

# Destination Montenegro

Imagine a place with sapphire beaches as spectacular as Croatia's, rugged peaks as dramatic as Switzerland's, canyons nearly as deep as Colorado's, palazzos as elegant as Venice's and towns as old as Greece's, then wrap it up in a Mediterranean climate and squish it into an area two-thirds the size of Wales and you start to get a picture of Montenegro.

Going it alone is a brave move for a nation of this size – its entire population of 678,000 would barely fill a medium-sized city in many parts of the world – but toughing it out is something this gutsy people have had plenty of experience in. Their national identity is built around resisting the Ottoman Empire for hundreds of years in a mountainous enclave much smaller than the nation's current borders.

After negotiating a reasonably amicable divorce from an unhappy state union with Serbia in 2006, relations between the exes have recently taken a turn for the worse. At the time of writing, Serbia had expelled Montenegro's ambassador after Montenegro officially recognised the former Serbian province of Kosovo as an independent country, joining around 50 other nations who had already done so. It was particularly galling for Serbia, coming a day after it had won a vote at the UN to ask the International Court of Justice for a ruling on the legality of Kosovo's declaration of independence (a vote that Montenegro supported).

Recognising Kosovo was a particularly difficult decision for Montenegro to make given their shared history with Serbia and the fact that a third of Montenegro's population is Serbian. In doing so, Montenegro is clearly setting its sights towards Europe and potentially a future less defined by ethnicity and religion.

Given the country's natural assets, tourism is vitally important to Montenegro's future. In that respect it's done spectacularly well in filling its tiny coast with Eastern European sun-seekers for two months of each year, while serving up the rest of the country as bite-sized day trips. The upshot for intrepid travellers is that you can easily sidestep the hordes in the rugged mountains of Durmitor, the primeval forest of Biogradska Gora or in the many towns and villages where ordinary Montenegrins go about their daily lives. This is, after all, a country where wolves and bears still lurk in forgotten corners.

Montenegro, Crna Gora, Black Mountain: the name itself conjures up romance and drama. There are plenty of both on offer as you explore this perfumed land, bathed in the scent of wild herbs, conifers and Mediterranean blossoms. Yes, it really is as magical as it sounds.

## FAST FACTS

Named after: Mt Lovćen  
(ie 'black mountain' or *monte negro* in Italian;  
Crna Gora in Montenegrin)

Population: 678,000

Area: 13,812 sq km

Capital: Podgorica

President: Filip Vujanović

Prime Minister: Milo Đukanović

GNI (per capita): €3900  
(2007 estimate)

Inflation: 9.2%

Unemployment: 12%

Currency: euro

Official language:  
Montenegrin

Famous for: being really  
beautiful

# Getting Started

Relax, Montenegro is easy. If you're the type who gets caught up in the excitement of planning every step of your journey in advance, by all means go ahead. If you'd prefer to wing it, that should be fine as well – provided you're a) avoiding the busy months of July and August; b) not planning a major mountain-biking, mountaineering or multi-day hiking adventure; and c) not hoping to cram everything into two days. Those sorts of factors will all require more in the way of organisation.

If you're a 'go with the Montenegro flow' sort of person it would still pay to flick through the destination chapters of this book in advance and see which places take your fancy. If you wait until you're there and take the advice of the locals, chances are you'll find yourself under one of a line of hundreds of beach umbrellas in Budva, being pressured into booking expensive coach tours. The presumption is that tourists – especially those from outside the region – have extravagant tastes, like crowded places with loud music and generally need their hands held. The idea that some people might prefer intrepid, independent travel isn't widely understood in these parts. During our research for this book we were constantly dissuaded from visiting towns slightly off the beaten track where there might not be a three-star hotel to stay in. Don't be put off or you'll miss out on some gems.

## WHEN TO GO

Montenegrin tourism is hung up with the idea of 'the season', which in most places is July and August. Wherever possible, these months should be avoided as prices skyrocket, accommodation options dry up, traffic snarls along the coastal road, insanely loud music thumps through the streets at night and hordes of tourists blanket the beaches. Worse still, some coastal areas experience water shortages.

The best months to visit are May, June, September and October. You'll still get plenty of sunshine and the average water temperature is over 20°C. The downside of avoiding 'the season' is that you will find some places closed (especially camping grounds and beachside bars and restaurants) and activities harder to track down.

The ski season is roughly from December to March. Winter can be a lovely time to visit the coast if you relish peace and quiet and the opportunity to hang out with locals in the few cafes that remain open. Many hotels also close their doors, but accommodation shouldn't be difficult to find.

