

# **Adriatic Coast**

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## Why Go?

The juxtaposition of mountains and sea sends the spirit soaring here. Croatia may hog most of the Adriatic coast but Montenegro's tiny section packs a lot into a very small area. Without the buffer of Croatia's islands, more of Montenegro's shoreline has developed into sandy beaches, culminating in a 12km continuous stretch leading to the Albanian border.

Living on the fault line between civilisations, the people of the coast have fortified their settlements since ancient times. That legacy can be explored in the lively bars and shops of Budva's Old Town, the surreal glamour of Sveti Stefan's village resort, the ramshackle residences within Ulcinj's fortifications and, most evocatively, the lonely and mysterious ruins of Haj-Nehaj, Stari Bar and Svač. Otherwise just spend your days lazing beside azure waters and supping the local vino in outdoor cafes between the oleanders.

### When to Go

- Enjoy the beaches and balmy weather in May and June, before the crowds descend.
- July and August see soaring temperatures, crowded beaches and peak prices – but these are the best months to party.
- → In September and October you may get some rain, but the air and water temperatures are still warm.

## History

From the 4th century BC the ancient Greeks set up colonies along the Illyrian-controlled coast, such as Bouthoe (Budva). Once the Romans had completely smashed Illyria in 168 BC, the region was incorporated into their province of Dalmatia and for over 500 years it benefited from its position near the centre of a great empire. When the decision was made to split the Roman Empire in two, the borderline crossed this section of the coast, leaving most of it within the Greekinfluenced eastern (Byzantine) half.

The Serbs reached this part of the coast by the 7th century and put down roots, organising into small clans. These eventually became part of the principality of Duklja (later called Zeta), Montenegro's antecedent. In 1089, only 35 years after the split of Christianity into Catholic (western) and Orthodox (eastern) halves, the rulers of Duklja succeeded in negotiating the creation of a Catholic archdiocese in Bar. Eventually Duklia was brought back into Byzantine control and later incorporated into the Serbian kingdom of Raška. In 1276, Stefan Dragutin overthrew his father to become king of Raška and installed his mother Helen of Aniou as ruler of Zeta, including most of the coast. Helen was a devout Catholic who founded Franciscan monasteries in Bar and Ulcini.

As Raška became bogged down fighting Byzantium, Bulgaria, Hungary, Venice and the Ottoman Turks, a new force started to gain power in Zeta, the Balšić family. Some historians believe they were originally Orthodox but later converted to Catholicism hoping this would gain them acceptance from the coastal population. In 1368 they had control of Budva, Bar and Ulcinj, but by the end of the century they were forced to oscillate between being a vassal state of the Adriatic's two big players, the Venetians and the Ottomans. By 1443 Venice ruled the coast with the support of powerful families such as the Paštrovići, who were offered a degree of autonomy.



### MOVING ON TO ALBANIA?

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After enjoying a couple of generations of peace, the people of the coast were once again under siege in 1570, this time from the Ottomans who already ruled most of the interior. Once Ulcinj fell, Bar surrendered without a fight. The Paštrovići resisted but couldn't prevent Budva from being sacked. In 1573 Venice signed a peace treaty confirming Ottoman control of the cities south of Budva, much to the detriment of the Paštrovići who continued to oppose their new overlords. In contrast, Ulcinj became a largely Muslim town, as it remains today.

This situation continued until 1877 when King Nikola's Montenegrin army ended 300 years of Ottoman control in Bar and Ulcinj, in the process finally gaining the seaport that they so desperately craved.

Montenegro disappeared completely after WWI as the whole of this coastal region was subsumed into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 (later Yugoslavia). During WWII both this part of Yugoslavia and neighbouring Albania were occupied by the Italians, who planned to redraw the boundaries to include Ulcini within Albania and annex Budva directly into Italy, leaving only Bar within their planned puppet Montenegrin state. This was never to eventuate and following the Partisan victory, all of the coastal area was incorporated into Montenegro within the federal Yugoslavia, including Budya for the first time.

### Climate

Gorgeously Mediterranean is the best way to describe it. Ulcinj is said to be one of the sunniest spots on the Adriatic, notching up 218 sunny days a year.



## Getting There & Away

Budva is connected to the Bay of Kotor by the Jadranski Put (Adriatic highway; also known as 'Jadranska magistrala'). The main route to Cetinje and Podgorica leaves Jadranski Put between Budva and Bečići and climbs steeply into the mountains. Petrovac is connected to Podgorica via a highway leading through Virpazar and the western edge of Lake Skadar. This route can also be reached by a tunnel starting near Sutomore. north of Bar (toll €2.50). A scenic back road links Ulcinj to the southern edge of Montenegro's section of Lake Skadar.

Regular buses connect all the coastal towns with the Bay of Kotor and Podgorica. A railway line links Bar with the centre of the country, including Lake Skadar and Podgorica. There are