



Croatia



THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

Anja Mutić

Peter Dragicevich

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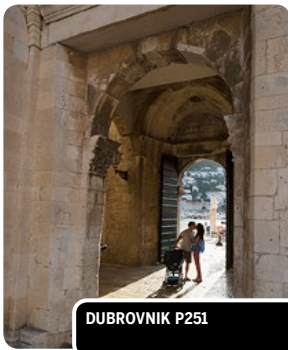
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DUBROVNIK P251



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Plan Your Trip

Itineraries



2
WEEKS

Essential Croatia

Take in the heavyweights of Croatia in this two-week journey from the continent to the coast, including the capital city, a national park and the gems of the Dalmatian coast.

Start in the capital, **Zagreb**, and set aside a long weekend to delve into its booming cafe culture, cutting-edge art scene, simmering nightlife and choice museums such as the quirky Museum of Broken Relationships. En route south, spend the day at the World Heritage-listed **Plitvice Lakes National Park** exploring its verdant maze

of turquoise lakes and cascading waterfalls by foot or on one of the park's boats and buses for a whirlwind tour.

Next, head down to **Zadar**, one of Croatia's most underrated cities. It's a real find: historic, modern, active and packed with attractions, such as the unique sound-and-light spectacle of the Sea Organ and Sun Salutation, so stick around for two days. From here take an overnight trip to **Pag Island** to try some of that famously pungent and dangerously delicious cheese and indulge in its hopping beach party scene, if it's the height of summer. En route further





Zadar (p179)

south, swim under the stupendous falls at **Krka National Park** and do the hour-long loop along boardwalks connecting little islands in the emerald green river; end the outing at Skradinski Buk, the park's largest waterfall.

Take an afternoon stroll through the pretty streets of the postcard-perfect town of **Trogir**, the World Heritage star of Central Dalmatia. Next up, prepare yourself for one of the region's best sights: Diocletian's Palace in **Split** is a living part of this exuberant seafront city, a throbbing ancient quarter that's home to 220 historic buildings within its boundaries and about 3000

people. Base yourself here for three days of sightseeing, beach fun and nightlife action. Don't miss a jaunt to the nearby town of **Solin** for an afternoon, to meander around its impressive Roman ruins.

Next, take it easy down the winding coastal road to **Dubrovnik**, a magnificent walled city whose beauty is bound to blow you away. Spend the next two days taking in the jaw-dropping sights of its old town, ringed by mighty defensive walls and sparkling blue Adriatic.



2
WEEKS

Cream of the Coast

Discover the stunners of Croatia's coast in two weeks – from Istria's favourite getaways to the jewels of Kvarner bay and all the way south to Dalmatia's greatest hits, both on the mainland and the islands.

Start your journey in Istria's coastal resort town of **Poreč** for an afternoon, admiring its showpiece, the World Heritage-listed Euphrasian Basilica that stands as one of Europe's finest intact examples of Byzantine art with magnificent 6th-century frescos. Then head south for the Venetian-inspired architecture and enchanting cobblestone streets of **Rovinj** for a two-day sojourn. Take in this star attraction of coastal Istria with its fishing-port vibe, the hilltop Church of St Euphemia, steep streets and piazzas and a lovely little art scene. Then it's on to **Pula** to tour its evocative Roman ruins and the 1st-century amphitheatre that overlooks the harbour. Spend a day exploring the historic highlights of Istria's capital before moving down the coast.

Make a pit stop in the old Habsburg resort of **Opatija** for a stroll along the elegant seaside promenade and killer views of the Kvarner coast. From nearby **Rijeka**, Croatia's third largest city and a lively port with a notable cafe scene, you can take a catamaran to pretty **Rab Town** on Rab Island. Spend a day exploring the ancient stone alleys of its old quarter and the four elegant bell towers that rise above it.

Next, devote another day to historic **Zadar** for its wealth of museums, churches, cafes and bars. Then travel south to the buzzing Dalmatian city of **Split** for a two-day fling focused on Diocletian's Palace.

