



# Southeastern Europe



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## PLAN YOUR TRIP

Welcome to Southeastern Europe.....	6
Southeastern Europe Map.....	8
14 Top Experiences.....	10
Need to Know .....	18
If You Like .....	20
Month by Month.....	22
Itineraries .....	25
Countries at a Glance ..	30

## ON THE ROAD

### ALBANIA ..... 36

Tirana.....	39
Northern Albania .....	46
Shkodra .....	46
Theth & Valbonë.....	48
Central Albania.....	48
Kruja.....	49
Durrës .....	50
Apollonia .....	51
Berat.....	51
Southern Coast.....	54
Vlora.....	54
Dryades .....	55
Dhërmi .....	55
Himara .....	55
Vuno & Jal .....	56
Saranda .....	56
Eastern Albania.....	58
Gjirokastra.....	59
Understand Albania ....	60
Albania Today .....	60
History .....	60
People .....	63
Arts.....	63
Environment .....	64
Food & Drink .....	64
Survival Guide.....	64
Directory A–Z .....	64
Getting There & Away ....	66
Getting Around.....	67

### BOSNIA & HERCEGOVINA ..... 69

Sarajevo.....	72
Around Sarajevo.....	84
Jahorina.....	84
Bjelašnica .....	85
Hercegovina .....	85
Mostar .....	86
Around Mostar .....	94
Stolac.....	95

### Eastern Bosnia & Hercegovina ..... 96

Trebinje .....	96
Trebinje to Višegrad.....	97
Višegrad.....	97
Central & Western Bosnia .....	98
Visoko.....	98
Travnik .....	99
Jajce.....	100
Banja Luka.....	101
Bihać .....	103

### Understand Bosnia & Hercegovina ..... 105

Bosnia & Hercegovina Today .....	105
History .....	105
People .....	108
Arts.....	108
Environment .....	109
Survival Guide.....	109
Directory A–Z .....	109
Getting There & Away ....	111
Getting Around.....	111

### BULGARIA ..... 113

Sofia .....	116
Around Sofia.....	125
Boyana .....	125
Vitosha Nature Park .....	126
Rila & Pirin Mountains	126
Rila Monastery .....	126
Melnik .....	127
Bansko .....	129
Thracian Plain & the Rodopis .....	130
Plovdiv .....	130
Smolyan .....	135
Central Bulgaria.....	136
Koprivshtitsa .....	137
Kazanлъk .....	137
Veliko Târnovo .....	139



GREEK CUISINE P316



AYA SOFYA, İSTANBUL,  
TURKEY P531

# Contents

Shumen .....	144
Ruse .....	145
Rusenski Lom Nature Park .....	148
<b>Black Sea Coast .....</b>	<b>149</b>
Varna .....	149
North Coast .....	153
Central Coast .....	154
Burgas .....	156
South Coast .....	158
<b>Northwest Bulgaria ...</b>	<b>161</b>
Vidin .....	161
Belogradchik .....	161
<b>Understand Bulgaria ..</b>	<b>162</b>
History .....	162
People .....	163
Arts .....	163
Environment .....	164
Food & Drink .....	165
<b>Survival Guide .....</b>	<b>166</b>
Directory A–Z .....	166
Getting There & Away ...	168
Getting Around .....	169
<b>CROATIA .....</b>	<b>171</b>
<b>Zagreb .....</b>	<b>173</b>
<b>Istria .....</b>	<b>188</b>
Pula .....	188
Rovinj .....	191
Poreč .....	194
<b>Kvarner Region .....</b>	<b>196</b>
Rijeka .....	196
Opatija .....	199
Krk Island .....	200
<b>Dalmatia .....</b>	<b>201</b>
Zadar .....	202
Split .....	204
Trogir .....	211
Hvar Island .....	212
Korčula Island .....	215
Mljet Island .....	216

