Tour Code
AD9

ADVENTURESABROAD

ITALY & THE ADRIATIC

'Our Full Northern Italy & Adriatic Trip'

30 days

Created on: 28 Mar, 2024

Day 1 Arrive in Rome

Today we arrive in Rome and transfer to our hotel.

Few cities in the world are as beautiful as Rome, and few are as glamorous. The Eternal City's ancient monuments and spectacular galleries are looking more magnificent than ever after an extensive restoration program.

Overnight in Rome.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Rome: City Tour

We begin our guided tour* of Rome at the 2,000 year old colosseum. Built to seat 55,000 spectators, this arena staged Rome's most brutal gladitorial combats. Next we walk through the Roman Forum where we will see the Curia, the Rostra, the Temple of Vesta, the Basilica of Constantine, and the Arch of Titus. Continuing onwards and upwards we reach the Campidoglio (Capitoline Hill), seat of the Roman Senate since the 12th century and the original citadel of the city. This beautiful square was redesigned by Michelangelo in the 16th century.

We arrive at Piazza Navona where we can break for lunch at one of the many restaurants and cafes on or near the square. In the square itself we can admire the impressive Fountain of the Four Rivers, with detailed figures representing the Nile, Ganges, Danube and Palata rivers.

We continue to the famous Trevi Fountain, designed by Nicholas Salvi in 1732. Its water was supplied by one of Rome's earliest aqueducts. Throwing a coin into the fountain is said to ensure your safe return to Rome. We also visit the temple-turned church called the Pantheon, and have the opportunity to admire its perfect proportions on our way to the Spanish steps, where we finish our day's tour.

* NOTE: Due to traffic problems and the fact that today's sites are reasonably close to each other, much of today's tour will occur on foot and with Rome's efficient public transit system (cost of tickets included). Any sightseeing / touring not accomplished today will be moved to tomorrow afternoon.

Overnight in Rome.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Rome: the Vatican Museums & St. Peter's

Today we travel by metro to the west side of the Tiber River and begin our visit to Vatican City with a guided tour through the immense Vatican Museums.* This amazing collection houses some of the most important Greek and Roman sculptures, Renaissance paintings, Flemish tapestries and mosaics in the world. Understandably this collection is visited by more than 3 million people a year. We also visit Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel to take in its breathtaking frescoes.

Heading into the cavernous interior of St. Peter's Basilica, we can appreciate it's many treasures, including Michelangelo's Pieta. At the end of the Vatican tour we visit the elegantly symmetrical Piazza St. Pietro.

After a break for lunch we will continue with any sightseeing carried over from yesterday.

* NOTE: The timing/order of today's sightseeing can vary depending on seasonality. Early spring and late fall tours can often begin in the morning due to lighter crowds at these times of year. Busier times often dictate an afternoon/evening visit in order to avoid morning crowds; indeed, we may include lunch instead of dinner today in order to expedite the flow of our activities. Your Tour Leader will advise of any adjustments upon your arrival in Rome.

Overnight in Rome.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Rome - Assisi - Siena

This morning we drive from Rome to Siena, a region famous for its wines.

Our first stop will be Assisi. Despite the millions of tourists and pilgrims it attracts every year, the hometown of St Francis remains a beautiful and tranquil refuge. St Francis was born here in 1182 and his spirit hovers over every aspect of the city's life. He renounced his father's wealth in his late teens to pursue a life of chastity and poverty, founding the order of mendicant friars known as the Order of Minors (the Franciscans after his death) which attracted a huge following in Europe.

St Francis' Basilica is the city's, and possibly Umbria's, primary attraction; after a guided tour of the basilica we depart for Siena, arriving later in the afternoon.

Overnight in Siena.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Siena & San Gimignano

Siena is best seen on foot. In fact, the city council was Europe's first to ban motor traffic from the city centre. Siena today seems frozen in time. The town has traditionally been Florence's rival as the centre of art and architecture in Tuscany. While Florence is known for its Renaissance art and buildings, Siena takes us straight back to the Middle Ages. Perhaps by preserving its original character more than any other city in Italy, Siena is a showcase of the Italian Gothic style. The walled city of Siena occupies three hill tops and contains a rich artistic heritage.