Hop over to chic **Hvar Island** for a taste of its happening nightlife and for some clothing-optional sunbathing on its offshore **Pakleni Islands**. Alternatively, opt for a couple of days of real rest, rustic food and top diving on the more remote and uncrowded **Vis Island**. From Split, drive down to **Dubrovnik** to spend the next two days exploring its old town's gleaming marble streets, vibrant street life and fine architecture. Don't miss a hop to the gorgeous island of **Mijet** with its national park, where the verdancy, salt lakes and tranquillity heal the soul.



MATTHEW WILLIAMS/ELIUS/GETTY IMAGES ©



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Top: Hvar Town (p236)
Bottom: Rab Town (p164)

1
WEEK

Highlights of Istria

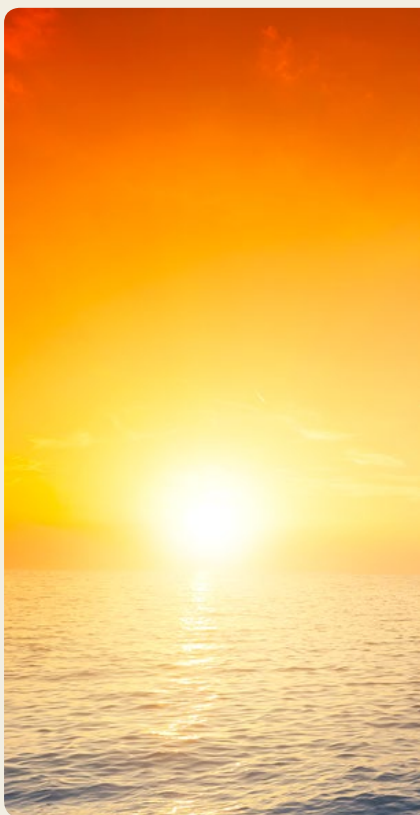
Explore the Istrian peninsula for its coastal resorts, pretty beaches, hilltop medieval towns, top-rated food, award-winning wines and lovely rural hotels.

Start your trip in **Pula**, the peninsula's coastal capital, home to the remarkably well-preserved Roman amphitheatre that overlooks the city's harbour. Arena, as it's known locally, once hosted gladiatorial contests, seating up to 20,000 spectators; today you can tour its remains and take in the small museum in the chambers downstairs. Base yourself in Pula for two days to see the smattering of other Roman ruins and take at least an afternoon to explore nearby **Rt Kamenjak** cape by bike or on foot. This entirely uninhabited cape, Istria's southernmost point, features rolling hills, wildflowers (including 30 species of orchid), medicinal herbs and around 30km of virgin beaches and coves.

Next drive up to **Rovinj** and set aside at least two days for the coast's showpiece resort town. Discover its steep cobbled streets and piazzas leading up to the Church of St Euphemia with its 60m-high tower that punctuates the peninsula, plus take in its verdant beaches and some of the 14 green islands that make up the Rovinj archipelago just offshore. Take a side trip to the captivating town of **Bale**, an offbeat place and one of Istria's best-kept secrets. Then zip up the coast to **Poreč** to gape at its World Heritage-listed Euphrasian Basilica; you'll be blown away by its medieval frescoes.

Don't miss exploring the peninsula's wooded interior, so end your trip with two nights in the hilltop town of **Buzet**, known as Istria's truffle epicentre. From here, make side trips to see the highlights of the interior. Istria carries the foodie crown of Croatia for its delicate truffles, air-dried ham, yummy olives and excellent wines; stop at the scenic village of **Zrenj**, home to a pair of top eating choices for simple but utterly delicious Istrian farm food (reserve ahead). Wander around the world's smallest town, the adorable **Hum**. Drive on to the artsy hilltop settlements of **Motovun**, known for its summer film festival, and the music-filled **Grožnjan**. Head south towards **Pazin** to walk through its famous chasm, which once inspired Jules Verne, then stroll through scenic **Svetvinčenat**, with its Renaissance-era square featuring a castle.