## COSTS & MONEY

Montenegro is desperately trying to make a transition from mass-market tourism to attracting the glitterati. Basically it's a case of 'Goodbye Serb and Kosovar families; welcome pretentious gits in multimillion-dollar yachts'. At the moment the balance is still tipped slightly more towards the former than the latter, but things are quickly changing.

By European standards it's still a relatively cheap place to visit but there's a sense that perhaps you should get in quick. Budget travellers renting private rooms and eating pizza and street snacks could comfortably get by on €30 per day. If you're staying in a three-star hotel and eating three proper sit-down meals, this jumps up to €70 per day. If your priorities are fancy sheets and fish meals that stare back at you while they're served, allow at least double this.

The number of tourists visiting Montenegro annually is double the country's resident population.

See Climate Charts (p158) and the beginning of each destination chapter for more information.

## HOW MUCH?

Short taxi ride €5

Internet access per hour €1

Cup of coffee €1

Bottle of *vranac* (local red wine) from the market €2.50

Postcard €0.50

See Quick Reference on the inside front cover for more examples.

**DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...**

- checking whether you need a visa (p162)
- ensuring your passport has six months left on it
- your driver's licence and/or an International Driving Permit (p171)
- something to wear while swimming, unless it's winter or you're sticking to nudie beaches
- warm clothes if you're visiting the mountains
- some clothes that won't scare the monks (p133)
- decent walking shoes (flip-flops aren't much use if you trod on a viper)
- a trashy novel (it's hard to find English-language books here)
- earplugs, especially if you're staying in one of the Old Towns
- an open mind and a modicum of patience
- a healthy appetite
- this book

**TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY**

Since our inception in 1973, Lonely Planet has encouraged our readers to tread lightly, travel responsibly and enjoy the magic independent travel affords. International travel is growing at a jaw-dropping rate, and we still firmly believe in the benefits it can bring – but, as always, we encourage you to consider the impact your visit will have on both the global environment and the local economies, cultures and ecosystems.

**Getting There & Away**

If you're coming from within Europe, it's quite possible to reach Montenegro without flying or driving. Montenegro's solitary passenger railway line dissects the country from south to north and continues through to Belgrade. From the Serbian capital, Europe's web of rail lines connects to all corners of the continent including Britain. Italy's east-coast port cities of Bari and Ancona are plugged into the same network and linked to Montenegro via regular ferry services. See the boxed text on p169 for more tips on flight-free travel, p168 for details of train services and p169 for ferries. If you do choose to fly, the boxed text on p164 has information about carbon-offset schemes.

**Slow Travel**

Once you're there, what's the rush? Montenegro is a small enough country to be explored by 'slow' means. Flying between destinations isn't an option as there are no internal flights. The bus network is very good and the train services, while limited, can also prove useful. The mountainous terrain may dissuade everyone but the fittest or most devout eco-warriors from taking advantage of the excellent hiking (see p154) and mountain-biking (see p153) trails, but they really do provide a wonderful way to see the country and they're well supported with resources from the National Tourist Office. Kayaking (see p155) is a fun option for exploring the Bay of Kotor and Lake Skadar. If you're an experienced sea kayaker you can tackle the entire coast this way.

**Accommodation & Food**

The 'eco' label is bandied around a lot in Montenegro but it's not always clear what is meant by it. All you can take for granted in an ecolodge

# TOP PICKS



## BEACHES

From sandy stretches to rocky coves, Montenegro's clear-watered beaches are its biggest drawcard. See the Adriatic Coast chapter (p94) for more options.

- Pržno on the Luštica Peninsula (p93)
- Sveti Stefan (p103)
- Murići in Lake Skadar National Park (p128)
- Morinj in the Bay of Kotor (p81)
- Miločer Beach at Sveti Stefan (p106)
- Drobni Pijesak near Petrovac (p109)
- Dobreč on the Luštica Peninsula (p93)
- Lučice Beach at Petrovac (p107)
- Ladies' Beach in Ulcinj (p116)
- Pržno near Sveti Stefan (p106)

## ACTIVITIES

If you can scrape yourself off the sand, Montenegro's not short on active pursuits to get your pulse racing. See p152 for more details.

- Rafting on the Tara River (p143)
- Kayaking around the Bay of Kotor (p78)
- Cruising on Lake Skadar (p126)
- Hiking in Biogradska Gora National Park (p141)
- Mountain biking around Lovćen National Park (p122)
- Skiing in Durmitor National Park (p144)
- Birdwatching in Lake Skadar National Park (p126)
- Paragliding from above Bečići (p103)
- Diving near Budva (p153)
- Parasailing from Herceg Novi (p78)

## FESTIVALS & EVENTS

In the warm months there's almost always something going on somewhere around the country, ranging from centuries-old traditions to all-out parties. See p159 for more information.