Included on our guided walking tour of Siena's charming medieval streets and squares is a visit to the Palazzo Pubblico (Town Hall), a famous example of Italian medieval architecture with Gothic influences. Also famous for its frescoes, the best-known are a secular series on government in the Hall of the Nine (also known as Sala della Pace), by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. These frescoes are collectively known as "Allegory and Effects of Good and Bad Government."

Our next stop is the Duomo. This huge cathedral, built in bands of black and white marble, dates from the 12th century. Built in the Romanesque and Italian Gothic styles, it has a dramatically painted façade -- partly designed by Giovanni Pisano -- and a soaring black and white bell tower. The inlaid marble floor depicts different Biblical scenes and the cathedral contains a glass-enclosed box with an arm. Tradition maintains that the arm is that of John the Baptist and was used to baptise Christ.

This afternoon we drive to San Gimignano, called the Manhattan of Tuscany. The medieval town preserves 13 of its noble brick towers, which give it a skyscraper skyline. Today its fortress-like severity is softened by the subtlety of its quiet, harmonious squares, and many of its places and churches are enhanced by Renaissance frescoes.

Our drive this afternoon back to Siena takes us through the wine growing region of Chianti.

Overnight in Siena.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Siena - Volterra - Pisa - Lerici

This morning we drive through beautiful and quintessential Tuscan rolling countryside to Volterra.

Situated like many Etruscan cities on a high plateau, Volterra offers uninterrupted views over the surrounding hills. In many places the town's ancient Etruscan walls still stand. The exact origins of the Etruscans and when they arrived in Italy, are unknown. Their civilisation was centred in the area between present-day Rome and Florence, and had its Golden Age from the eighth until the sixth century BC. After this

period the Etruscan empire was gradually superseded by the rising power of Rome, although in the process, the Romans incorporated many aspects of Etruscan culture into their own society and beliefs. Although the Etruscans had their own language and alphabet, nothing of their literature has survived. What we know of their civilisation comes mainly from their highly decorated tombs which were stocked with everything the deceased would need in the afterlife -- food, drink, clothes, weapons and furniture.

We also visit the city walls and the Etruscan Gate with its basalt heads of Etruscan gods dating back to the sixth century BC. Before leaving Volterra we view the Roman amphitheatre, dating to the first century BC. This is one of the best-preserved Roman theatres in Italy and enough of the original structure has survived to allow an almost complete reconstruction. In your free time here, we suggest Volterra's famous Museo Guarnacci, which contains one of Italy's best collections of Etruscan artifacts. Pride of place in the museum goes to the collection of 600 Etruscan funerary urns, depicting many aspects of Etruscan customs and beliefs.

Our next stop is Pisa, where we will spend most of our time concentrating on the town's principal monuments -- the Duomo, the Baptistery, and the most famous structure in Pisa, the gravity-defying "Leaning Tower." We will take ample time to view and photograph the tower from the outside (to climb the tower requires advance reservations and a considerable amount of time to queue for entry; time constraints make this impractical for our tour).

We continue to Lerici, set dramatically on a beautiful bay on the Ligurian coast.

Overnight in Lerici.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Lerici - Cinque Terre - Florence

Today we leave behind Lerici and travel (weather depending) by boat along the Ligurian coast to village of Riomaggiore in the Cinque Terre. Here we begin our easy-paced walk between the coastal villages. This spectacular section of the Italian Riviera is considered to rival the Amalfi Coast near Naples for its stunning views and gorgeous sunsets. From Riomaggiore we take an easy half hour walk on the Via D'Amore (lover's Walk) to Manarola. The next section (about 1 hour) takes us to Corniglia.*

Those not wishing to continue with the next two more difficult sections may walk up to Corniglia centre to sample the delightful town with its wonderful panoramic views. It is also possible to take a local train to the nearby town of Vernazza to enjoy this jewel of a village. Those wishing to continue may start on the 2-hour hike to Vernazza. The hills of the rugged coast are covered in vineyards which grow the grapes for the local Morasca, Chiaretto del Faro and Sciacchetra wines.