Dubrovnik .....	218
<b>Understand Croatia ...</b>	<b>224</b>
Croatia Today .....	224
History .....	225
People .....	226
Arts .....	226
Environment .....	227
Food & Drink .....	228
<b>Survival Guide .....</b>	<b>229</b>
Directory A–Z .....	229
Getting There & Away ...	232
Getting Around .....	232
<b>GREECE .....</b>	<b>235</b>
<b>Athens .....</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>Around Athens .....</b>	<b>253</b>
Piraeus .....	253
<b>The Peloponnese .....</b>	<b>255</b>
Patra .....	255
Corinth .....	256
Ancient Corinth & Acrocorinth .....	257
Nafplio .....	257
Epidavros .....	259
Mycenae .....	259
Sparta .....	259
Mystras .....	260
Monemvasia & Gefyra ..	260
Gythio .....	260
The Mani .....	261
Olympia .....	262
<b>Central Greece .....</b>	<b>262</b>
Delphi .....	262
Meteora .....	263
<b>Northern Greece .....</b>	<b>264</b>
Thessaloniki .....	264
Alexandroupolis .....	267
Mt Olympus .....	267
Ioannina .....	268
Zagorohoria & Vikos Gorge .....	269
Igoumenitsa .....	269

<b>Saronic Gulf Islands ..</b>	<b>269</b>
Aegina .....	270
Poros .....	270
Hydra .....	270
Spetses .....	271
<b>Cyclades .....</b>	<b>271</b>
Mykonos .....	271
Paros .....	275
Naxos .....	276
Ios .....	279
Santorini (Thira) .....	280
<b>Crete .....</b>	<b>283</b>
Iraklio .....	284
Phaestos & Other Minoan Sites .....	286
Rethymno .....	287
Hania .....	287
Samaria Gorge .....	288
Paleohora .....	289
Lasithi Plateau .....	290
Agios Nikolaos .....	291
Sitia .....	291
<b>Dodecanese .....</b>	<b>291</b>
Rhodes .....	292
Karpathos .....	294
Symi .....	295
Kos .....	295
Patmos .....	297
<b>Northeastern Aegean Islands .....</b>	<b>298</b>
Samos .....	298
Chios .....	299
Lesvos (Mytilini) .....	301
<b>Sporades .....</b>	<b>303</b>
Skiathos .....	303
Skopelos .....	304
Alonnisos .....	305
<b>Ionian Islands .....</b>	<b>305</b>
Corfu .....	305
Lefkada .....	308
Kefallonia .....	309
Ithaki .....	310

## ON THE ROAD

Zakynthos .....	310
<b>Understand Greece ...</b>	<b>312</b>
History .....	312
People .....	314
Arts .....	314
Environment .....	315
Food & Drink .....	316
<b>Survival Guide .....</b>	<b>317</b>
Directory A–Z .....	317
Getting There & Away ...	320
Getting Around .....	322

### KOSOVO..... 325

<b>Pristina .....</b>	<b>328</b>
<b>Around Pristina .....</b>	<b>331</b>
Peja (Peć) .....	331
Prizren .....	333
<b>Understand Kosovo ...</b>	<b>333</b>
History .....	333
People .....	334
Arts .....	334
Environment .....	335
Food & Drink .....	335
<b>Survival Guide .....</b>	<b>335</b>
Directory A–Z .....	335
Getting There & Away ...	336
Getting Around .....	336

### MACEDONIA..... 337

<b>Skopje .....</b>	<b>339</b>
<b>Western Macedonia ...</b>	<b>348</b>
Mavrovo National Park ...	348
Ohrid .....	349
<b>Central Macedonia ...</b>	<b>355</b>
Bitola .....	355
Pelister National Park ...	356
Prilep .....	357
Tikveš Wine Region .....	358
Stobi .....	359
<b>Understand Macedonia</b>	<b>360</b>
History .....	360

People .....	361
Arts .....	362
Environment .....	362
Food & Drink .....	363
<b>Survival Guide .....</b>	<b>363</b>
Directory A–Z .....	363
Getting There & Away ...	364
Getting Around .....	365

### MONTENEGRO .... 367

<b>Bay of Kotor .....</b>	<b>370</b>
Herceg Novi .....	370
Perast .....	372
Kotor .....	372
Tivat .....	375
<b>Adriatic Coast .....</b>	<b>376</b>
Budva .....	376
Pržno & Sveti Stefan ...	377
Petrovac .....	378
Bar .....	378
Ulcinj .....	379
<b>Central Montenegro ...</b>	<b>380</b>
Lovcen National Park ...	380
Cetinje .....	380
Lake Skadar	
National Park .....	381
Podgorica .....	383
Ostrog Monastery .....	385
<b>Northern Mountains ..</b>	<b>386</b>
Morača Canyon .....	386
Kolašin .....	386
Biogradska Gora National	
Park .....	387
Durmitor	
National Park .....	387
<b>Understand</b>	
<b>Montenegro .....</b>	<b>389</b>
Montenegro Today .....	389
History .....	390
People .....	391
Food & Drink .....	391
<b>Survival Guide .....</b>	<b>392</b>

