



CROATIA & MONTENEGRO

**CYCLE, HIKE & KAYAK THE DALMATIAN COAST
BY BIKE, FOOT & KAYAK
9-DAYS**

From the stonewalls of Dubrovnik to the beautiful surrounding archipelago, the Western Balkans are the perfect place for an active local living adventure. Over the course of 9 days, you'll discover Croatia, Herzegovina and Montenegro's cultural and natural charms, spending your days actively exploring the area and immersing yourself into the local culture. Enjoy homemade meals in all three countries and spend your nights in character-rich, family-run guesthouses. Admire panoramic views of the Dalmatian coast and mountains as you bike between villages, farms and vineyards of the Peljesac peninsula. Learn how to cook Croatian dishes with a local family and sample regional wines and olive oils right at the vineyard. Hike and bike around the sea-fed lakes and dense pine forest of Mljet Island's National Park. Learn about farming oysters and mussels before having a picnic-style lunch of the freshly harvested shell fish, accompanied by local wines and liqueurs. Kayak across the stunning Bay of Kotor to explore mysterious Cold War-era tunnels and 14th century settlements.

Day 1

DUBROVNIK

ARRIVAL

Our Western Balkan adventure begins in Dubrovnik, a beautiful walled medieval city wedged between the Adriatic Sea and the mountains of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Upon arrival, make your way to your cozy local B&B. The rest of the day is at leisure until the early evening when we'll meet together with your guide for a traditional Dalmatian dinner.

Accommodation: B & B

Meals: Dinner



Day 2

KONAVLE

BIKING

We start with a hearty homemade breakfast and then have a short drive to the village of Gruda. From here we get our bikes fitted and adjusted to our liking before setting off for a 35 km/21 mi bike ride along the Konavle Valley. The route veers past the Ljuta River and fertile farmlands of vineyards. We have a good climb to the small villages above the valley as we head towards Pridvorje. We make a stop along the way to a family home, where we have a tasting of local liquors and wine. Afterwards, we have a cooking class of local cuisine that we will feast on for today's lunch. Later, we return to Dubrovnik for some free time before dinner and overnight in the same comfortable B&B.

Biking Distance: 35 km / 21 mi

Accommodation: B & B

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 3

HERZEGOVINA

BIKING

This morning we have a 20 minute shuttle to the town of Ivanica on the Croatian border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. This part of southern Bosnia and Herzegovina is very rural with old traditional villages. There is an old abandoned Austrian railroad here that crosses the border and goes through the valley of Popovo Polje, before continuing on to southern Croatia. The last train was in 1970 and since then the tracks were lifted and the route has been paved. During the last war between the Croats and the Serbs this was a war zone and there are still many reminders of that time with devastated villages, houses, and war bunkers. Today however this area is beautiful and the way of rural life here is much less developed than in other parts of Europe. Our base is in the small village of Zavala, where there are only 15 inhabitants. We stay in very unique accommodations, the old railway station which was destroyed during the war but has recently been renovated and reopened into a small hotel. We'll have some time to wander through the village and explore the Vjetrenica cave and Zavala, a 15th century monastery. Dinner tonight will be at the B&B restaurant which is superb.

Biking Distance: 44 km / 27 mi
Accommodation: B & B
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 4

ZAVALA - STON

HIKING

After breakfast we pack our bikes and luggage into our vehicle and drive through the hilly Popovo Polje valley to the Dalmatian coast of Croatia and the town of Ston. We'll stop at our hotel to unload our bags and then drive to the village of Ponikve. From here we follow the old Napoleonic road down to the valley of Ston. There are stone vineyards and Mediterranean gardens scattered along the road. From the crest above the valley there are fantastic views of Mljet Island, Ston Bay with its oyster farms and many small islands, and also the forts and city walls of Ston. Once we hike down to the valley the winery owner will meet us and take us back to the village of Ponikve and to his winery. We'll have a tasting of his excellent wines, as well as sample extra virgin olive oil and herbal teas all produced on his property. Afterwards we'll drive to Hodilje where we'll embark on the boat of a local oyster producer. We'll sail along the bay dotted with oyster and mussel farms, docking on a small island where we'll be shown the technique of farming shellfish. Then it's time for a picnic lunch of mussel buzara (a traditional stew) plus oysters and homemade wines and liqueurs. We'll then return to Ston and have the remainder of the afternoon at leisure to explore this walled city. We'll meet for dinner around 7pm. Overnight in a cozy B&B.

Hiking Distance: 10 km / 6 mi
Accommodation: B & B
Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 5

MLJET ISLAND

HIKING

We have an early morning today with a 7:00am ferry to Mljet Island, one of the many islands of Dalmatia. The ferry ride is 45 minutes along the Adriatic Sea with beautiful views of mountainous islands scattered in the sea. Once we reach the port of Sobra, we'll drive to the National Park of Mljet. We'll stop at our hotel, unload our gear and freshen up and then hike along a path above the town in the direction of Montokuc peak, the highest peak in the park at 1100 feet/335 meters. The vistas from the top are spectacular with salt lakes, lush Mediterranean vegetation and small villages. On the way down we follow a path to the salt lakes and then to the port of Pristaniste where we'll take a water taxi to St. Mary island on the lakes. We'll have lunch here and then water taxi back to Pristaniste and walk back to our hotel. The remainder of the day is free before a group dinner in the evening. Overnight at a cozy B&B on Mljet Island.