We continue by train to Monterosso Al Mare, thus named for the red colour of the area. Here we find a large statue carved into the cliffs and a lovely beach.

* PLEASE NOTE: Due to past flooding in the region, our day may need to be adjusted depending on what trails are open or under repair.

Tonight we arrive in Florence.

Overnight in Florence.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Florence: Walking Tour

Florence is a city steeped in history and art. Our walking tour today begins with a guided tour of the Accademia, which was Europe's first Academy of drawing and today houses a superb art collection, including Michelangelo's David, probably the most famous statue in the world. We then proceed to the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore (Duomo), complete with its magnificent red dome. Upon its completion in 1436, the dome was hailed as the greatest architectural achievement of its day, equaling, perhaps even surpassing, the monuments of antiquity. The cupola's diameter is greater than that of St Peter's in Rome and the nave is the third largest in Christendom. Even today its brilliant engineering is not fully understood.

We continue along the pedestrian mall to the Ponte Vecchio, the oldest bridge in Florence and the only one in the city to survive World War II. The Ponte Vecchio was built in 1345 and used to be lined with butchers' shops which have now been replaced by rows of gold and silver shops on both sides. At the Piazza Santa Croce, we stop to admire the facade of the Franciscan church of the same name. Inside we see the

tombs of Michelangelo and Galileo Galilei and chapels covered in frescoes by Giotto.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Florence.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Florence: Uffizi Gallery

This morning we visit the Uffizi Gallery, Giorgio Vasari's extraordinary administrative buildings which he designed for Cosimo I Medici in the mid-sixteenth century. The galleries here contain the greatest collection of Italian artworks, including hundreds of paintings by such great artists as Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Michelangelo, Titian and Caravaggio. The galleries also contain one of the most famous paintings in the world -- Botticelli's 'Birth of Venus.'

The afternoon is free to take in the atmosphere of this sophisticated city.

Overnight in Florence.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Florence - Ravenna: Town Tour

From Tuscany we drive into the region of Emilia Romagna, an area of fertile plains surrounding the Po River. The area is known for balsamic vinegar, and today we'll visit an acetaia where balsamic vinegar is produced. We will see the machinery, cellar, the barrels, indeed the whole process and all the products that result.

We arrive in Ravenna, an incomparable treasure-store of Byzantine monuments. Ravenna was made capital of the Western Roman Empire in AD 402 as Rome was threatened by the unstoppable Barbarians. Later in the fifth century Ravenna also succumbed, but was recaptured in 540 by the Byzantines under the emperor Justinian. From the sixth to the eighth centuries Ravenna flourished as a great centre of Byzantine (Eastern Orthodox) culture and religion. Its influence came not from the rest of Italy but from Constantinople (today's Istanbul); indeed the humble-looking churches of Ravenna house the most spectacular Byzantine mosaics outside of Istanbul (if you are a kean aficianado of mosaics, your Tour Leader can point you in the right direction for your free time, ie the Church of San Vitale and/or the Basilica of Sant Appollinare in Classe).

We'll have a walking tour of the charming streets of Medieval Ravenna, during which we visit the spectacular mausoleum of Galla Placidia, a Roman princess who married a Barbarian chief. The walls, floor, and ceiling of her tomb are completely covered in dazzling decoration. The Mausoleum of Theodoric, built in AD 520 to house the mortal remains of an enlightened ostrogothic ruler, has a dome cut from a single block of stone weighing almost 336 tonnes (300 tons)!

Overnight in Ravenna.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Ravenna - Verona - Padova (Padua)

Today we drive from Ravenna to Verona via the Colli Eugani region, known in English as the Eugenian Hills. This glorious area is well-known for its thermal springs and terrific wines.

Onto Verona, the setting for Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet'. With its pink marble Roman structures and rose-painted buildings, Verona is one of Italy's most appealing towns. The town contains many Roman ruins including the first century Arena which is now used as Verona's opera house, the third largest such structure in existence. The Teatro Romano is often used for the performance of plays, particularly those of William Shakespeare.

During our time in Verona we'll have a walking tour starting with the Piazza Bra, the centre of Veronese life. We'll wander the rosy-hued streets admiring the palaces, townhouses and churches. We see the Gothic mausoleum of the Scaligeri rulers of the 13th and 14th centuries. We also visit the family's fortified residence on the River Adige and a bridge named after them.

