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## Croatia: The Dalmatian Coast

### Travel Style - Guided Walking Tour

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep into the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.



Along the golden archipelagos of the Adriatic, the Dalmatian Coast is a hidden wonder full of medieval cities, seaside olive groves, and glittering bays surrounded by hills of vibrant green. Island-hopping through this seaside paradise, you'll discover Brač's luminous white-stone walls and rosemary fields, Hvar's legendary vineyards, and the wooded hills of Korčula. Savor an authentic plate of *pašticada* (Croatian braised beef) or grilled calamari at a family-run *konoba* (tavern), where the owners are always happy to chat over a glass of grappa. Take a break from memorable coastal walks to swim in the turquoise water of a secluded cove. Enjoy a different perspective on the coastline during transfers via ferry, catamaran, or private water taxi. In Dubrovnik, walk the ancient walls of a UNESCO World Heritage city and look out at the iconic orange rooftops of its Renaissance-era buildings. It's a tantalizing region steeped in Greek, Roman, and Venetian history, and you experience its riches on this unforgettable adventure.

## Tour Only Itinerary - 2019

### Day 1

#### Join Your Country Walkers *Croatia: The Dalmatian Coast* tour

*Walking tour of Trogir and Split; 2-3 hours, easy*

You gather in the lobby of the meeting-point hotel for a brief orientation followed by a visit to Trogir—a beautifully preserved walled town that boasts a profusion of Romanesque and Renaissance architectural styles, along with a magnificent cathedral. Afterward, you transfer to Split for a guided walking tour of Split's UNESCO-preserved old town. You are transported back to Roman times, strolling inside what used to be the retirement residence of the emperor Diocletian, past the Temple of Jupiter and into the mausoleum, now the town's cathedral. You then venture outside the city walls to Split's vibrant market and bustling bayside promenade, the Riva. After this tour, enjoy a delicious



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lunch that may include grilled vegetables, octopus salad, and black risotto.

In the late afternoon, you board a public ferry for an hour transfer to Brač, the third-largest island of the archipelago, best known for its luminous white stone, from which both Diocletian's palace and the White House in Washington, D.C., were constructed. A short minibus transfer along the tranquil northern coast brings you to your hotel, a comfortable property with a pool overlooking the sleepy village of Postira. After getting settled, you gather for a welcome meeting and the first of many delicious dinners featuring the bounty of this distinctive coast.

### **Accommodation: Hotel Lipa, Brač**

The warm spirit and hospitality of Dalmatia infuse this modern, seafront hotel. Located in the center of the sleepy village of Postira, on Brač's tranquil northern coast, the hotel offers a quiet respite after a day of walking, with an outdoor pool and wellness center; spacious, well-equipped rooms; and a restaurant and terrace grill serving local specialties. And be sure to take advantage of the hotel's proximity to the beach!

## Day 2

### **Postira to Splitska and Skrip, and Skrip to Milovica quarry**

*5 miles, easy to moderate, 800-ft. elevation gain; 3 miles, easy to moderate, 700-ft. elevation gain*

Today's walk takes you along a pine-clad northern coastal path from Postira to the fishing village of Splitska. A steady ascent winds through olive groves and cultivated terraces, culminating at the village of Skrip, the island's first settlement, founded by the Illyrians in 1000 BC. Remains of the original wall can still be seen around the citadel. You stop for a brief visit to the tower and Roman mausoleum, today a museum dedicated to the history of the island, before indulging in a memorable lunch of *pastičada*, a traditional Dalmatian specialty of slowly braised beef served with homemade gnocchi.

The afternoon presents two options. You may continue on foot along a paved road that turns to a dirt trail to the Milovica quarry (along a steep, 25-minute ascent) that rewards with views to the sea. Or you may opt to return to the hotel via minibus with time to relax or swim before reuniting for a meal of local specialties at a traditional family-run *konoba* (tavern).

