TOUR CODE

XAD

ADVENTURESABROAD

CROATIA & MONTENEGRO

'Day Hiking in Adriatica'

14 days

Updated 01/11/2013

Day 1 ***Arrival in Dubrovnik***

Today we arrive in Dubrovnik, Croatia, one of Europe's loveliest and best-preserved mediaeval cities, and transfer to our hotel.

PLEASE NOTE: We rate this tour as "moderate" in terms of its physicality. Though all of our hikes are "day walks" and therefore optional, in order to fully enjoy the areas visited, you should be adequately fit in order to safely and comfortably participate in each day's activities. As this itinerary includes stops on three Adriatic islands, you will be required to carry your own luggage on and off the smaller local ferries. Ferry schedules may also result in early morning departures. If you think that this trip might be too strenuous for you, we recommend our non-hiking Adriatic trips.

Overnight in Dubrovnik. Meal plan: Dinner, if required.

Day 2 ***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 Franciscan Monastery, housing Europe's first pharmacy, the Rector's Palace, 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.

Your afternoon is free to enjoy this memorable place. You may wish to walk the walls of Dubrovnik, considered by many to be a highlight of our stay. 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!

Overnight in Dubrovnik. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 3 ***Dubrovnik, Croatia - Perast, Montenegro - Kotor***

Our foray into Montenegro will begin in Boka Kotorska, the only fjord in the Mediterranean, a bay of 32 km / 20 miles cut deep into the stone of the Orjen and Lovcen mountains.

We will drive along the coast to the town of Perast where we take a small boat to Perast's most famous site, Gospa od

Skrpjela (Our Lady of the Rock), a picturesque chapel built on the only artificially built island in the Adriatic. The island was built upon a rock after two Venetian sailors from Perast miraculously found a picture of the Virgin Mary on it in 1452.

After lunch in Perast, we travel the short distance to Kotor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Kotor was inhabited even at the times of Illyrians and Romans. Its history is also entwined with that of the Venetian Empire. On our afternoon walking tour we see a number of the city's fortifications and monuments dating from the time of Venetian rule, including the Cathedral of St Tryphon, which contains a rich collection of artifacts. Older than many famous churches and cathedrals in Europe, the Cathedral of St. Tryphon has a treasury of immense value. In its interior there are frescos from the 14th century, a stone ornament above the main altar in which the life of St. Tryphon is depicted, as well as a relief of saints in gold and silver. The most representative works of Kotor's masters and craftsmen are kept in this Cathedral, making its collection quite unique.

Within its walls, the city of Kotor has retained a mediaeval feel. A map of the old city shows hardly a single right angle; the town consists of a maze of tiny alleys that meet unexpectedly to form "squares" that are anything but square. Overshadowed by both towering cliffs and the high walls of four-storey stone houses, some of these narrow lanes must never see sunshine. One of the great pleasures of Kotor is wandering at random through this little labyrinth.

Overnight in Kotor. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 4 *Kotor: Fortress of St. Ivan, Montenegro - Dubrovnik, Croatia*

This morning we climb the city walls to the Fortress of St Ivan, passing the Chapel of Our Lady of Salvation along the way. The steps begin at the northwest corner of the city. It's a stiff climb so don't set off without something to drink: there are 1,350-1,500 steps according to various guidebooks. From the highest point the ground drops away sharply on three sides with the rooftops of Kotor immediately below. To the north you can see the whole inner part of the bay. Look out for a dome near the shore to the west -- it belongs to the implausibly large church in the village of Prcanj. When we have finished admiring the view we can scramble around the crumbling ruins with a freedom rarely found in more litiginous countries -- the only ones likely to challenge you are the goats.

After our hike, you'll have some free time to enjoy Kotor. Browse the town at your leisure and discover souvenir, antique and craft shops, boutiques and market stalls.

En route back to Dubrovnik, we'll stop in at Centinje and Budva.

TOTAL WALKING TIME +/- 2 HOURS.