We continue to Padova.

Overnight in Padova.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Padova: Town Tour - Venice

We begin our walking tour of Padova with a visit to the towering Basilica of Saint Anthony, patron saint of lost things. With its minaret-like towers and byzantine cupolas, the structure is a blend of eastern and western elements and a focal point for a constant flow of pilgrims. When we step inside its precincts, we leave Italy and enter the Vatican State. This is the only Vatican property (apart from Vatican City) in Italy that is extra-territorial. We also visit a unique structure -- Europe's oldest permanent anatomy theatre, built in 1594, with viewing balconies so narrow that when students fainted they would be prevented from falling. After a short walk from the university we come to the Piazza Bo, the scene of one of the liveliest daily markets in Italy.

We then travel the rest of the distance to Venice by road. After a brief orientation by your Tour Leader, you will have free time this afternoon for independent exploration. This evening you may choose to visit the casino, take a gondola ride, or perhaps spend an evening at the theatre.

Overnight in Venice.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Venice: City Tour

On our guided walking tour this morning we concentrate on St Mark's Square, surrounded with elegant, historic buildings. Napoleon called Piazza San Marco, "the drawing room of Europe". We start with a tour of the Doge's Palace. This former seat of Venetian power has the second largest wooden room in Europe. Of interest as we walk through the council rooms, is Tintoretto's Paradise over the Grand Council Chamber -- alleged to be the largest oil painting in the world. The palace is connected to the old prison by the 'Bridge of Sighs.' In the late 16th century the decision was made to build new airier prison cells to replace the original dark dungeons. It was from this new prison that Casanova made his daring escape across the rooftops in 1755.

The highlight of the square is St Mark's Basilica, a Byzantine masterpiece. This cathedral was begun in 830 to house the tomb of St Mark whose relics were stolen from Alexandria in Egypt. The inside walls are encrusted with precious art, rare marbles and magnificent mosaics. Behind the altar is the famous gold altarpiece, 'Palla d'Oro,' which is one of the finest examples of gold craftsmanship.

(We do not include a tour of the interior of the basilica as lengthy queues usually make this impractical for our program. We encourage you to visit the site during your free time this afternoon. Your ticket is valid for the Doge's Palace and the combined itinerary of Museo Correr, Museo Archeologico Nazionale and Monumental Rooms of the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana.)

Later we take the vaporetto, or public water bus, on the Grand Canal and then walk along the maze of canals, sidewalks and bridges that are uniquely Venice. At the Rialto Bridge we visit the market area. The name Rialto derives from 'high bank' because this area was one of the highest points on the islands that make up the core of Venice and was thus considered a safe gathering point. The market here is vibrant with locals buying fruit and vegetables brought in from the mainland, and a vast array of fish caught fresh in the Adriatic.

Overnight in Venice.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Venice, Italy - Ljubjana, Slovenia

Today we travel from Venice to Ljubjana, Slovenia.

NOTE: This portion of the tour has changed since the printing of our general catalogue.

Overnight in Ljubjana.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 15 Ljubljana: City Tour

Today we enjoy a walking tour of "Bela Ljubljana". This was the nickname given to this delightful city after it was entirely rebuilt following a major earthquake in 1511. A walk through the streets of this charming city reminds one of Vienna and Prague. However, Ljubljana is tiny in comparison, and easily visited on foot. We go up to the highest point of the city to visit the 16th century castle; the castle today houses a Virtual Museum, which gives a superb overview of the city's history, and a climb up the main tower affords a wonderful panorama of the town and surrounding mountains.

We then visit the old town by foot, stopping along the way to see the Parliament building, university, beautiful squares, and unique bridges. We also see the city's Cathedral, with its modern bronze doors commemorating the history of Slovenia and its struggle towards independence. A tour of Ljubljana would not be complete without a stroll through the great outdoor markets, where locals come to buy fresh mountain herbs and flowers, wild mushrooms, and fresh fruit and vegetables from nearby farms.

