

PEARLS OF THE ADRIATIC SEA



See the hotspots of the Adriatic: Ride the awesome coastal roads and enjoy the breath-taking scenery.

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RIDING DAY 1 : SPLIT - HVAR

Standard Route (196 km / 122 miles)

Almost the entire Croatian coast is beautiful, but the section between Split and Ploče is truly outstanding. We follow it, mountains on our left, sparkling sea on our right, to a town named Omiš, where we turn inland to discover the beautiful gorge of the Cetina River. A narrow road leads us along the gorge and up to a stunning viewpoint before it brings us back to the coast. Past the town of Makarska we reach Drvenik and catch the ferry to Hvar. This route is short enough for you to catch the midday ferry and arrive in Hvar township early enough to enjoy the atmosphere there as well as the beaches and the crystal clear water.

Highlights:

#1: Cetina Gorge



Die Cetina ist nur etwa 100 km lang, doch diese Strecke genügte dem Fluss, um eine tiefe, spektakuläre Schlucht zu graben. Wasserfälle und Stromschnellen, senkrechte Felswände, schmale Engstellen, unberührte Natur und nicht zuletzt eine enge, kurvige Straße, das gibt es hier zu sehen. Wie viele derartige Landschaften in Kroatien diente natürlich auch diese hier in den 60ern als Kulisse für einen Karl-May-Film: in "Der Ölprinz" spielt die Cetina ihre Rolle

als tosender Wildfluss mit Bravur.

#2: Makarska



Many people say that this is the most beautiful part of the Adriatic coast. With its 60 kilometers long bays with beautiful beaches and a crystal clear blue sea in the shade of pine trees the Makarska Riviera is really a pearl of the Adriatic Sea. The mountain Biokovo with its highest mountain Sv.Jure (1762m) is a protected natural park.



#3: Stari Grad



According to "Travel&Leasure" (2010) the island of Hvar is one of the 10 most beautiful islands in the world. Statistically it is also one of the sunniest, with 2762 hours of sunshine per year on average. Due to the expansive lavender fields Hvar is also said to be the most fragrant island of Croatia. Stari Grad (Pharos) is the heart of the island and also the oldest town in Croatia. It was founded by the ancient Greeks in 384 BC.

The lavender fields between Stari Grad and Vrbovska were also created by the ancient Greeks. Their layout remained unchanged for more than two millennia, reason enough for the UNESCO to protect them as a World Heritage site.

#4: Hvar



In 1278 Hvar was under the rule of Venice. Since then it has been the centre of the island. The buildings dated from 13th - 18th century of which the teatre, built in 1612, is one of the oldest teatres in Europe. Hvar impresses also with its old castle, the arsenal, the town's loggia, the cathedral and Franciscan monastery.



RIDING DAY 2 : HVAR - DUBROVNIK

Standard Route (225 km / 140 miles)

Once again we follow Hvar's backbone, take the ferry and set foot on the mainland. We continue down the coast, following the zigzagging road that offers wonderful views along the way. After looping around Ploče we reach the so-called Neum corridor, territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the country's only access to the sea. While Croatia features almost 1,800 km of coast line, BIH has only 5.

A little side trip brings us to the small town of Ston, founded and fortified by the Romans who operated large salines here. In the 14th century Ston was part of the Republic of Dubrovnik, ramparts were built and still today the wall that encompasses the town is considered to be the longest city walls in all of Europe, even if it is not entirely intact anymore.

Today's destination is Dubrovnik, the "Pearl of the Adriatic Sea" and filming location of "Game of Thrones". The old town and the massive ramparts are completely restored and stunningly beautiful, which in turn means that it tends to get very, very busy. But Dubrovnik is a must-see, so no excuses!

Highlights:

#1: Pelješac-Bridge



Built in only four years and at a cost of 420 million euros, the 2,404 m-long Pelješac Bridge bypasses the so-called Neum Corridor, a territory of Bosnia-Hercegovina which separates southern Dalmatia and Dubrovnik from the rest of Croatia. The two highest of the seven pylons measure almost 300 meters, 200 below the water surface and 98

above. The clearance below the road is 55 meters.



