contemporary designer hotel perched atop a cliff with an indoor pool and beach access.

Hotel Excelsior: Sophisticated choice for dramatic sea views and a luxe spa with an indoor pool.

What to do in Dubrovnik

Dubrovnik's well-preserved Old Town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a delight to explore. Wander through its cobblestone streets and peruse artisan boutiques, historic churches, grand palaces and museums. Don't miss landmarks like the Stradun (main street), the [Rectors Palace](#) and the [Franciscan Monastery](#).

One of its most iconic features, [Dubrovnik's city walls](#) encourage travelers to take a leisurely stroll and enjoy panoramic Adriatic Sea views. Vantage points atop the walls offer fantastic photo opportunities and a unique perspective of the city's architecture. Another fantastic way to see breathtaking views is Dubrovnik's cable car. This trip puts travelers atop Mount Srđ, offering incredible panoramic vistas, especially at sunset.

Just a 10-minute boat ride from Dubrovnik, [Lokrum Island](#) offers a peaceful escape from the city crowds. A filming location for Game of Thrones, the island's Benedictine monastery, medieval fortress and scenic trails make it a perfect day trip.

Where to eat in Dubrovnik

From traditional cafes serving regional favorites to airy patios dishing up the freshest seafood, Dubrovnik highlights an array of cuisine. For a romantic night out, head to [Nautika Restaurant](#), where upscale prix fixe and à la carte menus are served with a waterfront view. Set on a charming cobblestone street, [Lucin Kantun](#) is an intimate spot dishing up classic fare with an upscale twist, such as sea urchin and Dalmatian prosciutto.

For a taste of regional fare, [Restaurant Kopun](#) is a family-friendly venue specializing in traditional plates, such as pašticada (a beef stew), seafood in prošek (a sweet wine) and brodet (fish stew). Venture outside Old Town for a unique dining experience at [Konoba Dubrava](#), which specializes in peka, a traditional Croatian dish of meat or seafood slow-cooked under coal with a bell-shaped lid.

Split & Šibenik

Two of Croatia's most scenic coastal cities, Split and Šibenik abound in fascinating history and captivating Adriatic charm. In Split, wander through the ancient palace walls and bustling markets, then hop on a ferry to explore the sun-drenched islands dotting the coastline. Šibenik invites visitors to discover its magnificent UNESCO-listed cathedral and unwind in its hidden cafes, offering a quieter but equally unforgettable experience.



Image courtesy of Vestibul Palace

Where to stay in Split & Šibenik

Vestibul Palace (Split): A stone palace within an easy stroll of neighborhood sights. Fora's perks with SLH withIN include a hotel credit, daily breakfast for two, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

D-Resort (Šibenik): A design-forward hotel on a peninsula with stunning sea views. Fora's Tablet Pro partner perks include a \$100 hotel credit, daily breakfast for two, an upgrade and complimentary valet parking.

What to do in Split & Šibenik

In Split, where ancient sights mingle with bustling city cafes and shops, you can step into the grandeur of Diocletian's Palace. As you wander from the palace, head to the Riva, a palm tree-lined waterfront promenade, perfect for a leisurely stroll or a sunset cocktail at one of its chic bars. Nature lovers can explore the trails at nearby Marjan Forest Park or get out on the sparkling Adriatic with a catamaran hire.

About an hour up the coast from Split, Šibenik beckons with its regal Cathedral of St. James, a UNESCO gem and St. Michael's Fortress, where sunset views will take your breath away. Other popular stops include nearby vineyards and dramatic waterfalls at Krka National Park.

Where to eat in Split & Šibenik

Split has an abundance of cafes and restaurants, ranging from simple cafes to upscale eateries. Away from the busy crowds, Konoba Marjan exudes a modern vibe and dishes up specialty seafood recipes. Another seafood-centric find is Restoran Para di šoto, a quaint spot with charming terrace seating. And don't miss savoring a meal at Bokeria Kitchen & Wine, a vibrant and airy venue for creative plates and wine pairings.

In Šibenik, Pelegrini creates an exquisite fine dining experience, beautifully blending local ingredients with modern techniques. Featuring terrace seating, Konoba Nostalgija provides a cozy ambiance where guests can savor regional dishes. For more laid-back dining, Pa'Kai is a charming garden cafe serving up Asian-inspired bowls, soups and salads, while Bronzin features trellis-covered seating and traditional Dalmatian fare.

Hvar Island & Pelješac Peninsula

Get back to nature on Hvar Island and the Pelješac Peninsula, where the varied landscapes and crystal clear waters take center stage. Hvar charms with its sunny beaches, vibrant lavender fields and a bustling nightlife, while Pelješac offers a quieter escape with its rolling vineyards and pristine waters, perfect for wine tasting and leisurely coastal walks.