Overnight Ljubljana.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 16 Ljubljana - Skofja Loka - Kropa - Bled

Today we drive through the countryside, with small hamlets and farms scattered across the green rolling hills. This area has some of this new nation's oldest inhabited settlements, three of which we will visit today. Our first stop today is Skofja Loka, or "Bishop's Meadow," one of the most charming towns in Slovenia with its historic streets, houses and its castle perched high above. We will wander the Mestni Trg, the main street of the town, see the Granary, St. James' Church, Homan house, and visit the 13th century castle, which today houses the finest ethnographic museum in the country.

Our drive continues through small hamlets, with traditional farmhouses and steepled churches, where crops of potatoes, corn, turnips and hay are grown. Our next stop is Kropa, a tiny town on the Kroparica River which was historically famous for its iron forging industry. The forges here produced iron objects of all kinds were traded throughout Europe. From the huge spikes which were used in the construction Venice, to the tiny tacks used in Austrian mountaineering boots, Kropa produced over 130 varieties of nails.

We drive through spectacular scenery to Bled, where we will spend two nights. Bled is located on the edge of an emerald green glacial lake. The views upon approach are stupendous, with the town's castle perched above, Bled Otok, the small island with a church in the center of the lake, all set against the spectacular backdrop of the Karavanke Mountains and Julian Alps.

Overnight in Bled.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 17 Bled & Lake Bohinj

Reflecting the high mountain peaks, Lake Bled has always been considered sacred by the locals. Our first visit is to the 11th century castle which houses a small museum and provides magnificent views of town, lake and mountains. After our visit we will catch a small traditional boat, or pletna, to visit the country's only island, Bled Otok. On the island we will visit the Church of St. Mary of the Assumption, also known as "Our Lady of the Lake". Legend has it that if you make a wish while ringing the bell your wish will come true.

This afternoon we drive through lush green valleys to Bohinj, one of the gateways to the Julian Alps. The name Bohinj refers to the entire

valley and its numerous small settlements. Lake Bohinj is the largest permanent lake in Slovenia, and protected from development. It is fed by the Savica waterfall, which Slovenia's greatest poet, Francis Preseren celebrated in his poem "Baptism at the Savica Waterfall". We will visit the Church of St. John the Baptist, famous for its beautiful frescoes, located on the lake's edge in the charming town of Bohinjska Bistrica.

Further along the lake's shores we will take a cable car which climbs 1537m / 5,072 ft up to Mt Vogel, the only mountain ski resort within Triglav National Park. On a clear day we can view the peaks of the Julian Alps, some of the highest in the country, and see Mt. Triglav, a holy mountain and national symbol of Slovenia. There is also a spectacular panorama of Lake Bohinj and basin.

Upon our return to Bled, you may choose to walk around the shores of Bled, or even swim (!); an excellent path takes you on a 6km (3.75 mi) walk around the lake.

Overnight in Bled.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Bled - Kobarid

This morning travel to Triglcav National Park. Our First stop will be at Kranjska Gora, popular winter and summer tourist resort for a short walk. Then continue via the mountain pass of Predil into the Log pod Mangrtom town -- a small town that was devastated by an avalanche in 2000. From there continue to Klu□e fortress situated on the scenic gorge of Koritnica River.

We drive to the pretty town of Bovec nestled in the Soca Valley and near the Kanin ridge, the highest ski resort in the country. We finish our day just down the road at Kobarid, known for the Battle of Caporetto where the Italian retreat was documented by Ernest Hemingway in his novel 'A Farewell to Arms.'

We will go up to the Italian Charnel house and Church of St. Antony, located on a hill above Kobarid town. It houses the bones of over 7,000 Italian soldiers killed here during World War I. The church was redesigned in the 20th century by an Italian architect, when the bones were gathered from the surrounding valleys and placed here; Mussolini himself dedicated the church and Charnel house in 1938.

Overnight in Kobarid.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 19 Kobarid - Predjama - Postojna Caves - Piran

Driving the along the banks of the Soca River, we make our way out of Alpine territory to the region and plateau of Primorska. The Soca is a valley of wonderful colours, full of waterfalls, pools, ravines and canyons, with its own distinct flora and fauna. The impossibly blue-green Soca River flows over white gravel and through a fairy-tale landscape with a stunning vista at every turn.