Hiking Distance: 13 km / 8 mi

Accommodation: B & B

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Day 6

MLJET ISLAND - HERCEG NOVI

SEA KAYAKING

This morning we take the 9:00am ferry from Mljet back to the Peljesac peninsula. Once we reach the port of Prapratno we'll drive along the coast to Herceg Novi in Montenegro. The drive is two hours. Herceg Novi is the Bay of Kotor's youngest town, established in the 13th century and its Old Town and three fortresses (one Spanish, one Turkish and one Italian) stand guard to the entrance to the Bay of Kotor at the foot of the imposing Mount Orjen, the highest coastal peak of the Dinaric chain. We'll have our first Montenegrin lunch in the Old Town next to the harbour. We will sample the traditional coastal dishes such as black risotto (freshly caught kalamari and the ink used to colour the rice) and Sopska salad (feta cheese and cucumber). After lunch we'll check into our hotel and prepare for a late afternoon / sunset kayaking tour. We'll gear up with sit-on-top sea kayaks and our guide will give an instructional paddle. Then we'll set off paddling across the bay to the small fishing village of Rose and then onwards towards the entrance to the Bay with options to explore the Cold War era submarine tunnels or pull up on one of the tiny beaches and enjoy a swim. We'll paddle back towards Herceg Novi as the sun sets and enjoy the spectacular view of Mount Orjen and the other peaks around the Bay as the rock turns from grey to pink as the sun sets. After the kayak tour the evening is free to explore the historic Old Town and waterfront areas with many different restaurant choices. Overnight at a comfortable family-run hotel in Herceg Novi.

Kayaking Duration: 3 – 3.5 hrs

Kayaking Distance: 6 km / 4 mi

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

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Day 7

VRMAC RIDGE

HIKING

After breakfast we will transfer by car and ferry to the small town of Gornja Lastva on the mountainside above Tivat. From the village, we will start our hike to the spectacular Vrmac Ridge, with views to both Kotor Bay and Tivat Bay as well as the Adriatic Sea. We will hike along the ridge towards Kotor using the area's century old pathways and trails constructed as part of the Montenegrin Coastal Transversal route. At Trojica, we descend again on the switchback pathways into Kotor. The path is in good condition for most of the way but some parts may be overgrown. After the hike, we will have some leisure time to explore Kotor's historic walled town with its narrow traffic free streets, piazzas and cafes before heading back to Herceg Novi. Departing from Kotor by road, we'll have the chance to visit Perast and its historic waterfront and small monastery islands before heading back to Herceg Novi. Tonight, we'll enjoy an evening meal with a local family in their homestead just outside Herceg Novi on the lower slopes of Mount Orjen. A popular method of cooking food is to use a 'sac'. This is an iron pot with a lid which is buried inside the ashes of the fire and traditionally almost anything can be cooked in a 'sac'. We'll feast on locally grown food and taste locally produced wines. Another local specialty is ham cured on the mountains and a cheese that is soaked and cured in olive oil. Over 1000 different types of herbs grow around here and we'll also learn how they are used for making tea and medicines. Overnight in the same family-run hotel in Herceg Novi.

Hiking Distance: 9-13 km / 5.5 - 8 mi

Hiking Duration: 4.5 - 5.5 hours

Ascent: +170 m (560 ft)

Descent: -90m (300 ft) or -375m (1,225 ft)

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

Day 8

HERCEG NOVI - DUBROVNIK

HIKING

Today we hike from Herceg Novi on the ancient Austro-Hungarian pathway to the small village of Zlijebi and to the little church of St Nikola, patron saint of sailors, which watches across the entrance to the bay. Zlijebi is located 2500 feet above the bay and the views are spectacular! The total hike is 13 kms/8 mi. We'll start with a 10 minute drive to the trail head, cutting out the town. After visiting the village we'll ascend by foot another 350 feet on the old trail and then descend to the village of Kameno to a small village, which is just a few kilometers from the Croatian border. Lunch is a picnic on the trail and we'll meet our driver for a drive back to Croatia, and into Dubrovnik. Our Croatian guide will greet us at the hotel, and once everyone is freshened up from our last day of adventure, we'll meet for a group farewell dinner.

Hiking Distance: 13 km / 8 mi

Hiking Duration: 4 hours

Ascent: +250 m (820 ft)

Descent: -350m (1,150 ft)

Accommodation: Hotel

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

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Day 9

DUBROVNIK

DEPARTURE

We will have breakfast in our hotel and then depending on your flight time, you may have time to explore this lovely city a bit more before arranging your transfer to the airport for your international flight back home or onward within Europe.

Meals: Breakfast



NOTE about Ascent/Descent numbers:

The ascent/descent numbers are usually generated using Ride with GPS. The numbers are TOTAL ascent/descent for the day and these numbers do not suggest altitude. There are usually multiple small ascents and descents added up throughout the day to reach this total ascent/descent for the day. (While our numbers are generally consistent with Ride with GPS, depending on the mapping technology used, numbers may vary).

TRIP INCLUSIONS

Trip Includes

Meals as indicated, all accommodation (twin shared), all internal transportation, Cannondale CAAD8 Road Bikes or Trek 8.2 Dual Sport Hybrid bikes and English-speaking guides.

Not Included

International airfare, airport taxes, airport transfers*, gratuities, meals not included, and items of a personal nature.

**We can add transfers upon request as an additional service booking.*

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