- Adventure Race Montenegro (p159)
- Fašinada, Perast (p82)
- Boka Navy Day, Kotor (p86)
- Traditional Kotor Carnival, Kotor (p86)
- Lake Skadar Day, Virpazar (p127)
- Boka Night, Kotor (p86)
- International Folklore Festival, Budva (p100)
- River Zeta Festival, Danilovgrad (p133)
- International Fashion Selection, Kotor (p86)
- International Klapa Festival, Perast (p82)

is that it will be surrounded by nature. Don't expect solar power, composting toilets, ecofriendly materials, water-reduction practices or even recycling (Herceg Novi is currently trialling recycling, the first and only Montenegrin town to do so). Still, these are generally small-scale operations benefiting the local people in remote areas. Some, such as Eco Katun Vranjak (p140), make an effort to preserve and encourage traditional folk activities and crafts.

With so many gargantuan resorts being thrown up on the coast, many of them foreign-owned, you can choose to put your money directly into local hands by staying in smaller, family-run hotels and private accommodation. The same goes for restaurants. Outside the large resorts, they're almost always independently run by local families.

You won't find an organic section in local shops, but much of the local fruit, vegetables and meat would come close to qualifying for this category.

## Responsible Travel Organisations

The Podgorica-based Centre for Sustainable Tourism Initiatives (p131) works to develop responsible- and sustainable-tourism products in the country. This nongovernment, nonprofit organisation was founded in 2006 with money from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and CHF International. Much of its focus has been in the north of the country, working with small local operators to set up profitable and sustainable businesses which bring employment to the area. Their commercial wing, Montenegro Adventures (p131), organises tours and accommodation.

It's fair to say that some of the tourist businesses run by expats are more likely to fulfil Western expectations of environmental standards. Good examples are Black Mountain (p78) and Kayak Montenegro (p78), both of which have strong eco-credentials.

## READING UP

There aren't a huge number of books specifically about Montenegro available in English, although many include the fledgling country in a wider discussion of the region. Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941) is one of the classics of travel literature. This wordy but often hilarious travelogue provides wry observations on the peoples and politics of pre-WWII Yugoslavia.

For an interesting and exceptionally detailed dissection of the convoluted history of this land, you can't do better than *Realm of the Black Mountain: A History of Montenegro* by Elizabeth Roberts (2007). It's not light reading. At the other extreme is *Montenegro: A Novel* by Starling Lawrence (1997). It's an entertaining tale of politics, bloodshed and romance set at the dawn of the 20th century; perfect for the plane or the beach.

*Life and Death in the Balkans: a Family Saga in a Century of Conflict* by Bato Tomašević (2008) does much to illuminate the nation's recent history through a personal account of one family's journey. Marco Houston achieves a similar thing by looking at the travails of a slightly earlier and much grander family in *Nikola and Milena, King and Queen of the Black Mountain: The Rise and Fall of Montenegro's Royal Family* (2003).

On a more practical note, *The Mountains of Montenegro* by Rudolf Abraham (2007) is a good resource for alpine adventurers.

The character of Jay Gatsby in F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* boasts of a Montenegrin military medal awarded to him by King Nikola.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

**Destination Montenegro** ([www.destination-montenegro.com](http://www.destination-montenegro.com))

**Montenegro Smiles** ([www.montenegrosmls.com](http://www.montenegrosmls.com))

**Montenegro Times** ([www.themontenegrotimes.com](http://www.themontenegrotimes.com))

**National Tourist Organisation** ([www.montenegro.travel](http://www.montenegro.travel))

**So Montenegro** ([www.somontenegro.co.uk](http://www.somontenegro.co.uk))

**Visit Montenegro** ([www.visit-montenegro.com](http://www.visit-montenegro.com))

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

### THE BEST BITS

Base yourself somewhere in the vicinity of **Kotor** (p84) and spend three days exploring the nooks and crannies of the Bay of Kotor. Take the dazzling drive to **Cetinje** (p123) through **Lovćen National Park** (p122), stopping to visit the **Njegoš Mausoleum** (p122) on the way. Spend the next morning working up an appetite in Cetinje's museums and monastery, before heading to **Rijeka Crnojevića** (p127) for lunch. Lay off the wine though, as you'll need a clear head for the drive to **Ostrog Monastery** (p133) that afternoon. Continue on to **Šćepan Polje** (p143) and book a cabin at one of the rafting camps. Hit the **Tara River** (p143) the next morning, then head back down to **Podgorica** (p129) to celebrate your achievement in the capital's bars. The following morning continue to **Virpazar** (p127) for a chilled-out half-day cruise on **Lake Skadar** (p126). Carry on down to **Sveti Stefan** (p103) and spend your last days chilling out on the beach and exploring the surrounding towns such as **Pržno** (p106) and **Budva** (p96).