Overnight in Dubrovnik. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 5 *Dubrovnik - Korcula*

Today we travel by ferry to the breathtaking island of Korcula.*

The approach from sea to the town of Korcula is truly stunning. Situated on a small peninsula, the cluster of brilliant red tiled roofs perch above the aquamarine harbour waters, clear to a depth of 21m! Korcula was settled by the Greeks who called the island "Korkyra Melaina", or "Black Corfu" because of the dark appearance of its densely wooded forests. Today the island is covered with olive groves and vineyards; cereals, carob, citrus and vegetables are all grown on this island, as well as an array of wild herbs. The island is also proud of its heritage: it is the home of traditional shipbuilding and stone masonry, and also the center of Croatian folk traditions of costume and dance.

Later this afternoon we will have a walking tour of the old town. The street plan of the town is unique and often compared to a fishbone pattern: the north-south streets allowed the defenders of the town to reach the walls and towers, and the east-west lanes were designed to capture the pleasant maestral winds and minimize the force of the cold "bora." The Venetian Cathedral of St. Mark is an architectural delight, squeezed into a small square. Tucked into a narrow lane nearby is the small house where it is believed Marco Polo was born. We will also visit the Treasury and Town Museum with fascinating exhibitions of Korcula's history and traditions, from prehistoric times to the present.

* PORTERS ARE NOT AVAILABLE ON FERRIES. You MUST be able to carry / wheel your own baggage. Occasionally, changeable schedules may require that we travel to Korcula by road.

Overnight in Korcula. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 6 *Korcula: 'Napoleon's Road'*

Today we transfer to the town of Pupnat where we will begin our walk along via 'Napoleon's Road' all the way back to Korcula, stopping for a traditional Dalmatian lunch at a small local restaurant en route.

Pupnat is a village in the interior eastern part of the island of Korcula, located on the regional road running along the island. The population of Pupnat is about 500 making this the smallest village on the island. The name Pupnat, according to some interpreters, derives from "pampinata," which means vine leaves. The Illyrian lived around Pupnat, in the area of Mocila, where remains of Illyrian graves were found. The location of the village was chosen by its settlers, in the hilly part of the island so as to be invisible from the sea and passing pirates.

From Pupnat, the road descends past small farms and vineyards surrounded by countless miles of dry stone walls and dotted with kucice -- traditional dry stone huts used for housing livestock. We stop for lunch in the village of Zrnovo, one of the oldest settlements on the island. The prehistoric life that existed in the area was found in Jakasove Spila (cave). Zrnovo has numerous small churches that one can see walking along the road from east to west.

We continue to Korcula via a prehistoric walking path. Balance of the day at leisure in Korcula.

TOTAL WALKING TIME +/- 4 hrs; elevation variation +/- 100m / 330 ft.

Overnight in Korcula. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 7 *Korcula - Hvar: Walking Tour*

Today we travel by ferry to Hvar, "Queen of the Dalmatian Islands," considered one of the ten most beautiful islands in the world.

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.

This morning we have a walking tour through narrow streets to the 15th century Franciscan Monastery where we 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 visit St Stephen's Cathedral, and see the Arsenal (closed for

refurbishment), a thick walled fortress overlooking the harbour.

For those interested, there is an excellent walk up to the Venetian castle above town.

Overnight in Hvar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 8 *Hvar Hike: Velo Grablje - Malo Grablje - Milna*

This morning we have a stunning hike on the beautiful island of Hvar. We begin our morning with a short drive inland to Velo Grablje, the starting point of today's hike. On the winding road up to Velo Grablje we will drive past a number of small lavender farms, replanted after a devastating fire in 2003. From Velo Grablje we descend along a small road bordered on either side by olive groves and rosemary bushes to Malo Grablje, an almost-abandoned village situated in a valley between three steep hills. In Malo Grablje we will stop to look at a traditional olive press that once turned olives from the surrounding hills into oil for local consumption. From Malo Grablje we continue downhill to the coastal village of Milna, where we can stop for a rest or a refreshing swim before scrambling along a picturesque coastal path back to the town of Hvar.