Directory A–Z .....	392
Getting There & Away ...	393
Getting Around .....	394

### ROMANIA..... 395

<b>Bucharest .....</b>	<b>397</b>
<b>Transylvania .....</b>	<b>408</b>
Sinaia .....	409
Braşov .....	412
Sighişoara .....	416
Sibiu .....	418
Cluj-Napoca .....	420
<b>Crişana &amp; Banat .....</b>	<b>423</b>
Timişoara .....	423
Oradea .....	426
<b>Maramureş .....</b>	<b>427</b>
Sighetu Marmăţiei .....	428
Valea Izei .....	430
<b>Moldavia .....</b>	<b>432</b>
Iaşi .....	432
Suceava .....	435
Southern Bucovina .....	436
<b>Danube Delta &amp;</b>	
<b>Black Sea Coast .....</b>	<b>439</b>
Danube Delta .....	439
Constanţa .....	444
Mamaia .....	445
Vama Veche .....	446
<b>Understand Romania ..</b>	<b>447</b>
Romania Today .....	447
History .....	447
People .....	449
Arts .....	449
Environment .....	450
Food & Drink .....	450
<b>Survival Guide .....</b>	<b>451</b>
Directory A–Z .....	451
Getting There & Away ...	454
Getting Around .....	455

# Contents

## SERBIA..... 457

### Belgrade..... 460

### Around Belgrade..... 471

Zemun ..... 471

### Vojvodina..... 471

Novi Sad ..... 472

Subotica ..... 474

### Southern Serbia..... 475

Niš ..... 475

Novi Pazar ..... 477

Kopaonik ..... 478

Zlatibor ..... 478

### Understand Serbia..... 480

Serbia Today ..... 480

History ..... 480

People ..... 481

Arts ..... 481

Environment ..... 482

Food & Drink ..... 482

### SURVIVAL GUIDE..... 482

Directory A-Z ..... 482

Getting There & Away ..... 484

Getting Around..... 484

## SLOVENIA..... 485

### Ljubljana..... 487

### Julian Alps..... 499

Lake Bled..... 500

Lake Bohinj..... 504

Kranjska Gora..... 506

Soča Valley ..... 507

### Karst & Coast..... 509

Postojna..... 509

Škocjan Caves ..... 510

Koper ..... 511

Piran..... 512

Portorož..... 516

### Eastern Slovenia..... 516

Maribor ..... 517

Ptuj..... 517

### Understand Slovenia .. 518

History ..... 518

People ..... 519

Arts..... 519

Environment ..... 520

Food & Drink ..... 520

### Survival Guide..... 520

Directory A-Z ..... 520

Getting There & Away ... 523

Getting Around..... 523

## TURKEY..... 525

### İstanbul..... 527

### Around İstanbul..... 543

Edirne..... 543

Bursa ..... 544

### The Aegean Coast..... 546

Gallipoli (Gelibolu)..... 546

Peninsula..... 546

Eceabat (Maydos) ..... 546

Çanakkale..... 548

Behramkale & Assos ..... 549

Ayvalık ..... 550

Bergama (Pergamum)..... 551

İzmir ..... 552

Çeşme Peninsula..... 554

Selçuk..... 555

Ephesus (Efes)..... 557

Kuşadası..... 557

Bodrum ..... 559

Marmaris..... 563

### The Mediterranean Coast..... 564

Fethiye..... 564

Ölüdeniz..... 566

Patara..... 567

Kalkan ..... 567

Kaş ..... 568

Olympos & Çirali ..... 571

Antalya..... 573

Side..... 576

Alanya ..... 577

Anamur ..... 578

Kızkalesi..... 578

Adana..... 579

Antakya (Hatay)..... 579

### Central Anatolia..... 580

Ankara ..... 580

Konya ..... 582

### Cappadocia (Kapadokya)..... 583

Göreme ..... 585

Uçhisar..... 587

Zelve Valley ..... 587

Ürgüp ..... 587

Mustafapaşa..... 588

Kayseri..... 588

### Eastern Turkey..... 589

Mt Nemrut National Park..... 590

Mardin ..... 591

Van ..... 592

### Understand Turkey.... 593

History ..... 593

People ..... 595

Religion ..... 595

Arts..... 596

Sport ..... 597

Environment ..... 597

Food & Drink..... 598

### Survival Guide..... 599

Directory A-Z ..... 599

Getting There & Away .. 605

Getting Around..... 607

## SURVIVAL GUIDE

Directory A-Z..... 610

Transport..... 621

Language..... 630

Index..... 644

Map Legend..... 654

➤ Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first

➤ Look out for these icons:



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

## ALBANIA .....36

TIRANA ..... 39

NORTHERN ALBANIA..... 46

Shkodra ..... 46

Theth & Valbonë..... 48

CENTRAL ALBANIA..... 48

Kruja ..... 49

Durrës ..... 50

Berat ..... 51

SOUTHERN COAST..... 54

EASTERN ALBANIA..... 58

Gjirokastra..... 59

## BOSNIA & HERCEGOVINA .....69

SARAJEVO ..... 72

HERCEGOVINA..... 85

Mostar ..... 86

EASTERN BOSNIA & HERCEGOVINA..... 96

Trebinje ..... 96

Višegrad..... 97

CENTRAL & WESTERN BOSNIA..... 98

Visoko..... 98

Travnik ..... 99

Banja Luka..... 101

Bihać ..... 103

## BULGARIA ..... 113

SOFIA ..... 116

RILA & PIRIN MOUNTAINS 126

Rila Monastery ..... 126

Melnik ..... 127

Bansko ..... 129

THRACIAN PLAIN & THE RODOPIS ..... 130

Plovdiv ..... 130

CENTRAL BULGARIA .... 136

Kazanlak ..... 137

Veliko Târnovo..... 139

Shumen ..... 144

Ruse ..... 145

BLACK SEA COAST..... 149

Varna ..... 149

North Coast..... 153

Central Coast ..... 154

Burgas ..... 156

South Coast ..... 158

NORTHWEST BULGARIA. 161

Vidin ..... 161

Belogradchik ..... 161

## CROATIA ..... 171

ZAGREB..... 173

ISTRIA ..... 188

Pula..... 188

Rovinj ..... 191

Poreč ..... 194

KVARNER REGION ..... 196

Rijeka ..... 196

Opatija ..... 199

Krk Island ..... 200

DALMATIA..... 201

Zadar ..... 202

Split ..... 204

Trogir ..... 211

Hvar Island ..... 212

Korčula Island..... 215

Mljet Island ..... 216

Dubrovnik ..... 218

## GREECE .....235

ATHENS..... 237

THE PELOPONNESE ..... 255

Nafplio ..... 257

The Mani ..... 261

CENTRAL GREECE ..... 262

Delphi ..... 262

Meteora ..... 263

NORTHERN GREECE ..... 264

Thessaloniki ..... 264

SARONIC GULF ISLANDS ..... 269

CYCLADES ..... 271

Mykonos ..... 271

Paros ..... 275

Naxos ..... 276

Ios ..... 279

Santorini (Thira)..... 280

CRETE ..... 283

Iraklio ..... 284

Hania ..... 287

DODECANESE ..... 291

Rhodes ..... 292

Kos ..... 295

NORTHEASTERN AEGEAN ISLANDS..... 298

Samos ..... 298

Chios ..... 299

Lesvos (Mytilini) ..... 301

SPORADES ..... 303

IONIAN ISLANDS ..... 305

Corfu ..... 305

Lefkada ..... 308

Zakynthos ..... 310

## KOSOVO.....325

PRISTINA ..... 328

Peja (Peć) ..... 331

Prizren ..... 333

# On the Road

<b>MACEDONIA</b> .....	<b>337</b>	Valea Izei .....	430	<b>TURKEY</b> .....	<b>525</b>
SKOPJE .....	339	MOLDAVIA .....	432	İSTANBUL & AROUND ...	527
WESTERN MACEDONIA ..	348	Iași .....	432	Edirne .....	543
Mavrovo National Park ..	348	Suceava .....	435	Bursa .....	544
Ohrid .....	349	Southern Bucovina .....	436	THE AEGEAN COAST ...	546
CENTRAL MACEDONIA ..	355	DANUBE DELTA & BLACK SEA COAST .....	439	Gallipoli Peninsula .....	546
<b>MONTENEGRO</b> .....	<b>367</b>	Constanța .....	444	Çanakkale .....	548
BAY OF KOTOR .....	370	Mamaia .....	445	Behramkale & Assos ...	549
Herceg Novi .....	370	Vama Veche .....	446	Ayvalık .....	550
Kotor .....	372	<b>SERBIA</b> .....	<b>457</b>	Bergama (Pergamum) ...	551
ADRIATIC COAST .....	376	BELGRADE .....	460	İzmir .....	552
Budva .....	376	VOJVODINA .....	471	Çeşme Peninsula .....	554
Pržno & Sveti Stefan .....	377	Novi Sad .....	472	Selçuk .....	555
Petrovac .....	378	Subotica .....	474	Ephesus (Efes) .....	557
Bar .....	378	SOUTHERN SERBIA .....	475	Kuşadası .....	557
Ulcinj .....	379	Niš .....	475	Bodrum .....	559
CENTRAL MONTENEGRO	380	Novi Pazar .....	477	Marmaris .....	563
Cetinje .....	380	Zlatibor .....	478	THE MEDITERRANEAN COAST .....	564
Lake Skadar National Park .....	381	<b>SLOVENIA</b> .....	<b>485</b>	Fethiye .....	564
Podgorica .....	383	LJUBLJANA .....	487	Kalkan .....	567