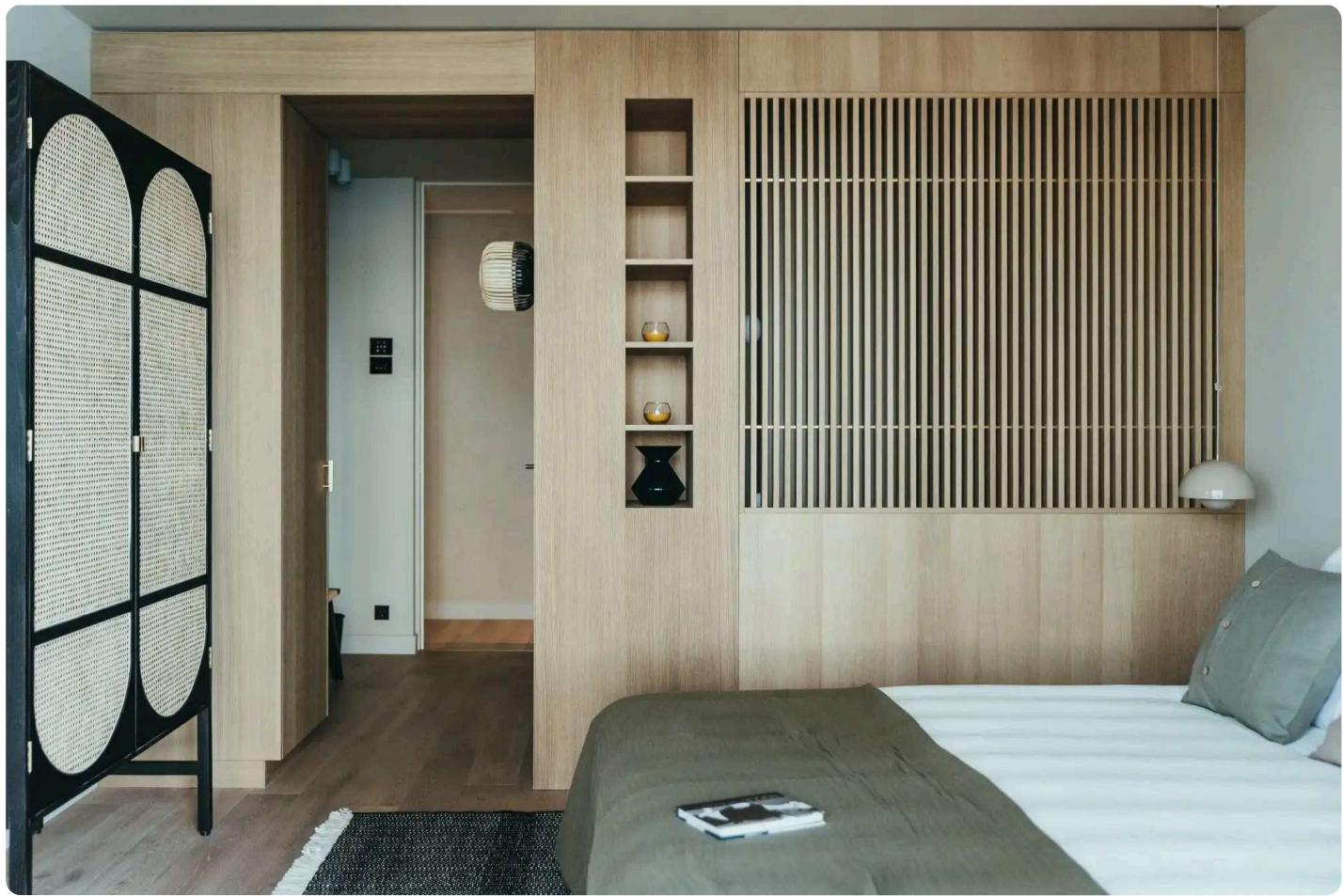


Image courtesy of Maslina Resort

Where to stay on Hvar Island & the Pelješac Peninsula

Maslina Resort (Stari Grad): A wellness-focused property touting contemporary design and gorgeous sea views. Fora VIP perks include a \$100 resort credit, daily breakfast for two, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

Palace Elisabeth, Hvar Heritage Hotel (Hvar): A majestic hotel steeped in history and close to the ferry. Book with me to receive a \$100 resort credit, daily breakfast for two, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

Villa Korta Katarina & Winery (Pelješac Peninsula): A grand destination stay featuring a sweeping vineyard and Adriatic views. Book with me to unlock VIP Relais & Chateaux perks like daily breakfast for two.

What to do on Hvar Island & the Pelješac Peninsula

Known for its fine wines including Dingač and Plavac Mali, the Pelješac Peninsula is a destination for wine lovers. Visitors can learn about the wine-making process and savor

vintages while soaking in lovely vineyard views. Another fascinating stop is Ston, a historic town known for its impressive defensive walls and its salt production.

Hvar (both an island and a town) is all about the coast, offering plenty of picturesque beaches and water activities (try sea kayaking or sailing to nearby islands!), as well as spectacular hiking and bike trails. Wander through the historic streets of Hvar Town, where you can visit the ancient fortress for panoramic views of the harbor and the Pakleni Islands. The town square, surrounded by lively cafes and Venetian architecture, is not to be missed.

