



Croatia



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Plan Your Trip

Itineraries



Essential Croatia

This itinerary focuses on the essential Croatian experience – a sunny island-hopping trip along the Dalmatian coast stopping at three World Heritage Sites along the way. Conveniently, it has an international airport at each end. We've envisaged it as a journey that can be made predominantly by ferry.

Start with a stroll through the marbled streets of the postcard-perfect walled town of **Trogir**. Either relax here for a

night or continue on to Croatia's exuberant second city **Split**. Diocletian's Palace is a living part of this seafront city, a throbbing ancient quarter that's home to 220 historic buildings and about 3000 people. Base yourself here for a day or two of sightseeing and nightlife.

Hop on a fast catamaran to **Bol** on the island of Brač (or alternatively a car ferry to Supetar and then a bus). This pretty little port is most famous for Zlatni Rat beach – a glorious spur of pebbles that extends 500m into the Adriatic.





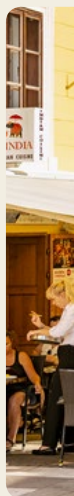
Peristil (p240), Diocletian's Palace, Split

Next, catch the catamaran to historic **Hvar Town**, the vibrant capital of the island of the same name. This picturesque place offers an intriguing mix of European glamour and a raucous bar scene.

From Hvar Town there are year-round connections to **Korčula Town** – a highly photogenic walled town jutting out into the Adriatic on its own little peninsula. From May to mid-October, there are

catamarans from here to Dubrovnik, otherwise you'll need to catch the car ferry to Orebić on the Pelješac Peninsula and continue by bus.

Your first sight of the magnificent old town of **Dubrovnik**, ringed by mighty defensive walls and the sparkling blue Adriatic, is bound to blow you away. Spend the next two days taking in its sights.



2
WEEKS

Capital to Coast

Take in the heavyweights of Croatia in this two-week journey, including the capital city, three national parks and the gems of the Dalmatian coast.

Start in the capital, **Zagreb**, and set aside two days to delve into its booming cafe culture, cutting-edge art scene, simmering nightlife and interesting museums. 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.

Cut down through the Velebit mountains to the coast and cross onto **Pag Island** to try some of its famously pungent cheese and indulge in its summertime beach-club scene. Continue on to **Zadar**, one of Croatia's most underrated cities. It's simultaneously ancient and modern and packed with attractions.

The next day, stop en route at **Krka National Park** and do the hour-long loop along the boardwalks connecting the little islands in the emerald-green river. End the outing with a swim at the lake below Skradinski Buk, the park's largest waterfall. Continue on to **Šibenik**, another gem of an old town with a truly magnificent cathedral.

Next day, stop at **Trogir** to admire the World Heritage-listed walled town sitting on its own little island, then travel south to the buzzing Dalmatian city of **Split** for a two-day fling focused on Diocletian's Palace.

If you hired a car, return it here and hop over to chic **Hvar Town** by ferry for a taste of its happening nightlife and for some clothing-optional sunbathing on the Pakleni Islands, immediately offshore.

Catch another ferry to Pomena on the gorgeous island of **Mljet**, gateway to Mljet National Park – you'll get a great view of Korčula Town from the boat. Walk through the forest and around the salt lakes before hiring a car to drive to the eastern end of the island to spend the night. The following morning, return the car to Pomena and catch the ferry on to **Dubrovnik**. Spend the next two days exploring the old town's gleaming marble lanes, vibrant street life and fine architecture.

Note that the Hvar–Pomena–Dubrovnik ferries only operate from May to mid-October. At other times it's easiest to omit Mljet, ferry back to Split and catch the bus to Dubrovnik.



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Top: Mljet Island (p318),
Bottom: Restaurants in Zagreb's Old Town (p85)



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 a remarkably well-preserved Roman amphitheatre that overlooks the city's harbour. The Arena, as it's known locally, once hosted gladiatorial contests with 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 **Cape Kamenjak** 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.

Stop to check out the captivating town of **Bale**, an offbeat place and one of Istria's best-kept secrets. Push on to **Rovinj** and set aside at least two days for the coast's showpiece resort town. Its steep cobbled streets and piazzas lead up to St Euphemia's Church, an imposing construction with a 60m-high tower that punctuates the peninsula. Take time to explore the verdant beaches and some of the 14 green islands that make up the Rovinj archipelago just offshore.