#2: Ston



From 1326, Ston was a part of the Ragusan Republic (Dubrovnik). In the 15th century, it was built systematically as a double fortress in parts of Veliki Ston in the south and Mali Ston in the north whose defensive walls were regarded as a notable feat of medieval architecture. The town's inner wall measures 890 meters in length, while

the Great Wall outside the town has a circumference of 5,5 km, one of the longest defensive walls in Europe, thanks to encouragement by the most

famous architects, such as Juraj Dalmatinac and Michelozzo Michelozzi among others. The defensive wall has 41 round and square defensive towers and 7 bastions. In spite of several earthquakes, around 5 km of the wall has remained preserved.



#3: Dubrovnik



Hidden in the southernmost part of the Croatian territory, Dubrovnik is a priceless pearl gracing the south shores of the Adriatic Sea. With its breathtaking natural beauty, perfect climate, rich historical heritage, and diverse tourist offers, Dubrovnik is definitely among the most beloved and most regularly visited destinations of the region.

Dubrovnik's turbulent history, dating all the way back to ancient times, is filled with exciting adventures, legends,

and battles against foreign domination exchanged with periods of prosperity and independence. The ever-changing historical circumstances helped form the specific mentality and culture, as well as the beautifully preserved city architecture.

The best way to enjoy the many sights of Dubrovnik is by foot. You can soak up the romantic atmosphere of the narrow streets covered in stone, admire the beauty of countless monuments and explore the city's rich gastronomic offer. Make sure to take a stroll down the most famous city street, Stradun, admiring numerous sights and monuments along the way. Make a stop at some of the beautiful churches such as the Cathedral or the Church of St. Blaise. You will be left breathless with the harmonious beauty of the Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance buildings such as the Rector's Palace, Franciscan Monastery, or the famous Sponza Palace. You can visit some of the numerous city museums, galleries, and souvenir shops.

Once you get tired of sightseeing, you can seek out refreshment in the crystal clear, blue sea on one of several beautiful beaches around the wider city area. You can choose how to spend your day near the sea according to your preferences; there are sandy, rocky, or pebble beaches with countless options for leisure and recreation. The mild Mediterranean climate provides the perfect weather throughout the tourist season; with the ideal sea temperatures and warm sunny days making Dubrovnik the ideal summer destination.

Dubrovnik doesn't lose any of its vividness by night. There are numerous restaurants, concert venues, nightclubs, and cocktail bars to choose from. If you are in the mood for a more relaxed night out, there is a rich offer of restaurants, ranging from fast food to fine dining venues. It is highly recommended to try some of the Dubrovnik signature dishes, such as green ministry, Dubrovnik Rozata, Kotonjata, or black risotto along with a glass (or a few) filled with some of the quality wines from the local vineyards. If you are seeking more dynamic nighttime fun, there are several nightclubs, dancing venues, and cocktail bars; all in close proximity to the city center.

No matter how you arrive, where you stay, or how you choose to spend your time in Dubrovnik, one thing is sure: once you open your heart to Dubrovnik, it stays there forever.



RIDING DAY 3 : DUBROVNIK - KOTOR

Standard Route (155 km / 96 miles)

Dubrovnik gets extremely busy during the season which lasts, as it seems, from January to December. In order to really enjoy it, you should go there very, very early. Your tour guide knows how to do it best!

After sightseeing and if the weather is nice, as it always is around here, we can ride the difficult access road to Srd fortress for the views or even for lunch. After that we head down the coast, cross the border to Montenegro and take a quick ferry to shortcut across the Bay of Kotor.

The town of Kotor is arguably Montenegro's number one tourist attraction. The narrow alleys and cobblestoned squares are almost too cute to be true. You can walk around the town on the old city walls but watch out, it's quite a walk! Take good shoes and enough water.

Highlights:



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#2: Kotor



The history of Kotor can be traced back more than 2000 years. The natural harbour provided good protection which later attracted Illyrians already in the 3rd century BC who were followed by the Greeks and Romans. In 168 BC Kotor was mentioned as Ascrivium. At that time began the colonisation by the Romans. At the beginning during the emperor era the town belonged to the Province Dalmatia, then 500 years to Venice, but also Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Hungary and Bosnia had at times occupying power. The

Turks tried to sack the city but didn't succeed to scale the walls. In 1979 UNESCO declared Kotor a World Heritage culture and nature site.

The compact old town is inside the town wall comprised of twisting alleyways and buildings that were built between the 12th and 20th century.