Where to eat on Hvar Island & the Pelješac Peninsula

In Hvar Town, dining options range from charming and casual to sophisticated elegance. Dalmatino is a cozy, family-run spot offering traditional Dalmatian dishes with a modern twist, where seafood lovers can indulge in freshly caught fish. Another gem, Lungo Mare, provides a wonderful seaside dining experience, perfect for enjoying a sunset meal with views over the Adriatic.

Over on the Pelješac Peninsula, Ston is home to Bota Šare Mali, famed for its oysters and mussels sourced directly from the local beds. Head here for the freshest seafood and sunset views. For an authentic dining experience, Konoba Andiamo in Orebić offers a seaside setting and a menu featuring local specialties and simply prepared seafood dishes.

Istria & Kvarner

Positioned on Croatia's northern Adriatic coast, Istria and Kvarner offer a blend of seaside havens and historic finds. Explore Istria's Roman ruins and taste its famed truffles and wines, or unwind along Kvarner's stunning coastal towns on pristine beaches with towering mountain backdrops. Whether you're seeking a culinary adventure, historical exploration or simply a tranquil seaside escape, discover my top picks for these destinations.



Image courtesy of Grand Park Hotel Rovinj

Where to stay in Istria & Kvarner

Grand Park Hotel Rovinj: Sleek modern hotel with tiered hillside rooms and dreamy sea views. Fora's VIP perks include a \$100 resort credit, daily breakfast for two, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

Kempinski Hotel Adriatic Istria Croatia: Posh waterfront resort boasting plush rooms, private villas and beach access. Book with me to unlock Kempinski Club 1897 perks like a resort credit, daily breakfast for two, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

Ikador Luxury Boutique Hotel & Spa (Kvarner): A refined hotel boasting contemporary decor, an on-site spa and a sea-view pool. Book with me to receive VIP perks like a food and beverage credit, daily breakfast for two, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

What to do in Istria & Kvarner

With an enchanting mix of activities and sights, Istria & Kvarner offer glimpses of the area's rich history paired with stunning natural beauty. In Istria, the ancient Roman amphitheater in

Pula stands as a testament to the region's deep historical roots and still hosts live performances. Nature enthusiasts must visit the Brijuni Islands, known for their breathtaking scenery and national park, ideal for hiking, biking and even golfing.

In the Kvarner region, the elegant seaside town of Opatija is home to a 12-kilometer coastal promenade known as the Lungomare, ideal for leisurely walks against the backdrop of the sparkling sea. And for the adventurous, the rocky northern peaks of Učka Nature Park promise spectacular vistas of the entire Kvarner Bay.

Where to eat in Istria & Kvarner

Set in Istria's Novigrad, Konoba Čok delights guests with its charming ambiance and a hearty menu that pays homage to traditional Istrian cooking, with truffles and seafood taking center stage.

Tucked away on a charming cobblestone side street in Rovinj, Monte is known for exceptional cuisine and flawless presentation. Heading north to the Kvarner region, Plavi Podrum in Volosko offers a superb seafood experience with a quaint marina view.

Nearby in Opatija, Bevanda is a hotel restaurant combining luxury and tradition in its approach, serving up refined dishes in a sophisticated setting with sprawling sea views.

City of Zagreb

The capital of Croatia, Zagreb is where charming old-world vibes meet the buzz of modern city life. Packed with attractions and activities, this urban landscape appeals to a variety of interests and visitors, including families, couples and solo travelers. Whether wandering through historic Upper Town, delving into the art scene or grabbing a coffee on lively Tkalčićeva Street, travelers can choose their own adventure.



Image courtesy of Esplanade Zagreb Hotel

Where to stay in Zagreb

Esplanade Zagreb Hotel: A haven of urban elegance within walking distance of Zagreb's landmarks. Book with me to receive VIP perks like a \$100 resort credit, daily breakfast for two, an upgrade and extended check-in/out.

What to do in Zagreb

Some must-see areas of the city include Upper Town (Gornji Grad) and Tkalciceva Street. Upper Town is Zagreb's historical heart, boasting narrow cobblestone streets, charming medieval buildings and significant sites, such as [Lotrščak Tower](#), where you can get a panoramic view of the city. Nearby, Tkalciceva Street is a vibrant pedestrian street lined with cafes, bars and shops – the perfect place to experience the lively atmosphere of Zagreb.

Museum lovers can explore the [Museum of Contemporary Art](#), which showcases an impressive collection of both Croatian and international art. The area is also home to the [Museum of Broken Relationships](#), a unique museum that explores the concept of breakups through personal artifacts.

Where to eat in Zagreb

Featuring gracious stone archways and a central location, Vinodol is a popular choice for upscale regional cuisine, especially seafood. Serious foodies gather at Noel, a sophisticated venue where ingredients are transformed into edible art. Pod Zidom Bistro is a bright, lively space, where refined dishes are paired with an extensive wine list.

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