Zip up the coast to **Poreč** to gape at its World Heritage-listed Euphrasian Basilica, one of Europe's finest intact examples of Byzantine architecture, with magnificent 6th-century frescos.

Spend the rest of your trip exploring the peninsula's wooded interior. Drop into music-filled **Grožnjan** before continuing on through to **Motovun**, a similarly artsy hilltop settlement known for its summer film festival. The hilltop town of **Buzet**, known as Istria's truffle epicentre, makes for a good base for exploring the villages of Croatia's foodie heartland.

Stop to wander around the 'world's smallest town', the adorable **Hum**. Head southwest towards **Pazin** to walk through the famous chasm which once inspired Jules Verne. On your way back to Pula, make a final stop to stroll through scenic **Svetvinčenat**, with its Renaissance-era square and castle.

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Top: Roman Amphitheatre (p129), Pula
Bottom: Detail from the alterpiece in the Euphrasian Basilica (p144), Poreč





10
DAYS

Kvarner & Northern Dalmatia

PLAN YOUR TRIP ITINERARIES

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 the 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 underserviced city and another to visit the elegant seaside resort town of **Opatija**. Its beautiful belle époque villas date from the dying days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, when the town was the stomping ground of the Viennese elite. While you're at it, take time 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 gastronomic destinations; 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 campgrounds, pristine beaches, a handful of medieval villages and an off-the-radar feel. 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 the 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 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. Head back inland to spend a day exploring the dazzling natural wonderland of **Plitvice Lakes National Park**, with its gorgeous turquoise lakes linked by a series of waterfalls and cascades.



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Top: Rijeka (p171)

Bottom: Paklenica National Park (p211)

Off the Beaten Track

HUM

Istria has many gorgeous walled hilltop towns, but what's particularly charming about Hum is its tiny size (basically one street) and tucked-away location. (p156)

PLEŠIVICA WINE ROAD

Tour past wee red-roofed villages, stopping at family-run wineries along the way. This route is located in the countryside west of Zagreb, 20km south of the town of Samobor. (p102)

STARA BAŠKA

It's nice to know that even the busy island of Krk has quieter coves, such as this pebble-and-sand stretch accessed from a minor road heading south from Punat. (p195)

OLIVE GARDENS OF LUN

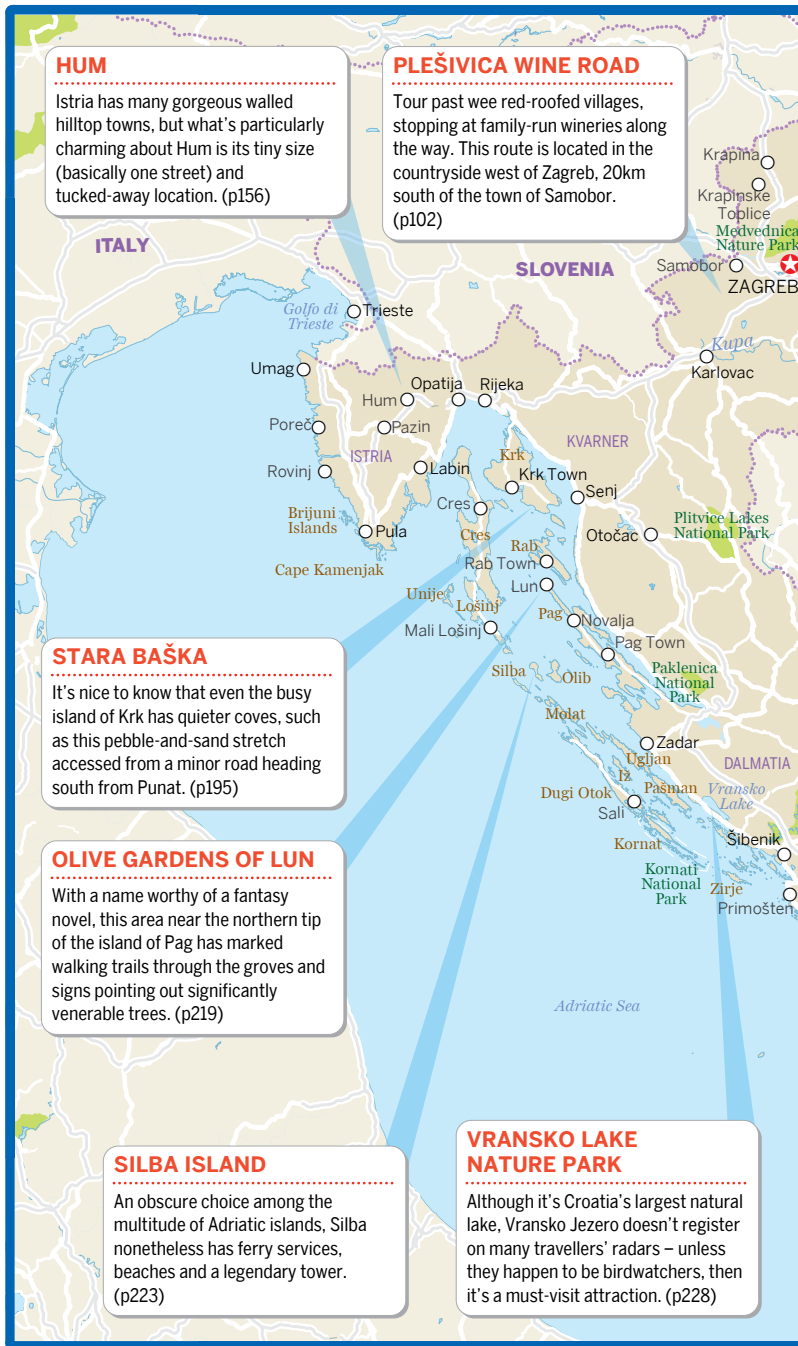
With a name worthy of a fantasy novel, this area near the northern tip of the island of Pag has marked walking trails through the groves and signs pointing out significantly venerable trees. (p219)