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### Day 3

#### Blaca Monastery, Zlatni Rat beach, and Vidova Gora summit

*3-5 miles, moderate, 1400-ft. elevation loss*

After a breakfast of fresh fruit, homemade bread, cheese, and *prsut* (Dalmatian smoked ham), you set out to explore some of the island's finest attractions. A 45-minute transfer by minibus, takes you to the trailhead, which leads to the 16th-century Pustinja Blaca, originally a hermitage founded in 1551 by Glagolitic priests during the Ottoman advance. A rocky dirt path descends gradually to the monastery, where you stop for a visit before continuing to a secluded cove. Here, a short transfer by private boat brings you past the famous Zlatni Rat, or "Golden Cape." Afterward you proceed to a former shepherd's hamlet for a traditional *peka* lunch (meat and vegetable stew simmered slowly over hot coals under a dome-shaped lid).

This afternoon, you take a drive to Vidova Gora, the highest point on the island, for a panoramic view over the islands you will explore during the course of the journey.

Later today, you board a large catamaran ferry for a short transfer to the chic island of Hvar, famous for its lavender production. After you check into your comfortable seaside hotel, the evening is yours to stroll the promenade and admire Hvar town's main historical buildings, including the old theater—the first in Europe to be open to the public. For dinner, you are free to choose from among the many restaurants and cafés, with recommendations from your guides and hotel staff.

#### **Accommodation:** Hotel Adriana, Hvar

Croatia's first and only member of *The Leading Small Hotels of the World*. A boutique hotel overlooking the marina in the center of Hvar town. The property features a saltwater swimming pool and spa.

### Day 4

#### Brusje to Milna, and Milna to Hvar

*3-4 miles, easy to moderate; 5-6 miles, moderate, 600-ft. elevation loss*

This morning, you may wish to relax on the harborside terrace over a copious breakfast before departing for a short walk to Spanjol Fortress. The climb to the citadel rewards with a bird's-eye view over the picturesque harbor and the nearby Pakleni islets. A short minibus transfer takes you inland to just outside the former shepherds' settlement of Brusje and the trailhead. The rocky path winds past terraced hillsides dotted with olive trees, lavender, and drystone walls. You reach the abandoned village of Malo Grablje (a name derived from the fact that it is "lower" or Malo and "grab" or hornbeam bush—a plant that grows on these uplands), recently restored and turned into a wonderfully preserved open-air museum of sorts. Take time to explore the village before reaching the peaceful cove of Milna, where you may opt for a swim in the turquoise sea. You enjoy lunch at a seaside café before returning to Hvar either on foot or by minibus. Some guests may wish to indulge in a spa



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treatment or simply unwind at the hotel, while others may prefer to shop or explore prior to dinner at one of our favorite family-run restaurants.

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## Day 5

### **Hvar's northern coast: Stari Grad Plain**

*4.5 miles, easy to moderate*

After a buffet breakfast of fresh fruits, cereals, pastries, and eggs, you embark on a scenic excursion on the island's northern coast. Today's exploration begins with a (30-minute) transfer to tranquil Stari Grad (literally *Old Town*). Considered one of Croatia's oldest towns, dating to the fourth century BCE when it was a Greek colony called Faros, it lies on the edge of a UNESCO-preserved agricultural plain in a deep and protected cove. Upon arrival to Stari Grad, you visit the fortified castle of poet, and native son, Petar Hektorović, before continuing on a walk through The Plain (known by the Greeks as Hora Pharu it became Ager Pharensis in Roman times). Virtually untouched since its inception 24 centuries ago, it provides incredible insight into the agricultural practices of the ancient Greeks. You stroll through vineyards and olive groves en route to Vrboska, the island's tiniest town and a fishing harbor established in the 15th century.

A light lunch refuels before transferring back to Hvar town, where you have time for a stroll or perhaps a gelato before you bid the island farewell. Late afternoon is spent relaxing on a scenic public ferry (catamaran) transfer to Korčula Island, the sixth-largest Adriatic island. There is time to refresh at your hotel, a seaside property and your base for the next two nights, before another memorable dinner.