NORTHERN MOUNTAINS	386	JULIAN ALPS .....	499	Kaş .....	568
<b>ROMANIA</b> .....	<b>395</b>	Lake Bled .....	500	Olympos & Çirali .....	571
BUCHAREST .....	397	Lake Bohinj .....	504	Antalya .....	573
TRANSYLVANIA .....	408	Kranjska Gora .....	506	Alanya .....	577
Sinaia .....	409	Soča Valley .....	507	CENTRAL ANATOLIA ...	580
Brașov .....	412	KARST & COAST .....	509	Ankara .....	580
Sighișoara .....	416	Postojna .....	509	Konya .....	582
Sibiu .....	418	Škocjan Caves .....	510	CAPPADOCIA .....	583
Cluj-Napoca .....	420	Koper .....	511	Göreme .....	585
CRIȘANA & BANAT .....	423	Piran .....	512	Ürgüp .....	587
Timișoara .....	423	Portorož .....	516	EASTERN TURKEY .....	589
Oradea .....	426	EASTERN SLOVENIA ...	516	Mt Nemrut National Park	590
MARAMUREȘ .....	427	Maribor .....	517	Mardin .....	591
Sighetu Marmației .....	428	Ptuj .....	517	Van .....	592

# 》Southeastern Europe





# Top Experiences >





## 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 Melbourne, London and Oakland, 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



### Marika McAdam

**Coordinating Author** A lawyer by training and a traveller by conviction, Marika first started working at Lonely Planet's Melbourne office as a teenager, stuffing envelopes in the marketing department and packing books in the warehouse. Since becoming an author, she has written about places including Bangladesh, Goa, Poland and the Western Balkans. When she is not travel writing, she works as an independent consultant on human trafficking, migrant smuggling and other issues mostly for the United Nations. Marika is also a member of a research ethics review committee and is currently working towards a PhD in human rights law.



### Alexis Averbuck

**Greece** Alexis Averbuck lives on Hydra, takes regular reverse R&R in Athens (she wrote *Pocket Athens*), and makes any excuse she can to travel the isolated back roads of her adopted land. She is committed to dispelling the stereotype that Greece is simply a string of sandy beaches. A travel writer for two decades, Alexis has lived in Antarctica for a year, crossed the Pacific by sailboat and written books on her journeys through Asia and the Americas. She's also a painter – visit [www.alexisaverbuck.com](http://www.alexisaverbuck.com).



### James Bainbridge

**Turkey** Media assignments and extra-curricular wanderings have taken James to most of Turkey's far-flung regions, from Aegean islands to the eastern steppe via Cappadocia's surreal rock formations. He has coordinated three editions of Lonely Planet's Turkey guide, and deepened his local knowledge by living in Istanbul and grappling with suffixes on a Turkish course. For articles on Turkey, and a link to a blog with advice about travel writing, visit James's website at [www.jamesbainbridge.net](http://www.jamesbainbridge.net).

Read more about James at:  
[lonelyplanet.com/members/james\\_bains](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/james_bains)



### Mark Baker

**Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia** Based permanently in Prague, Mark has lived and worked in Central Europe for more than 20 years, first as a journalist for The Economist Group and then for Bloomberg News and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. He travels frequently throughout the region and counts Bulgaria, Slovenia and Romania among his favourite countries in Europe. In addition to this book, Mark is co-author of the Lonely Planet guides to Prague, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria.