### One Week / Kotor to Budva

Taking in the country's most iconic sights, this 425km trip focuses mainly on the Bay of Kotor and the Adriatic Coast. Montenegro is teensy-weensy, so a short journey clear across the country is suggested, giving you a taste of the mountains and a day's rafting.



## THE FULL MONTE

### Two to Three Weeks / Herceg Novi to Petrovac

Start off in **Herceg Novi** (p76) and take a boat or kayak trip to **Rose** (p93), **Mamula Island** (p81), the **Blue Grotto** (p93) and possibly the beaches of the **Luštica Peninsula** (p93). Stop at **Morinj** (p81) for a swim and **Risan** (p81) for a gander at the Roman mosaics on your way to **Perast** (p82). Consider staying overnight and don't miss **St George's** (p82) and **Our-Lady-of-the-Rock Islands** (p82). Continue to **Kotor** (p84) and use this as a base to discover **Dobrota** (p83), **Prčanj** (p89) and **Stoliv** (p89). Then follow the previous itinerary through **Lovćen National Park** (p122), **Cetinje** (p123), **Rijeka Crnojevića** (p127), **Ostrog Monastery** (p133) and **Šćepan Polje** (p143) for rafting. Instead of heading straight back to Podgorica, continue on to **Žabljak** (p143) and spend some time exploring **Durmitor National Park** (p142). Follow the road along the Tara River to the isolated **Dobrilovina Monastery** (p144). Keep the nature buzz going with a trip to **Biogradska Gora National Park** (p141) – you can stay in the cabins here or continue on to the upmarket hotels in **Kolašin** (p138). Stop at the **Morača Monastery** (p138) on your way to **Podgorica** (p129), then hang out in the capital for a day. Continue down to **Virpazar** (p127) for a morning's cruise on **Lake Skadar** (p126), then head on to **Murići** (p128). Skirt the Rumija Mountains until the road shies away from the Albanian border and hooks down to **Ulcinj** (p114). Head down to **Velika Plaža** (p118) before continuing back up the coast. Stop to check out **Stari Bar** (p113) and **Haj-Nehaj fortress** (p113) before continuing on to **Sveti Stefan** (p103). Use this as base to explore **Budva** (p96), **Pržno** (p106), **Petrovac** (p107) and the surrounding monasteries.



All of Montenegro's big-hitting beauty spots are covered in this 770km itinerary, which can be accomplished in two weeks or stretched out to a leisurely three. Starting with the amazing Bay of Kotor, you'll then visit all four national parks before hitting the Adriatic beaches.

# ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

## BREATHTAKING BYWAYS & BACKWATERS

Four Weeks /  
Moring to Buljarica Beach

Wend your way around the wonderful Bay of Kotor road, staying at smaller spots such as **Moring** (p81), **Perast** (p82), **Prčanj** (p89) or **Krtole** (p92). Continue around the **Luštica Peninsula** (p92), allowing time to get lost amongst the olive groves. Cut through the tunnel towards Kotor and take the glorious back road through **Lovćen National Park** (p122) to **Cetinje** (p123). Check out **Rijeka Crnojevića** (p127), **Danilovgrad** (p133) and **Ostrog Monastery** (p133) on the way to **Nikšić** (p134), then take the dramatic road along the Piva River to **Šćepan Polje** (p143) for a rafting expedition. Cut through on the back road to **Žabljak** (p143) and consider staying in one of the remote mountain huts in **Durmitor National Park** (p142). Another stunning drive will take you along the Tara River to **Dobrilovina Monastery** (p144). Cut down to **Biogradska Gora National Park** (p141), then check out **Mojkovac** (p142) and **Bijelo Polje** (p145) en route to **Rožaje** (p146). Double back slightly and head down to **Plav** (p147), making sure you fit in a quick visit to **Gusinja** (p149). Take the awe-inspiring back road through Andrijevića to **Kolašin** (p138), then call in at the peaceful **Morača Monastery** (p138) before being wowed by the road along the Morača Canyon. Stop off at the obscure ancient ruins of **Žabljak Crnojevića** (p129) before continuing to **Virpazar** (p127). Head along Lake Skadar to **Murići** (p128). Stop at **Lake Šas** (p119) on the way to the coast, where you might find a relatively uncrowded spot on **Velika Plaža** (p118). Check out the enigmatic ruins of **Stari Bar** (p113) and remote **Haj-Nehaj fortress** (p113), then beat the crowds at the uncluttered south end of **Buljarica Beach** (p107).

Here's one for those of you who want to lose yourselves and your fellow travellers in hidden corners. You'll definitely need a car to get to all the tucked-away spots on this 1000km itinerary, but you'll be rewarded with some of Europe's most beautiful drives.





# TAILORED TRIPS

## CARBON CAUTIOUS

There's only one train route through Montenegro and while it misses some of the iconic sights it does take in a good cross-section of what the country has to offer. **Bar** (p110) is at the end of the line and although it's not the highlight of the coast you can walk to good rugged beaches within half an hour. Get off the train at **Virpazar** (p127) to explore **Lake Skadar National Park** (p126). The museums and bars of **Podgorica** (p129) are in walking distance of the station. The Bjelasica mountain range can be accessed from several stops: you can go skiing if you alight at **Kolašin** (p138); head straight into **Biogradska Gora National Park** (p141) from Štitarika Rijeka; or access walking tracks from **Mojkovac** (p142). From Mojkovac a reasonably flat hike in the other direction will take you to **Dobrilovina Monastery** (p144) on the edge of **Durmitor National Park** (p142). **Bijelo Polje** (p145) has an interesting mix of monasteries and mosques.

It's quite possible to explore the **Bay of Kotor** (p73) by kayak from **Herceg Novi** (p76). If you're really fit and reasonably experienced you could kayak along the entire coast.

The 138km Coastal Mountain Traversal walking route links Herceg Novi with **Murići** (p128) via **Mt Orjen** (p80) and **Lovćen National Park** (p122); spur routes lead to **Kotor** (p84), **Budva** (p96) and Bar.



## BEACH YOURSELF

If you plan to spend your holiday as near to horizontal as possible, Montenegro offers plenty of opportunities. For our money, the best beaches are **Pržno** (p93) on the Luštica Peninsula for its clean water and natural beauty, and **Sveti Stefan** (p103) for the iconic views of the fortified island.

For a buzzy Riviera feel, plant yourself amongst the rows of sun umbrellas at **Budva** (p96), **Ulcinj** (p114) or **Herceg Novi** (p76). If you've got the kids in tow, they'll love **Petrovac** (p107) and the other **Pržno** (p106), near Sveti Stefan. For the chance of your own empty patch of sand, try **Velika Plaža** (p118) or **Buljarica Beach** (p107).

Much of Lake Skadar is edged by water lilies, but **Murići** (p128) offers a nice clear swimming spot. You can avoid the underwater foliage of **Lake Plav** (p147) by taking to the deeper waters off the pier. The slow-moving waters of the inner part of the Bay of Kotor are like swimming in a lake. **Morinj** (p81) offers decent swimming from a pretty little beach.

You'll catch people sunbathing on little beaches along the rivers but fewer braving the bracing waters. Still, if you're rafting along the **Tara River** (p143) on a scorching hot day, you might find its pristine appeal hard to resist.



# The Authors



## PETER DRAGIČEVIĆ

### Coordinating Author

After a dozen years working for newspapers and magazines in both his native New Zealand and Australia, Peter finally gave in to Kiwi wanderlust, giving up staff jobs to chase his typically antipodean diverse roots around much of Europe. While it was family ties that first drew him to the Balkans, it's the history, natural beauty, convoluted politics, cheap *rakija* and, most importantly, the intriguing people, that keep bringing him back. He's contributed to over a dozen Lonely Planet titles, including writing the Macedonia and Albania chapters for the previous edition of the *Eastern Europe* guide.

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHORS

**Will Gourlay** wrote the History chapter. Will ate his first *ćevapčići* at a child's birthday party at Melbourne's Yugoslav consulate in the mid-'70s. Some 25 years later he made his first foray into the Balkans and was immediately hooked on the region, its history and its diverse cultures. Subsequent trips to Montenegro and parts thereof have only served to heighten his addiction and that of his family. A travel junky with tertiary degrees in history and editing, Will has worked as a commissioning editor for Lonely Planet for several years. He is contemplating learning the *gusle* and spends entire days dreaming of the opal seas, chalky hills and plump pomegranates of the Boka Kotorska.

**Vesna Marić** wrote the Gateway City: Dubrovnik chapter. Vesna was born in Bosnia and Hercegovina while it was still a part of Yugoslavia, and she has never been able to see Croatia as a foreign country. A lifetime lover of Dalmatia's beaches, pine trees, food and wine, she found researching this chapter a true delight.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'

### LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travellers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com).