### **Accommodation: Hotel Liburna (or equivalent), Korčula**

Named for a galley ship of the ancient Roman navy, the Hotel Liburna is ideally located on a pebble beach, just a short walk from Korčula's medieval Old Town. The hotel was renovated in 2015 and offers a contemporary décor and a host of amenities, including indoor and outdoor pools, two clay tennis courts, and a selection of bars and restaurants. A wellness center and water sports are also available at the Liburna's nearby sister hotel, the Marco Polo.

## Day 6

### **Zrnovo Circuit**

*3-5 miles, easy to moderate*



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After breakfast in the panoramic dining room, you set out to explore the wooded hills above Korčula, an island rich in vineyards and olive groves, and sprinkled with picturesque villages. Traditional culture has been preserved on this island, from religious festivals to folk music and dance to shipbuilding. A short transfer brings you to Zrnovo, where you explore the village and St. Martin's Church before continuing along a wide, rocky path dotted with cypress and aromatic Mediterranean *maquis* (low-lying vegetation).

As you emerge from the wooded trail, you spy beautiful views of the Peljesac Peninsula just across the channel. A special lunch rewards your efforts.

This afternoon affords time to rest, swim, or peruse town on your own before a guided visit of the UNESCO-preserved old town—often referred to as a miniature Dubrovnik for its beautiful medieval buildings and stonework. Dinner is at a restaurant in the heart of town, where a typical feast awaits, featuring prawns, calamari, and salad of sheep's cheese and olives, all topped off by a creative confection for dessert. An after-dinner stroll along the narrow streets of Korčula town provides perfect closure to the day.

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## Day 7

### **Peljesac Peninsula: Viganj to Orebic**

*5 miles, easy to moderate, 700-ft. elevation gain and loss*

After breakfast, you bid farewell to Korčula to walk the hills along the Peljesac Peninsula, home to some of the best beaches in southern Dalmatia, with wide, sandy coves bordered by groves of tamarisk and pine. After a short boat transfer to the tiny town of Viganj, you ascend a rocky trail for approximately 20 minutes. You are quickly graced with gorgeous views across the channel to Korčula before descending to Orebic, once an important maritime center and now home to a small maritime museum. You are free to enjoy lunch on your own at one of the local bakeries, pizzerias, or seaside restaurants before transferring to Ston, whose former importance was linked to salt production. Today, it is revered as a gastronomic capital, famous for its fresh seafood and, in particular, oysters, which you have an opportunity to taste. Afterward, you proceed to a luxury hotel in magnificent Dubrovnik. A final celebration takes place at an excellent local restaurant, where you toast your week's adventures.

### **Accommodation: Grand Villa Argentina, Dubrovnik**

A seaside luxury hotel located within walking distance of Dubrovnik's historic center is set in lush



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terraced gardens leading down to its private beach; also with indoor and outdoor swimming pools and spa with sauna, whirlpool, and treatments. Comfortable guest rooms feature sea views, and the hotel has three restaurants, including one on its private beach.

### Day 8

#### **Your Country Walkers *Croatia: The Dalmatian Coast* tour concludes**

*2 miles, easy city walking*

Your tour concludes with a walking tour of “The Pearl on the Adriatic,” as Lord Byron so famously described Dubrovnik. This much-celebrated town, a World Heritage site, is completely encircled by over a mile of beautifully preserved walls built between the 13th and 16th centuries. Historically, they provided protection against all intruders, from the Saracens to the Turks, coming by way of the sea. You explore the town’s main works of art, learn about its history of proud and fierce economic and political independence from Venice, marvel at the loving way the town was restored after the shelling in 1991, and take pleasure in discovering its architectural details and narrow alleys. At 11:30 a.m., say farewell to your guides at the Grand Villa Argentina, then continue your exploration of this enchanting coast or make connections to Dubrovnik Airport for your departure.