## OVER MORE PAGE WRITERS

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**Chris Deliso**

**Macedonia** Chris Deliso, an American travel writer and journalist, has been based in Macedonia for more than a decade and has written considerably about the country since then for a range of world media. In addition to covering Macedonia for this book, he has contributed to Lonely Planet guides to Greece, Crete, Turkey, Romania and Bulgaria. His original enthusiasm for the region and introduction to its cultures and history came with an MPhil in Byzantine Studies at Oxford University in 1999.

**Peter Dragicevich**

**Montenegro** 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. While it was family ties that first drew him to the Balkans, it's the history, natural beauty and the intriguing people that keep bringing him back. He wrote Lonely Planet's first guide to the newly independent Montenegro and has contributed to dozens of other Lonely Planet titles.

**Mark Elliott**

**Bosnia & Hercegovina** British-born travel writer Mark Elliott was only 11 when his family first dragged him to Sarajevo and stood him in the now defunct concrete footsteps of Gavrilo Princip. Fortunately no Austro-Hungarian emperors were passing at the time. He has since visited virtually every corner of Bosnia and Hercegovina, supping fine Hercegovinian wines with master vintners, talking philosophy with Serb monks and Sufi mystics, and drinking more Bosnian coffee than any healthy stomach should be subjected to.

**Tom Masters**

**Albania, Kosovo** Tom is a British writer and photographer whose work has taken him to some of the strangest and most challenging countries on earth. Having lived in Russia, travelled to all corners of eastern Europe in the decade that he's been working on the *Eastern Europe* guide and currently residing in East Berlin, he has a good understanding of what makes the former communist world tick. Tom wrote the Albania and Kosovo chapters of this book. You can find more of Tom's work at [www.tommasters.net](http://www.tommasters.net).

**Craig McLachlan**

**Greece** Craig has covered the Greek Islands for the last five editions of Lonely Planet's Europe guidebooks. He runs an outdoor activity company in Queens-town, New Zealand in the southern-hemisphere summer, then heads north for another summer, writing for Lonely Planet and leading tours all over the world, including Greece. A 'freelance anything', he has an MBA from the University of Hawaii and leads other lives as a pilot, karate instructor and Japanese interpreter. Check out [www.craigmclachlan.com](http://www.craigmclachlan.com)

**Anja Mutić**

**Croatia** 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 13 years ago. But the roots are a'calling. She's been returning to Croatia frequently for work and play. 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](http://www.everthenomad.com).

**Tamara Sheward**

**Serbia** After years of freelance travel writing, rock'n'roll journalism and insalubrious authordom, Tamara joined the Lonely Planet ranks as the presenter of LPTV's Roads Less Travelled: Cambodia documentary. Since then, she's stuck to covering decidedly less leech-infested destinations including arctic Russia and Serbia. She lives between northern Serbia, a mountain shack in Montenegro and Melbourne with her husband Dušan, whom she never would have met were it not for some late night "researching" for the last edition of *Eastern Europe*.

# itineraries

*Whether you've got 10 days or two months, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travellers.*



## Ten Days Highlights in a Hurry

For a taste of the Adriatic coast, base yourself in **Dubrovnik** for a few days. Spend a day in the Old Town enjoying resplendent views from the meticulously restored city walls. Get an early start on your second day for a day or overnight trip to **Mostar**, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for a glimpse of the iconic Balkan bridge and to explore resurrected Ottoman, Orthodox and Austro-Hungarian architectural gems shining like new again. Next, head to nearby Montenegro for an overnight stay at the sublime **Bay of Kotor** with its majestic rock ramparts.

From Dubrovnik, fly to the thriving metropolis of **Athens**. After a couple of days exploring the ancient Acropolis and museums, move on to **Meteora** to boggle at 14th century monasteries perched on rocky cliff tops. Continue overland to lively **Thessaloniki**, with its Byzantine cultural treasures. Finally, take a bus or fly to the minaret-studded skyline of **Istanbul**, one of the greatest cities in the world. With the polished glamour of Europe and the exotic energy of Asia, Istanbul is the place to end your Southeastern Europe sojourn with thoughts of starting on the spice trail into the Middle East.



Six Weeks

## Southeastern Europe from A to T

This ambitious overland odyssey takes in all twelve countries of the region from Albania to Turkey.

