



# Dubrovnik (Croatia)

POP 30,000

## Includes ➔

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## Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Oyster & Sushi Bar Bota Šare (p130)
- ➔ Lucin Kantun (p130)
- ➔ Sugar & Spice (p129)
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## Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Karmen Apartments (p129)
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- ➔ Begović Boarding House (p127)

## Why Go?

Why have we included a Croatian city in a book on Montenegro? The first reason is practical: many travellers to Montenegro fly into Dubrovnik airport, which is, after all, only 17km from the border. More importantly, it seems inconceivable that you'd come this close and not visit one of the most beautiful cities in the entire Mediterranean, if not the world. Its proximity to the Bay of Kotor makes at least a day trip practically obligatory.

Dubrovnik is simply unique. It leaves many speechless: its beauty is bewitching, its setting sublime. Regardless of whether you are visiting Dubrovnik for the first time or the hundredth, the sense of awe when you set eyes on the remarkable Old Town, ringed by its mighty defensive walls, never fades. Indeed it's hard to imagine anyone becoming jaded by the city's marble streets, baroque buildings and the endless shimmer of the Adriatic.

## When to Go

- ➔ St Blaise's Day in February is marked by pageants and processions, while a carnival sees in Lent.
- ➔ Sate your cultural appetite during the prestigious Summer Festival in July and August.
- ➔ In October sea temperatures are still warm enough for swimming along the coastline.

## History

After the Slavs wiped out the Roman city of Epidaurum (site of present-day Cavtat) in the 7th century, survivors fled to the safest place they could find – a rocky islet separated from the mainland by a narrow channel. By the end of the 12th century the city they founded, Ragusa (later called Dubrovnik), had become an important trading centre on the coast. It came under Venetian authority in 1205, finally breaking away from its control in 1358. Through canny diplomacy the Republic of Ragusa maintained good relations with everyone – even the Ottoman Empire, to which it began paying tribute in the 16th century.

Centuries of peace and prosperity allowed art, science and literature to flourish, but most of the Renaissance art and architecture in Dubrovnik was destroyed in the earthquake of 1667, which killed 5000 people and left the city in ruins. The earthquake also marked the beginning of the economic decline of the republic. The final *coup de grâce* was dealt by Napoleon in 1808.

Caught in the cross-hairs of the war that ravaged former Yugoslavia, Dubrovnik was pummelled with some 2000 shells in 1991 and 1992.

## Sights

### The Old Town

#### Pile Gate

CITY GATE

(Map p130) The natural starting point of any visit to Dubrovnik, this fabulous city gate was built in 1537. Notice the **statue of St Blaise**, the city's patron saint, set in a niche over the Renaissance arch. As you pass through the inner gate (1460) you're struck by the gorgeous view of the main street, **Placa**, or as it's commonly known, Stradun, Dubrovnik's pedestrian promenade.

#### City Walls & Forts

FORTRESS

(Gradske Zidine; Map p130; adult/concession 70/30KN; ☀9am-6.30pm Apr-Oct, 10am-3pm Nov-Mar) No visit would be complete without a leisurely walk around the spectacular city walls, built between the 13th and the 16th centuries. They're the finest of their kind in the world, enclosing the entire old town within a stone barrier 2km long and up to 25m high. The main entrance is by the Pile Gate, but you can also enter at the **Ploče Gate**; the walls can only be walked clockwise.

## War Photo Limited

GALLERY

(Map p130; ☎326 166; www.warphotoltd.com; Antuninska 6; admission 30KN; ☀9am-9pm Jun-Sep, 9am-3pm Tue-Sat & 9am-1pm Sun May & Oct) An immensely powerful experience, this state-of-the-art photographic gallery features exhibitions curated by photojournalist Wade Goddard, who worked in the Balkans in the 1990s. War Photo declares its intention to 'expose the myth of war... by focusing on how war inflicts injustices on innocents and combatants alike'. There's a permanent exhibition on the upper floor devoted to the war in Yugoslavia.

#### **Franciscan Monastery & Museum** MONASTERY

(Muzej Franjevačkog Samostana; Map p130; Placa 2; adult/concession 30/15KN; ☀9am-6pm) Over the doorway of this monastery is a remarkable *pietà* sculpted in 1498. Inside is a mid-14th-century cloister – one of the most beautiful late-Romanesque structures in Dalmatia – and the third-oldest functioning pharmacy in Europe (since 1391). The small monastery museum has a collection of relics, liturgical objects and pharmacy equipment.

#### **Dominican Monastery & Museum** MONASTERY

(Muzej Dominikanskog Samostana; Map p130; off Ulica Svetog Dominika 4; adult/concession 20/10KN; ☀9am-6pm May-Oct, to 5pm Nov-Apr) This imposing structure is an architectural highlight, built in a transitional Gothic-Renaissance style. Constructed around the same time as the city walls in the 14th century, the stark exterior resembles a fortress more than a religious complex. The interior contains a graceful 15th-century cloister, a large church and the monastery's impressive art collection.

#### **Rector's Palace**

PALACE

(Map p130; Pred Dvorom 3; adult/concession 35/15KN, audioguide 30KN; ☀9am-6pm May-Oct, to 4pm Nov-Apr) The Gothic-Renaissance Rector's Palace was built in the late 15th century and is adorned with outstanding sculptural ornamentation. It was built for the rector who governed Dubrovnik, and it contains his office, private chambers, public halls and administrative offices. Interestingly, the elected rector was not permitted to leave the building during his one-month term without the permission of the senate. Today the palace has been turned into a museum evoking the glorious history of the republic.