The catholic cathedral is definitely one of the most beautiful churches in Montenegro. It was built in the 12th century. Inside there are sarcophaguses, a treasure-house and an altar, all worth seeing.



RIDING DAY 4 : KOTOR

Standard Route (151 km / 94 miles)

Kotor and its surroundings are stunningly beautiful and definitively justify a rest day. You could while it away in the picturesque old town, drink coffee, sip wine, and watch people. But you would miss out on the most amazing road in all of Montenegro.

25 tight hairpin turns take you up from the town to some viewpoints overlooking the entire Bay of Kotor. The cruise liners, three times bigger than the whole town, look tiny from up here.

The mountains are part of Lovćen National Park which protects a whole bunch of peaks that reach elevations of up to 1,750 m (5,740 ft). Being up here feels so nice on a hot day since temperatures up here are 10-15°C cooler than down on the coast.

We head down the other side and follow some tiny roads to Virpazar, on the shore of Lake Shkodra, for lunch. Along the coast and past the pretty town of Budva we return to Kotor in time to do some sightseeing, drink coffee and wine and watch the people.

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#2: Lovcen National Park



Directly behind Kotor is Mt Lovćen (1749m, the black mountain that Crna Gora (Montenegro) gave its name. This area occupies a special place in the hearts of all Montenegrins. For most of its history it represented the entire nation – a rocky island of Slavic resistance in the Ottoman Empire.

The national park is 6220 hectares large, of which two-thirds are covered by woods, particularly the black beech that gives it its muddy complexion. The park is home of various types of reptiles, 85 species of butterflies and large mammals such as brown bears and wolves.

#3: Budva



Budva dates back to the 5th century BC and therefore is one of the oldest settlements on the Adriatic coast. During its 25 centuries of history many foreign powers controlled Budva: Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Serbs, Venetians, Habsburgs, even Napoleon ruled it from 1807 to 1813. After WWI the town became part of Yugoslavia, first of the Kingdom and after WWII of the Socialist Federal Republic.

In 2006 Montenegro finally gained its independance.

With it mighty walls and narrow, cobblestoned alleys Budva is like a smaller copy of Dubrovnik or Kotor even though almost all buildings you see today are reconstructions. Out of over 400 buildings only 8 were left standing after a devestating earthquake struck in town in 1979.



RIDING DAY 5 : KOTOR - MOSTAR

Standard Route (257 km / 160 miles)

We start our riding day by circling around the Bay of Kotor, past Perast and Risan, all the way to the other side. Carved into the side of one of the mountains is the road to Bosnia and as we ride up we can enjoy some beautiful last-minute views of the bay. The border post is high up in the mountains and not very busy, so we find enough time to marvel at the scenery, for example at the gorge of the Trebišnjica, a river that spends much of its time underground.

Beautiful curves bring us all the way down to Trebinje, a laid-back Bosnian town with some good lunch options. Afterwards the road climbs up again, towards the north, and takes us through a remote part of the country. Gacko is the only town around here, a mining town that you can see – and sometimes smell – from the distance due to its lignite power station.

Our destination is Mostar, home of the famous Old Bridge. The city is a meeting point of orient and occident, of east and west, of Christianity and Islam. It's quite fascinating, so don't miss out on a little walk around the old town.

Highlights:

#1: Perast



Perast lies beneath the hill of St. Ilija (873 m. Near Perast there are two islands: one is called Sveti Đorđe (St. George) and the other Gospa od Škrpjela (Our Lady of the Rocks), and each has a picturesque chapel. Gospa od Škrpjela is particularly interesting given that it is the only artificially-built island in the Adriatic, with an area of 3,030 m² — it was built upon a rock (Škrpjel) after two Venetian sailors

from Perast found a picture of the Virgin Mary on it in 1452.



#2: Trebišnjica



Trebišnjica River is the longest sinking river (96.5 km) in Europe and the second longest in Bosnia and Herzegovina.The course of the river and the drainage basin are in the Dinaridic mountains and in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A distinctive hydrological system has been developed through the underground sinking water reservoir.