Our next stop is Predjama Castle, located in the middle of a 123m (403 ft) high, overhanging, limestone cliff, in the entrance of a cave. The cave was utlitised by a robber baron from centuries ago to become his stronghold. It's been described as a "masterpiece of medieval ingenuity, courage, cunning and defiance". Its white walls, roofs, turrets and chimneys jutting from the mountainside, built onto solid rock, make it the most unique and picturesque fortress you will ever come across in Europe.

We continue through the limestone plateau, or "karst" region en route to the Postojna Caves where we have a guided visit. This region was once submerged by a deep sea; today the landscape is characterized by subterranean rivers which have carved out magnificent caves, and by the rich red soil deposits in poljes, the depressions left when caverns collapse. The cave is 27 km (17 miles) long and over 2 million years old, and consists of a series of caverns, halls and passages with enormous stalactites and stalagmites. The caves also have their own unique ecosystem, flora and fauna; the most famous creature endemic to the caves is the so called Proteus Anguinus, or "human fish", a small pink, blind type of salamander equipped with both gills and rudimentary lungs.

We continue to Piran, Istria, beautifully located on the Adriatic. The town resembles a large open-air museum, with medieval architecture and a rich cultural heritage. Narrow streets and compact houses give the town its special charm.

Overnight in Piran.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 20 Piran, Slovenia - Porec, Croatia - Pula - Opatija

We depart Piran and continue by road across the border into Croatia where our first stop is Porec, a pretty seaside town dating back to the Roman period. We will walk through the ancient narrow lanes, see the ruins of the Roman Temple of Augustus, and visit the Euphrasian Basilica. This church houses some of the finest Byzantine mosaics in the world, comparable to those in Ravenna. The Basilica is listed among many other Croatian masterpieces of art and architecture, as a protected UNESCO World Heritage site.

We also stop in Pula, called Pola by the first Illyrian settlers and Polensium by the Romans. We visit one of the most impressive sites in town, the amphitheater, located near the harbour. Built entirely of local limestone, the amphitheater was designed to host gladiatorial contests and could accommodate up to 22,000 spectators.

We finish our day in Opatija, the oldest established and still one of the most popular Croatian resorts. A Rijeka businessman built the first villa here in 1844, and after a visit by the trend-setting wife of the Austrian Emperor, the town was promoted as a handy health resort for aristocratic Austrians.

(Depending on hotel availability, we may overnight in Opatija or continue the short distance to Rijeka.)

Overnight in Opatija or Rijecka.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 21 Opatija - Zagreb

Today we travel inland to the capital, Zagreb.

From its intriguing architecture to nearby natural havens, this underrated European capital has something for everyone. Unlike most western European capitals, Zagreb's cityscape is a fascinating mixture of classic Austro-Hungarian architecture and gritty socialist structures. Some of the city's most emblematic buildings include the iconic, colourful roof of St Mark's Church and the twin spires of Zagreb Cathedral which tower above. With an electric mix of Italian, Turkish, and Austro-Hungarian influences, even its coffee culture here is steeped in history.

Zagreb is located on the intersection of several important routes between the Adriatic coast and Central Europe. It offers visitors the Baroque feel of the Upper Town, picturesque open-air markets, and various kinds of shops. Perched on two small hills encircled by Renaissance-era walls, Zagreb's oldest district is home to many of the city's main attractions. This picturesque medieval part of the Croatian capital boasts its most impressive architecture and great views over the rest of the city.

Time-permitting, we are likely to have to time to begin our city sightseeing program upon arrival.

Overnight in Zagreb.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 22 Zagreb: City Tour

Today's city tour* features Governor Jelacic Square, undoubtedly the very heart of the capital. Located in Zagreb's center, the square is dominated by the statue of Josip Jelacic who became the governor of the triple Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia on the 23rd of March, 1848.

In the District of Gradec, we take a funicular from the Lower Town to the Upper, which for centuries has connected the old part of town with Ilica Street, the main shopping area. We will then stroll back down to Kaptol, St Catherine's Cathedral, Church of St Mark, St. Stephen's Church, and Lotrscak Tower.