Start in **Istanbul**, at the juncture of East and West, before heading to **Antalya** on the ‘Turkish Riviera’. Continue along the coast to the ancient Roman City of **Ephesus (Efes)**. Work your way through ruins along the coast, past the legendary town of **Troy** with a side trip to the WWI pilgrimage site of **Gallipoli**.

Back in Istanbul, cross into Bulgaria and enjoy the Black Sea, first at laid-back **Sozopol** and then further north at more dynamic **Varna**. After traipsing through **Rusenski Lom Nature Park**, make your way to the Romanian capital of **Bucharest** for a couple of days of city sightseeing. Explore mountains and castles from the Gothic town of **Braşov**, then via the Saxon town of **Sibiu**, keep moving to Serbia’s heady capital, **Belgrade**.

If your timing is right, head north to the EXIT music festival in **Novi Sad**, and explore the mellow monasteries of nearby **Fruška Gora**. Make the overland journey across inland Croatia to **Zagreb**. From there, take a relaxing detour to Slovenia’s capital **Ljubljana** and the nearby town of **Bled**. Now plunge directly south to **Rijeka** back into Croatia. Wind your way down the Dalmatian coast to **Zadar** and then **Split**, from where you can enjoy some island hopping.

From the walled city of **Dubrovnik**, detour into Bosnia and Herzegovina for the historic old town of **Mostar** and its rebuilt old bridge. Immerse yourself in the fascinating cultural fusions of **Sarajevo** before returning to the sea, this time at Montenegro’s **Bay of Kotor**. Head inland to visit the awesome **Ostrog Monastery** then further north to the primeval forests of **Biogradska Gora National Park**. Now head to Kosovo and explore the tiny country’s monasteries from **Pristina** before continuing to the historic Macedonian capital of **Skopje**, with its Ottoman and Byzantine architecture. Continuing southeast, explore the wineries of the **Tikveš region**. Via old world **Bitola**, go to **Ohrid** to see the other-worldly Church of Sveti Jovan at Kaneo, perched above the lake.

Moving on into Albania, take in the wild colours of **Tiranë** before travelling south via the Unesco World Heritage-listed cities of **Berat** and **Gjirokastra**. Finally, take the ferry in **Saranda** to **Corfu** in Greece. Relax. You’ve earned it.



## Six Weeks Remote Ramblings

One of the delights of Southeastern Europe is the fact that there are still remote regions to explore. This ramble through some of the more off-beat pockets of Southeastern Europe takes in bustling cities, rural towns and some waterside respite. This is the journey to embark on if you really want to get to know the region and its people.

After charging your batteries on the Greek beach of **Corfu**, take a ferry to Albania. Spend a couple of days exploring the ruins of **Butrint** and **Gjirokastra**, before continuing on to the picturesque Unesco-listed town of **Berat**. Move north into the colourful Albanian capital of **Tirana** to soak up the cultural assets of the city.

Leaving Albania, head east into the mountains of Macedonia. Spend at least a couple of days in beautiful **Ohrid** for its picture-perfect monastery and some swimming in its eponymous lake. Make your way to the Macedonian capital of **Skopje** where Ottoman and Byzantine architecture meet in the streets.

From here, move overland to Bulgaria where your first obvious stop is **Sofia**, an underrated and accessible urban gem that offers access to the museum town of **Koprivshitsa**. It gets even better east in **Veliko Târnovo**, the ancient capital dramatically set on a rapid river. From here, it's a cinch to get to the beach town of **Varna** on the Black Sea coast.

Continue up along the coast into Romania to experience its lush **Danube Delta**. When you crave company again, plunge into the urban eclecticism of **Bucharest**. Once you have had your fill of city life, base yourself for a couple of days in **Braşov** to take in the famed haunts of Transylvania. Head deeper into the rural heartland of Romania; using **Suceava** as a base, explore the peculiarly painted churches of **Southern Bucovina** and the last thriving peasant society of Europe in **Maramureş**.

Continue across the country towards Serbia, and return to the throngs of people in **Belgrade** to explore innumerable museums by day and clubs by night. Head south, and if your timing is right, experience the Dragačevo Trumpet Assembly of **Guča**. Continue down to **Novi Pazar** with its bizarre Turkish tones. If all is well at the border, cross into Kosovo and explore its monasteries from **Pristina**.



