

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. The first thing that strikes you is the clarity of the water. When it's set against a dazzling white pebbly beach, it sparkles with a jewel-like intensity in shades of emerald and sapphire. There are long sandy and shingly stretches too – perfect for lazy days spent lounging and devouring trashy holiday novels. If that all sounds too relaxing, there are myriad water-based activities at hand to lure you off your sun-lounger – snorkelling, diving, kayaking, windsurfing and sailing, just for starters.

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 palazzi 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 that cover the gamut of European history, from the prehistoric to the post-communist, 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, caverns, river canyons, 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 among it on the numerous hiking and biking trails – while the more adventurous can have a go at rock climbing, rafting and ziplining.

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!). Sharing food and drink plays a big part in the culture here, which speaks both to the nature of Croatian hospitality and to the quality of local produce. 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, Writer

I'll admit, I'm more than a little biased, but Croatia is quite simply my favourite country to visit. 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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