As part of our tour, we plan to visit the popular Museum of Broken Relationships, where you can find yourself lost in all of the featured sad, funny, and highly personal stories of heartbreaks from over the world. This visit is certain to send you down memory lane, mentally revisiting all of the relationships in your own past.

After our tour you will have time at leisure to explore, shop, relax, visit museums etc. Your Tour Leader can help plan your afternoon.

* PLEASE NOTE: In 2000 the region experienced an earthquake which damaged 2,000 buildings in Zagreb, many of which are still closed off for repairs. This means that many/most of the buildings, including museums (except the M of Broken Relationships), that we may have planned to visit were still closed as of our 2022/23 season, without a clear time frame for when this may improve. This note will be updated as conditions warrant. That said, the city is still a stunning place with great views, wonderful architecture, pleasant walking, and friendly people.

This evening we convene for our farewell dinner.

Overnight in Zagreb.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 23 Zagreb - Plitvice Lakes

This morning we depart for Plitvice, where 16 lakes, each at a different level, join each other in a series of cascading waterfalls. Surrounded by dense woods, this is a region of unique beauty. The travertine terraces have been continuously reforming themselves over 10,000 years as calcium carbonate dissolves and settles, forming barriers and cascades. The lakes are also home to a huge variety of flora and fauna including 120 species of birds and a variety of mammals and fish species. The entire area is protected as one of UNESCO's Natural World Heritage Sites.

Wooded paths at the edge of pine, beech and fir forests follow the successions of lakes and waterfalls which we will follow on our walk* around the Lower and Upper Lakes, ending with a short boat ride across the largest lake.

* Good walkers will have no trouble with the well-maintained trails. If you have concerns about your suitability, please have a word with your Tour Leader.

Overnight in Plitvice.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 24 Plitvice Lakes - Zadar - Split

Today we travel to the coast via Zadar, the ancient capital of Byzantine Dalmatia.

This large city has its historic center crowded on a small piece of land jutting into the Adriatic When it was occupied by the Germans in 1943, Allied bombings destroyed about 60% of the city. Zadar was rebuilt one more time, as it had been many times over its tumultuous history; it is for this reason that one can find a variety of architectural styles, from Roman Corinthian columns to Romanesque churches. We enter the city through one of the Venetian gates and proceed to the Roman Forum, the Church of St. Donatus and Cathedral of Anastasius, and visit the Archaeological Museum, with a fine collection of artifacts dating from Roman and medieval times. NOTE: In the event that the Archaeological Museum is closed, due to erratic opening hours, the Museum will be replaced with a visit of the Treasury, a collection of relics attended to by the order of Benedictine nuns in the Church and Nunnery of St. Mary.

We continue on to the 13th century Saint Lawrence Gothic cathedral in Trogir, esteemed as a masterpiece. Then it's on to Split (ancient Spalato), the second largest city of Croatia. The historic city center actually lies in the walls of the enormous retirement Palace of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, built between 295-305 AD. The palace served as a palace, military fortress, and later, a fortified town. The city is enclosed by huge walls, pierced by 4 main gates, one on each side of the rectangular plan. Later you may wish to walk the promenade along the harbour when it comes alive with locals taking an evening stroll or relaxing in the seaside cafes outside the ancient palace walls.

Overnight in Split.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 25 Split - Hvar

This morning we have a walking tour through the heart of ancient Split. We will visit the cryptoporticus (underground vaults) of the Palace, the Mausoleum and Church of St. Donatus, the Peristyle court, and explore the ancient narrow streets still paved with the lustrous white stone of Brac Island. We will also exit the Golden Gate of the palace to see the huge bronze statue of St. Gregory of Nin made by Ivan Mestrovic, the most celebrated sculptor of modern Croatia.

Later we take a short ferry ride to the island of Hvar. En route we will pass the island of Brac, which provided the lustrous white stone for the construction of the Cathedral of Sibenik, Diocletian's Palace at Split, the Cathedral of Liverpool, and the White House in Washington, DC.

