

welcome to Croatia



Croatia's Brand of Tourism

Despite its reputation as Europe's vacation hot spot, Croatia hasn't given in to mass tourism. The 'Mediterranean As It Once Was' motto of Croatia's tourist board may be overblown in popular destinations where development has taken a firm hold, but pockets of authentic culture can be found and there's still plenty to discover off the grid. This country in transition, on the brink between Mitteleuropa and Mediterranean, offers good news for visitors on all budgets: Croatia is as diverse as its landscapes. Some of the more popular Adriatic locales come with hefty price tags in the summer months, while continental

Croatia costs a fraction of what you'll pay on the coast. The chic and trendy outposts may make you forget that a civil war raged through Croatia in the 1990s. The way in which the country has bounced back is a sign of its people's resilience – people who are remarkable hosts once you cross the tourist-local barrier.

Coastal Croatia

There's a buzz and an undeniable star appeal to Croatia's coast. You'll get glitz and glamour in Dubrovnik and Hvar, where night action and celebrity-spotting, designer cocktail in hand, is de rigueur, and fancy yachts dock in droves. For those wanting peace and quiet, hideaways aplenty wait to

Croatia's rare blend of glamour and authenticity make it Europe's 'it' destination, where beaches vie for attention with cultural treasures, ancient architecture and time-tested folk traditions.

(left) Hvar (p230)
(below) Dubrovnik (p242)



RELO CHENG TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY / GETTY IMAGES ©



ANGILO CAVALLI / GETTY IMAGES ©

be discovered, including remote lighthouse islets, fetching fishing villages, secluded coves and Robinson-Crusoe-style atolls. Families flock to the string of safe beaches, and there are activities galore for all ages.

Beauty on the Inside: Continental Croatia

Everyone visits the nearly 2000km-long coastline, with over 1000 islands, but most people skip the unsung beauties of inland Croatia. Enjoy a slice of pristine farmland in one of the rural hotels or 'agro-tourisms', roam rugged wilderness or get active – hike, bike, paraglide, sail, raft and canoe. Zagreb may play second fiddle to nearby Vienna, but this pocket-sized capital has

an attractive cafe life, a new contemporary art museum, ancient attractions and a jam-packed roster of festivals and events.

Foodie-Friendly Croatia

Croatia has been slowly crawling its way up to the top of Europe's culinary rankings. Its chief assets are locally sourced, prime-quality ingredients from the land and sea, creatively prepared by celeb chefs or cooked up home-style in family-run taverns. Some of these gastronomic havens require a trek, but the minute you taste the food you'll realise the effort was worth it. The wine regions of Croatia are as burgeoning as the country itself, and its olive oils (particularly those of Istria) are getting top awards.