

# Welcome to Croatia

*If your Mediterranean fantasies feature balmy days by sapphire waters in the shade of ancient walled towns, Croatia is the place to turn them into reality.*

## Coastal Croatia

Croatia's extraordinary island-speckled coastline is indisputably its main attraction. Part of the appeal lies in its diversity. You'll find glitz and glamour in places like Hvar, where fancy yachts and fancier threads are *de rigueur*. In other locales Croatian families get busy with buckets and spades, Aussie backpackers slop about in flip-flops and German naturists free themselves from the tyranny of apparel altogether. For those wanting peace and quiet, there are plenty of secluded coves and Robinson Crusoe-style islets to discover.

## The Edge of Empires

Precariously poised between the Balkans and Central Europe, this land has been passed between competing kingdoms, empires and republics for millennia. If there's an upside to this continual dislocation, it's in the rich cultural legacy that each has left behind. Venetian palazzos snuggle up to Napoleonic forts, Roman columns protrude from early Slavic churches, and Viennese mansions face off with Socialist Realist sculpture. Excellent museums showcase treasures from most key stages of Europe's history, telling a story that is in equal parts fascinating and horrifying.

## Beauty on the Inside

Shift your gaze for just a moment from the glittering waters and chances are an almighty mountain will loom into view. The Dinaric Alps, which stretch all the way from Italy to Albania, hug much of the coast. The limestone karst has bequeathed a wonderland of craggy peaks, underground caverns, river canyons, dramatic waterfalls and ridiculously picturesque lakes. Head further inland and things flatten out again into rolling farmland. Active types will find plenty of chances to get amongst it on the numerous hiking and biking trails.

## Cultural Feast

If you're lucky enough to cross the tourist/guest barrier and be invited into a local's home, you'll soon become acquainted with the refrain '*Jedi! Jedi! Jedi!*' (Eat! Eat! Eat!). It's little wonder that sharing food and drink plays such a big part in the culture here, when the country is blessed with such top-notch ingredients from the land and sea. Simple home-style cooking is a feature of family-run taverns, but increasingly a new breed of chefs are bringing a more adventurous approach to the table. Meanwhile Croatian wines and olive oils are making their mark on the world stage, garnering top awards.



## Why I Love Croatia

By Peter Dragicevich, Author

I'll admit, I'm more than a little biased, but Croatia is quite simply my favourite country to visit. For me, it offers a unique combination of all the things I love: breathtaking natural beauty, great swimming, summertime sun, oodles of history, interesting architecture, incredible wine, delicious seafood... I could go on. True, Croats don't always present the sunniest face to complete strangers, but break through that initial reserve and you'll discover the friendliest, most hospitable people you could hope to meet. I'm sure that even if my grandparents didn't hail from here, I'd still adore the place.

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