TOTAL WALKING TIME 4 hrs

Overnight in Hvar. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 9 *Hvar - Brac Island & Hermitage of Blaca*

This morning we will take an early ferry to the town of Bol on the nearby island of Brac Island, the highest and third largest island in the Adriatic. Today's excursion takes us on a relaxing and panoramic boat ride along the coast of Brac to a hiking trail that leads us up to the intriguing Hermitage of Blaca, now a museum. Departing from Bol, our boat will pass Croatia's most famous beach, the Golden Horn, before continuing past pine forests, olive groves and coastal vineyards to the trailhead in Blaca Bay.

The reward for our 45 minute uphill climb is a visit to the dramatically situated Hermitage of Blaca, whose stone structures cling to cliff overlooking a dry ravine. The hermitage was established in the 16th century by monks from the mainland town of Polijice who sought refugee from invading Turks. Originally situated in a cave, the hermitage was built up over the centuries to include a church, school, astronomical observatory and library. Today the museum houses a unique collection of ancient books, clocks, astronomical instruments and artifacts from the life of the last monk to inhabit Blaca, Niko Milicevic.

After a tour of the hermitage we return to our boat in travel back to Bol, where you have the remainder of the afternoon to explore the town of Bol or swim at the Golden Horn.

TOTAL WALKING TIME +/- 2 hrs; elevation variation +/- 250m / 820 ft.

Overnight on Brac. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 10 *Brac: Island Tour - Split*

After breakfast we'll explore Brac with its stone landscapes, olive groves, and sheep dotting the hillsides. Our bus tour starts begins with a long but gradual climb to the ridge of the island, across Brac to the village of Pucisca, home to a famous marble quarry. Stone from Brac has been used in the a number of famous buildings, including Diocletian's

Palace, the parliament buildings of Vienna and Budapest and the Canadian WWI memorial at Vimy Ridge.

Our next stop will take us to Vidova Gora (778m / 2,567 ft), the highest point on the island offering spectacular views. We continue to Supetar, where we will stop for lunch before boarding a ferry for Split, located on the mainland.

This afternoon we tour 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.

Overnight in Split. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 11 *Split - Trogir - Plitvice*

This morning we tour the medieval town of Trogir, one of the most beautiful and popular towns of the Dalmatian Coast. The heart of this Venetian walled town is Narodni Trg, with its white stone paved square, Cathedral, Communal Palace and Loggia. We visit the Cathedral of St. Lawrence, built between the 13th and 15th centuries by Slavic masters. The entire town has been preserved as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Our final destination is Plitvice, where 16 lakes, each at a different level, join each other in a series of cascading waterfalls. Overnight at Plitvice.

Overnight at Plitvice. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 12 *Plitvice Lakes National Park - Zagreb*

Travertine terraces have been continuously reforming themselves over 10,000 years as calcium carbonate dissolves and settles, forming barriers and cascades. Imagine Niagara Falls diced and sprinkled over a heavily forested Grand Canyon. This lush valley of terraced lakes is laced together by waterfalls and miles of pleasant wooden-plank walks. Countless cascades and strangely clear and colourful water make the Plitvice Lakes National Park a misty natural wonderland. The ever-changing fluid landscape -- created by water, gravity, limestone and time -- is mesmerizing.

Look for wildlife as you hike. The park is home to deer, wolves, wildcats, wild boar, and more than 160 species of birds (from eagles to herons to owls). The lakes (and local menus) are full of trout. The entire area is protected as one of UNESCO's Natural World Heritage Sites. We will follow wooden paths on our walk around the Lower and Upper Lakes, ending with a short boat ride across the largest lake.

In the late afternoon we will drive to Zagreb, the capital of Croatia.

TOTAL WALKING TIME +/- 4 hours (leisurely, easy)

Overnight in Zagreb. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 13 *Zagreb: City Tour*

Today we have a city tour, featuring 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 has connected, for centuries, 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. We continue our stroll along the promenade on the side of the tower to enjoy a view of the city.

Balance of the day at leisure.

Overnight in Zagreb. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 14 *Departure*

Departure from Zagreb.

SRETAN PUT! Meal plan: Breakfast.