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Top: Rovinj (p108)
Bottom: Roman Amphitheatre (p101), Pula





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DAYSKvarner & Northern
Dalmatia

Take in the delights of Croatia's northern coastal stretches and their wild hinterland, starting with the Kvarner Gulf and moving south to northern Dalmatia with its wide spectrum of appealing sights.

Start in the capital of Kvarner, **Rijeka**, Croatia's third largest city and a thriving port with a laid-back vibe and a lively cafe scene. Take a day to explore this under-visited city and another to take in the elegant seaside resort town of **Opatija** and its leafy Riviera, just 13km west of Rijeka. Take in the beautiful belle époque villas and ample gardens of this town that once was the stomping ground of Viennese elite during the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. While you're at it, be sure to stroll Lungomare, a picturesque path that winds along the coast through exotic bushes and thickets of bamboo to **Volosko**, a pretty fishing village that's become one of Croatia's gastro meccas; make sure you have lunch or dinner in one of its acclaimed restaurants.

Next hop over to one of the Kvarner islands for two days – the interconnected **Cres** and **Lošinj** are the most offbeat. Wilder, greener Cres has remote camping grounds, pristine beaches, a handful of medieval villages and an off-the-radar feel, while more populated and touristy Lošinj sports a pair of pretty port towns, a string of beautiful bays and lush and varied vegetation throughout, with 1100 plant species and 230 medicinal herbs, many brought from faraway lands by sea captains. Spend another two days chilling on **Rab**, lounging on the sandy beaches of Lopar peninsula and exploring the postcard-pretty Rab Town with its ancient stone alleys and four bell towers that rise from them.

Back on the mainland, if you're feeling adventurous, don't miss a hike through the alpine trails and stunning canyons of **Paklenica National Park**. Next head down to **Zadar** for an amble through this vibrant coastal city with its medley of Roman ruins, Habsburg architecture and a lovely seafront; stick around for two days to take it all in. En route back inland, spend the day exploring the dazzling nature wonderland of **Plitvice Lakes National Park** with its gorgeous turquoise lakes linked by a series of waterfalls and cascades.



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JEAN-PIERRE LESCOURET / GETTY IMAGES ©

Top: Plitvice Lakes National Park (p171)

Bottom: Church of St Nicholas (p314), Nin, Zadar (p179)



OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Franklin, London, Melbourne, Oakland, Beijing and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

OUR WRITERS



Anja Mutić

Coordinating Author, Zagreb, Zargoje, Slavonia, Istria, Split & Central Dalmatia

It's been more than two decades since Anja left her native Croatia. The journey took her to several countries before she made New York City her base 15 years ago. But the roots are a'calling. She's been returning to Croatia frequently for work and play, intent on discovering a new place on every visit, be it a nature park, an offbeat town or a remote island. She's happy that Croatia's beauties are

appreciated worldwide but secretly longs for the time when you could head to Hvar and hear the sound of crickets instead of blasting music. Anja is online at www.everthenomad.com.

Read more about Anja at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/anjamutic



Peter Dragicevich

Kvarner, Northern Dalmatia, Dubrovnik & Southern Dalmatia After a dozen years working for newspapers and magazines in both his native New Zealand and Australia, Peter ditched the desk and hit the road. Since then he's contributed to literally dozens of Lonely Planet titles, including writing our first guide to Montenegro. Returning to Croatia this year was especially poignant for him, as it's exactly 100 years since his grandfather left his village in Dalmatia to seek a better

life on the other side of the world. Peter also wrote the Welcome to Croatia, Travel with Children, Croatia's Coast, Croatia Today, History, The Croatian Mindset, Architecture in Croatia, The Natural Environment and The Arts chapters.

Read more about Peter at:
lonelyplanet.com/members/peterdragicevich

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