### Three Weeks From City to City via Sea

Starting and ending in two of the great cities of the world, this delightful odyssey begins in **Istanbul**, which straddles East and West. Highlights of the city include Topkapı Palace, Aya Sofya and the Blue Mosque. Further along the Aegean coast, **Çanakkale** is a popular base for visiting **Gallipoli** – site of horrific losses during WWI – and the legendary town of **Troy**. Follow the coast to **Ephesus (Efes)** near Selçuk, which is home to the remains of the Temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. From nearby Kuşadası, take a ferry 3km to the Greek island of **Samos**, a hub of Hellenic culture.

Now that you've hit the Greek Islands, start hopping! Sail south to **Naxos**, the largest and greenest of the Cyclades islands, on your way to **Santorini**, an Aegean gem with volcanic cliffs sheering up from the limpid blue sea. Stop at laid-back **Paros** and the popular beaches of Antiparos on your way north to much-visited **Mykonos**. Now jump on a ferry to **Piraeus** on the mainland, a 30-minute metro ride from **Athens**. Conclude your journey with a visit to the Acropolis, one of the most significant and iconic monuments in Europe.

### Six Weeks The Whole Shebalkan

Ease yourself into the Balkans with a laid-back start in the Slovenian capital of **Ljubljana**. After a side trip to picturesque **Bled**, plunge south for sea breezes on Croatia's dramatic Dalmatian Coast.

Starting in **Rijeka**, continue along the coast to marble-coated **Zadar**, then on to **Split** and architecturally awesome **Dubrovnik**. Detour into Bosnia and Herzegovina for the iconic Old Bridge of **Mostar** and the captivating capital city of **Sarajevo**. Plunge back to the beach, this time to Montenegro's **Bay of Kotor**. Continue south into Albania, and spend a couple of days in hectic **Tiranë**; consider an excursion to **Berat**, the 'town of a thousand windows'. From Tirana, make your way overland via bus into Macedonia, for the holy lake of **Ohrid** and onwards to the Macedonian capital of **Skopje**. After soaking up the sights of Skopje, head to new kid on the block, Kosovo. Base yourself for a couple of days in **Pristina** to explore Kosovo's monasteries. After checking on the border situation to determine which routes into Serbia are currently the best, pick up the pace in **Belgrade**, a hub of history, culture and late-night hedonism.





### Three Weeks Adriatic to the Aegean

Embark on offbeat adventures between the Adriatic and Aegean Seas. First, walk along the magnificent walls of **Dubrovnik** and trip out to nearby islands. Then head into Bosnia and Hercegovina, stopping at **Mostar** on your way to **Sarajevo**. After enjoying the Turkish and Austrian stylings of the town, plunge south into Montenegro, visiting the **Bay of Kotor** on your way to **Podgorica**. In Albania, take the stunning Lake Koman ferry between the villages of **Koman** and **Fierzë**. Stop off in **Tirana** to experience the culture of the capital, before continuing on into Macedonia and the majestic monastery on **Lake Ohrid**. After pausing in the old world town of **Bitola** continue on into Greece.

Climb russet rock pinnacles to the exquisite monasteries of **Meteora**. Stop at the ruins of **Delphi** as you make your way down to the thriving metropolis of **Athens**. Spend two or three days taking in the unfathomably ancient Acropolis and visiting archaeological treasures of the town. Then, use the ferry hub of **Piraeus** as a gateway to access the islands of the Aegean. Consider heading to gay-mecca **Mykonos**, party island **Ios**, quintessential **Santorini**, or world-unto-itself **Crete**.

### Two Weeks Cruising the Coast

Take it easy along the Dalmatian Coast for a couple of weeks. Start in the cobblestoned fishing village of **Rovinj**, then take in the landscapes of cape Rt Kamenjak, near Pula, on your way to **Rijeka**. From here, detour to **Plitvice Lakes National Park** for its famed falls, then plunge down to **Zadar**, to wander through the slippery marble streets of the Old Town.

Keep cruising the coast to **Split**, home to the Diocletian's Palace and gateway to **Hvar Island**. After a few days on Hvar, continue down to **Dubrovnik**, with foreboding walls that are a crowning glory of the coast. From here, take a side trip to forest-covered **Mljet Island**.

If you still have time and can't get enough of the coast, leave Croatia and explore tiny but tantalising Montenegro, where historic towns line the limestone cliffs of the **Bay of Kotor**. Further along the Adriatic coast, you will find **Budva**, with its atmospheric Old Town and numerous beaches. Five kilometres south is the cherry on the coast, **Sveti Stefan**, with iconic terracotta roofs and views you could stare at all day.



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