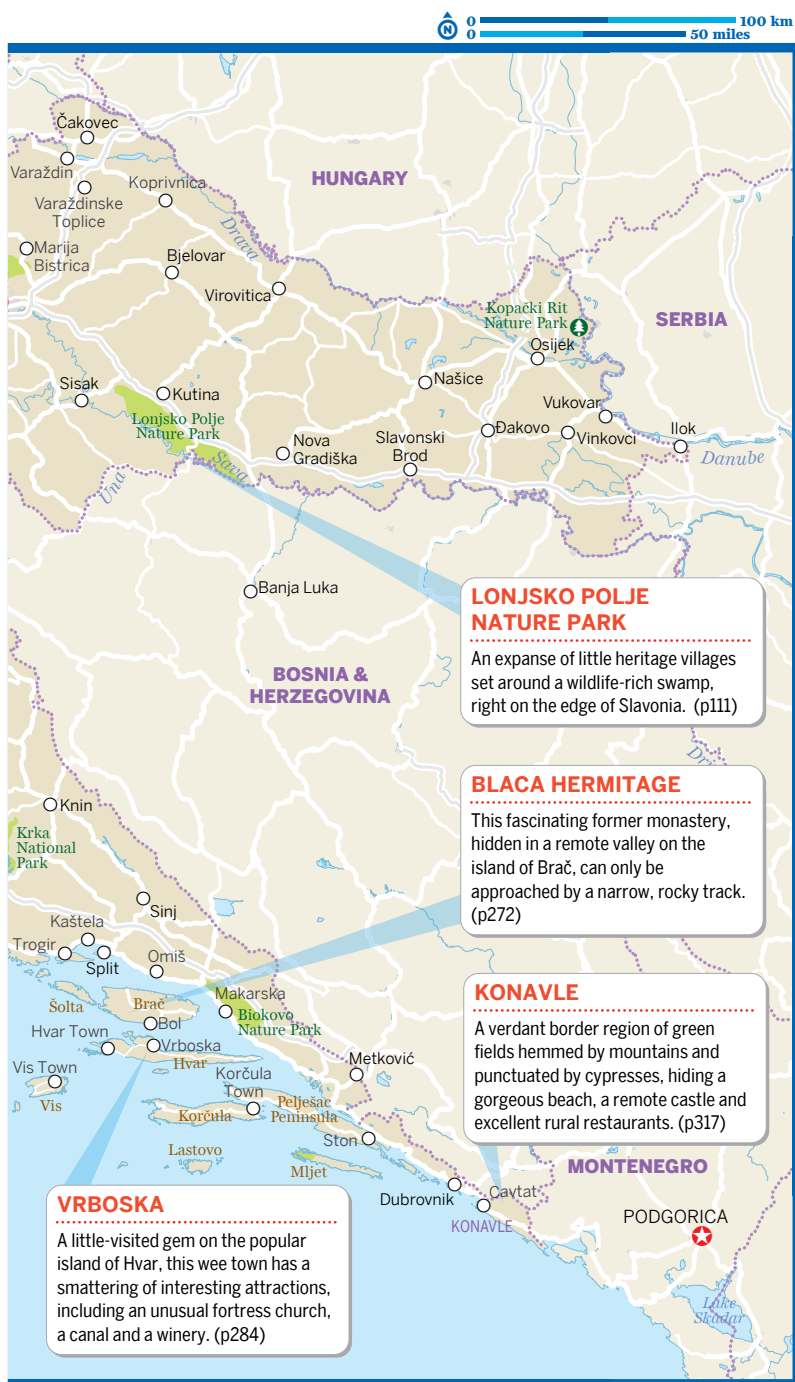
SILBA ISLAND

An obscure choice among the multitude of Adriatic islands, Silba nonetheless has ferry services, beaches and a legendary tower. (p223)

VRANSKO LAKE NATURE PARK

Although it's Croatia's largest natural lake, Vransko Jezero doesn't register on many travellers' radars – unless they happen to be birdwatchers, then it's a must-visit attraction. (p228)





Behind the Scenes

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THIS BOOK

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Map Legend

Sights

- Beach
- Bird Sanctuary
- Buddhist
- Castle/Palace
- Christian
- Confucian
- Hindu
- Islamic
- Jain
- Jewish
- Monument
- Museum/Gallery/Historic Building
- Ruin
- Shinto
- Sikh
- Taoist
- Winery/Vineyard
- Zoo/Wildlife Sanctuary
- Other Sight

Activities, Courses & Tours

- Bodysurfing
- Diving
- Canoeing/Kayaking
- Course/Tour
- Sento Hot Baths/Onsen
- Skiing
- Snorkelling
- Surfing
- Swimming/Pool
- Walking
- Windsurfing
- Other Activity

Sleeping

- Sleeping
- Camping
- Hut/Shelter

Eating

- Eating

Drinking & Nightlife

- Drinking & Nightlife
- Cafe

Entertainment

- Entertainment

Shopping

- Shopping

Information

- Bank
- Embassy/Consulate
- Hospital/Medical
- Internet
- Police
- Post Office
- Telephone
- Toilet
- Tourist Information
- Other Information

Geographic

- Beach
- Gate
- Hut/Shelter
- Lighthouse
- Lookout
- Mountain/Volcano
- Oasis
- Park
- Pass
- Picnic Area
- Waterfall

Population

- Capital (National)
- Capital (State/Province)
- City/Large Town
- Town/Village

Transport

- Airport
- Border crossing
- Bus
- Cable car/Funicular
- Cycling
- Ferry
- Metro station
- Monorail
- Parking
- Petrol station
- Subway station
- Taxi
- Train station/Railway
- Tram
- Underground station
- Other Transport

Routes

- Tollway
- Freeway
- Primary
- Secondary
- Tertiary
- Lane
- Unsealed road
- Road under construction
- Plaza/Mall
- Steps
- Tunnel
- Pedestrian overpass
- Walking Tour
- Walking Tour detour
- Path/Walking Trail

Boundaries

- International
- State/Province
- Disputed
- Regional/Suburb
- Marine Park
- Cliff
- Wall

Hydrography

- River, Creek
- Intermittent River
- Canal
- Water
- Dry/Salt/Intermittent Lake
- Reef

Areas

- Airport/Runway
- Beach/Desert
- Cemetery (Christian)
- Cemetery (Other)
- Glacier
- Mudflat
- Park/Forest
- Sight (Building)
- Sportsground
- Swamp/Mangrove

Note: Not all symbols displayed above appear on the maps in this book



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, Dublin, 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'.

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