#3: Mostar



The symbol of Mostar is the "Old Bridge" or Stari most over the River Neretva, built from 1556 to 1566 by the Ottoman architect Mimar Hajrudin. The town's name comes from the bridge guardians (Mostar = Bridge Guardian). The "Old Bridge" was destroyed by massive bombardment of the Croatian side in the Bosnian war on 9th November 1993. The reconstruction work began in 1996 and was completed

with the ceremonial reopening on 23rd July 2004. The Bridge and the Old Town were inscribed on the World Heritage List of UNESCO on 15th July 2005. Stari Most is supposed to be a symbol of the peaceful coexistence of different people in Mostar and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Near the bridge is the Karagöz Bey Mosque. The Mosque with Medresa (Islamic school) and Sadrvan (Fountain) was built in 1557 and was damaged in the war in Herzegovina, but since then it has been restored.



RIDING DAY 6 : MOSTAR - ZADAR

Standard Route (326 km / 202 miles)

This route takes you through southern Bosnia-Herzegovina, basically along the Croatian border, and on to Zagora, the Dalmatian outback. Just before we cross the border you can spot Busko lake, a man-made lake that holds 800 million cubic meters of water. A near-by hydroelectric power plant generates plenty of electricity, but the economic impact of the lake as a tourist attraction is much bigger. All sorts of water sports are popular here and during the hot summer months, the shores are full of people from all over the country. BiH is close to the ocean but has almost no coastline, so a lake like this comes in very handy!

Once back in Croatia the scenery and the roads we're on are still more or less the same. We are off the beaten track around here, with no tourists to be seen anywhere. The roads are narrow and fairly twisty. Then, like out of nowhere, tourist coaches and campervans surround us and we know we must be close to something big. And we are, Krka National Park is just around the corner. From a viewpoint, we can enjoy the beautiful panorama of the Krka's mouth.

Our destination today is the city of Zadar, an ancient settlement that boasts a beautiful historic old town as well as great shopping, dining, and nightlife.

Highlights:

#1: Buško jezero (Lake Buško)



The lake Buško, at the altitude of 700 meters, has an area of 55.8 km². The storage lake is one of the largest in Europe. It is caused by the sinking of Busko Blato in the seventies of the 20th century.

#2: Sinj

Sinj is the centre of the Cetina region and a pearl in the treasure chest of Zagora region. On the rocky hill life began already in the 1st century BC. Its inhabitants still remember with pride the year 1715 in which they managed to defend their town against an Ottoman invasion and since then, in memory of this glorious victory, perform a riding competition, called Alka.



RIDING DAY 7 : ZADAR

Standard Route (272 km / 169 miles)

Today is a rest day. You can spend the day relaxing on the beach, enjoying the old town of Zadar, visit Krka National Park and see the beautiful waterfalls there or experience an intense day of riding that will challenge your riding skills.

Our ride will first take us over small roads to Prezid pass and down the other side of the mountains. Past Gracac we ride on the backside of Velebit to Smiljan, the birthplace of Nikola Tesla. A small museum here commemorates the great inventor, physicist and electrical engineer who, among other things, developed alternating current.

Then the highlight of the day approaches. Passing through the wildest part of Velebit, after all the largest if not the highest mountain range in Croatia, we descend to Karlobag on the coast, on a breathtaking scenic road. It then runs right along the coast, remaining just as breathtaking and scenic as up in the mountains, or even more so. This is one of the best and most beautiful coastal roads in all of Europe!

Overall, a great day of riding in an area that hardly any tourists ever get to see.

Highlights:

#1: Memorijalni centar "Nikola Tesla" (Memorial)



On July 10, 1856 a man was born in Smiljan who enriched and changed the world - at least the world of physics and electrics: Nikola Tesla. His life's work was so remarkable that he receivied numerous honorary doctorates and several things were named after him: among others a physical unit, the airport in Belgrade and - last but not least - a manufacturer of highly advanced electric vehicles from California.

Im Smiljan is a small memorial museum dedicated to him. It features the house he was born in, some prototypes of his inventions and many other things.



#2: National Park Northern Velebit



Velebit is the largest Croatian mountain and as such rich in natural phenomena. Protected as a nature park extending over 2,000 km2, it is by far the largest protected area in the country. Velebit mountain contains many natural sites which rank among the most precious in Croatia. Therefore, the entire mountain, in its full length of about 150 km, has been placed under UNESCO protection as a World

Biosphere Reserve, presently the only one in Croatia listed as such. Velebit is not only significant for the total number of various species and its wealth of flora and fauna but for the significant number of endemic species as well.

#3: Croatian coastal road



Croatia's coastline is over 1,000 miles long and the road that follows it is scenic almost everywhere. But here, in the north, between the towns of Karlobag and Starigrad-Paklenica, it is simply spectacular. Crystal clear, deep-blue water on one side, barren, sun-drenched hillsides on the other, devided by a ribbon of beautifully maintained tarmac, not towns, no traffic - just awesome!

Optional Route (190 km / 118 miles)

The ride to Krka National Park is not a long one, but inside the park there is a lot to see and to do. Der park protects a prime, unaltered landscape of the kind that's hard to find in Europe these days. Highly recommended are the numerous waterfalls; some of them served as scenic background in many a European "Western", like the Winnetou series. The river Krka fills many pools and basins with crystal-clear water, very inviding to take a dip on a hot day.

Back on the coast and on our return trip to Vodice we have the opportunity to visit the picturesque old town of Sibenik.

Highlights:



#1: Krka National Park



With its 72 kilometers, the River Krka is the longest in the central Dalmatia and thanks to the 20 km between Knin and Skradin, which occupies the Krka National Park, probably the most spectacular in Europe. Countless rapids, paths, ponds, waterfalls and other karst phenomena, caused by geomorphic processes, shape the course of the river and offer at each point a new and exciting perspective on the ingenuity of the nature.

#2: Šibenik



Sibenik sets apart from all Croatian towns on the Adriatic by its unique location in a picturesque and open bay at the mouth of the River Krka. Initially it was created as an ancient Croatian castrum, a fortress or encampment, at the bottom of St. Michael's Fortress that still dominates the town. Šibenik was mentioned for the first time in 1066, in a document issued by the most important Croatian ruler - the king Petar Krešimir IV. Šibenik obtained the status of a

native Croatian town in 1290, when the Diocese of Šibenik was established.



RIDING DAY 8 : ZADAR - SPLIT

Standard Route (281 km / 175 miles)

From Zadar we first follow the coast and then head inland for another loop around the mountainous Croatian outback. Despite their size (600 km long) and elevation (up to 2600 m) the Dinaric Alps are largely unknown, but they feature twisty and mostly traffic-free roads. Krka National Park is a true highlight of this region so we pass through it again and look at the beautiful river from up close and from high up. The source of the river is a bit further up the road, past the nondescript town of Knin. The place where a beautiful waterfall cascades down from a limestone cliff is where the Krka starts her journey to the sea. On a hot day the spray from the waterfall feels soooo good!

Just like Krka we also make our way back towards the coast. As we climb across the last ridge a beautiful view opens up of the coast, the islands and – far in the distance – the city of Split. Soon big city traffic will engulf us again. What a pity...

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#2: Knin



Knin is first mentioned in the 10th-century history of Constantine Porphyrogenitus as the centre of a parish. Knin was also the capital of the Kingdom of Croatia around 1080 during the rule of King Dmitar Zvonimir. At the entrance of Knin, the town sign has an inscription stating "Welcome to Knin, town of King Dmitar Zvonimir". This heritage has led to Knin being known as the "City of Croatian Kings" or

"Zvonimir's City" (Zvonimirov grad). Between the 10th and the 13th century, Knin was a notable military fort. It is one of the largest fortification buildings in Dalmatia and is divided into the upper, middle and lower town, connected by drawbridges.

Its strategic position played an important role in many wars and power changes. Knin passed on to the Habsburgs together with Dalmatia in 1797. By 1813, the Austrians regained control over the town. In 1867, Knin became a part of Dalmatia.

From October 1990, eight months before Croatia declared independence (June 25, 1991) from Yugoslavia, Knin became the main stronghold for the Serbs in the Knin region, eventually becoming the capital city of the internationally unrecognized Republic of Serbian Krajina in 1991. Serbs held the town until Croatian forces captured it during Operation Storm (Oluja) on August 5, 1995. The date is today marked as a Victory Day in Croatia.

#3: Split



2000 years old.

In 295 AD the Roman Emperor Gaius Diocletian began to build his palace in a calm bay on the Dalmatian coast. Today the palace is the centre of the city Split. The mausoleum of the emperor was converted into a cathedral in the 7th century and is now considered the oldest Catholic cathedral in the world. Outside the cathedral is an original Egyptian Sphinx guard. At the start of the construction it was already

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