The island of Hvar receives 2,724 hours of sunshine per year, more than anywhere else in Croatia, and is thus called the "Island of the Sun". Greeks from Paros first settled on the island in the 4th century BC in Pharos, the modern town of Stari Grad. In the 13th century, the capital of the island was transferred to the town of Hvar (a mutation of Pharos in Slavic) and prospered during the 3.5 centuries of Venetian rule. This picturesque town and marina is alive with the constant hum of activity.

Overnight in Hvar.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 26 Hvar: Walking Tour

This morning we have a walking tour through narrow streets to the 15th century Franciscan Monastery, visit the Renaissance cloister, the old rectory that today houses a collection of lace, manuscripts and books; and the church with its remarkable collection of paintings. We also visit St Stephen's Cathedral.

The afternoon is free for independent exploration on this beautiful island. For those interested, there is an excellent hike up to the Venetian castle above town.

Overnight in Hvar.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 27 Hvar, Croatia - Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina

Today we depart Hvar by ferry to Drvenik from where we drive along the coast to Opuzen where we turn inland to the border crossing at Metkovic. After crossing into Bosnia, we drive to Pocitelj where we have a chance to stop and discover the exquisite blend of Mediterranean and Oriental architecture. From Pocitelj we will continue our drive to Mostar arriving in the afternoon.

Despite great damages suffered in the last war, the city on the emerald green River Neretva has preserved a great part of its authentic Oriental architecture and the way of life conceived on the boundaries of civilizations.

Overnight in Mostar.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 28 Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina: Walking Tour - Dubrovnik, Croatia

We begin our day with a walking tour of Mostar. Our tour will include a visit to the ancient city dating to the 16th/17th centuries, a visit inside a traditional house dating to this period, and a visit to the recently rebuilt Mostar Bridge, the emblem of the city. After our tour of Mostar, we will begin our journey to Dubrovnik. En route we will stop at the historic, fortified town of Ston. We arrive into Dubrovnik in the late afternoon.

The history of Dubrovnik, or ancient Ragusa, begins in the 7th century, when it was under the protection of the Byzantine Empire. In the 12th

century Ragusa, formerly an island, merged with mainland settlements and the channel between was filled in with carted-in material. Today this area is the main street of the old city named the Placa or Stradun. After shaking off the yoke of Venice in 1385, Ragusa became an independent republic. It remained one of the most powerful maritime powers in the Mediterranean for over four centuries (until 1808). Ragusa was the link between the Mediterranean and the Balkans and hence developed into an important centre of trade and shipping. Dairy products, wax, honey, timber, coals, salt, silver, lead, copper, wine, oil, fish and slaves were all traded. During the "Golden Age" of Ragusa in the 16th century, she had the 3rd largest merchant fleet in the world and consulates in over 50 countries. After changing hands a number of times, the city was finally ceded to Croatia (former Yugoslavia) and in 1918 the Slavic name of Dubrovnik was officially adopted.

Overnight in Dubrovnik (just outside Old Town).

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 29 Dubrovnik: Walking Tour

This morning features a walking tour of Dubrovnik's historic center. Dubrovnik has been called "Croatian Athens" and the "Pearl of the Mediterranean" for its astounding beauty, sophisticated history and culture, and prosperity.

Over the course of its tumultuous history, the city had to be extensively reconstructed; the earthquake of 1667 destroyed much of the city; and in recent memory, the town was bombarded by over 2,000 shells in 1991-2. After great international efforts, the city has been restored to its former glory, with its towering fortifications, magnificent medieval architecture, red tiled roofs, winding paved streets and picturesque harbours.

Today we visit the Cathedral and Sponza Palace; en route we will see many famous landmarks including Onofrio's fountain, the Clock Tower, Roland's Column and the Church of St. Blaise, the patron saint of Dubrovnik.

We also walk the walls of Dubrovnik, considered by many to be a highlight of our visit. The total circuit is nearly 2km / 1.25 mi, and from the bastions you will have magnificent views of the city's monuments, including the Minceta Tower, Revelin Tower, and the mighty fortress of St. Lawrence, with walls 12m / 40 feet thick!

Your afternoon is free to enjoy this memorable place.

Overnight in Dubrovnik.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 30 Departure

Departure from Dubrovnik.

SRETAN PUT!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast