

Overseas Adventure Travel®

THE LEADER IN PERSONALIZED SMALL GROUP ADVENTURES SINCE 1978

Your O.A.T. Adventure Travel Planning Guide®



Crossroads of the Adriatic

2025

Overseas Adventure Travel®

347 Congress Street, Boston, MA 02210

Dear Traveler,

I am thrilled that you are considering exploring the world with O.A.T. There are so many wonderful destinations to discover, and the itinerary described inside is a perfect way to fulfill a travel dream.

When you join us, you will slip seamlessly into local life as you explore off the beaten path in your small group. Like all our itineraries, this one is designed to give you an intimate understanding of your destination, not just a superficial view. You will get to know community leaders and try your hand at local trades during your *A Day in the Life* experience, share traditional fare and lively conversation during a Home-Hosted Visit, discuss the Controversial Topics impacting everyday life, and visit sites supported by Grand Circle Foundation. And if you choose to travel solo, you will enjoy all these cultural experiences at an unmatched value, with our FREE Single Supplements—just one of the reasons we continue to be the leader in solo travel.

To ensure you experience the true culture and feel supported every step of the way, we provide the services of a local Trip Experience Leader from the beginning of your adventure to the end. Along with introducing you to the history and culture of their homeland, these friendly experts will gladly help you out with any special requests to make your trip even more special. You can also rely on the seasoned team at our regional office, who are ready to help 24/7 in case any unexpected circumstances arise.

Plus, you can put your own personal stamp on your trip, like the **87% of our travelers who personalize their experience**. Perhaps you will choose to see more of your destination by adding an optional trip extension to your itinerary. You can also arrive a few days early to explore independently and get acclimated, customize your air itinerary, and more.

I hope you find this Travel Planning Guide helpful. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact one of our Travel Counselors at **1-800-955-1925**.

Warm regards,



Harriet R. Lewis
Chair
Overseas Adventure Travel

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Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia

Crossroads of the Adriatic: Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Slovenia

Small Group Adventure

Croatia: Dubrovnik, Karanac, Zagreb, Plitvice Lakes, Opatija | **Montenegro:** Kotor | **Bosnia & Herzegovina:** Mostar, Sarajevo | **Slovenia:** Ljubljana, Lake Bled

Small groups of no more than 16 travelers, guaranteed

18 days starting from \$4,895

including international airfare

Single Supplement: **FREE**

For departure dates & prices, visit www.oattravel.com/foy2025pricing

Venture from the elegant walled city of Dubrovnik, Croatia and historic streets of Sarajevo in Bosnia & Herzegovina, to the splendor of the Plitvice Lakes and the towering peaks of Slovenia's Julian Alps to discover one of the world's great travel destinations. We'll also spend **A Day in the Life** of the village of Karanac in the Croatian countryside during an overnight stay at a family-owned farmstead—a feature exclusive to O.A.T.

IT'S INCLUDED

- 16 nights accommodation
- International airfare, airport transfers, government taxes, fees, and airline fuel surcharges unless you choose to make your own air arrangements
- All land transportation
- 32 meals—16 breakfasts, 8 lunches, and 8 dinners (including 1 Home-Hosted Dinner)
- 15 small group activities
- Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- 5% Frequent Traveler Credit toward your next adventure

Prices are accurate as of the date of this publishing and are subject to change.

Crossroads of the Adriatic: Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Slovenia



ITINERARY SUMMARY

DAYS	DESTINATION
1	Fly to Dubrovnik, Croatia
2-5	Dubrovnik
6-8	Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina
9	Karanac Village, Croatia
10-12	Zagreb
13-14	Opatija
15-17	Ljubljana, Slovenia
18	Return to U.S.

WHAT TO EXPECT

① ② ③ ④ ⑤ Moderate

Pacing: 6 locations in 17 days with one 1-night stay

Physical requirements: Walk on rugged paths and cobblestoned streets, travel by bus over rural roads that may be bumpy and narrow, and hike up and down hills

Flight Time: Travel time will be 12-20 hours and will most likely have two connections

View all physical requirements at www.oattravel.com/foy

THE ADRIATIC: THE O.A.T. DIFFERENCE

Unbeatable Value: Travel at the lowest price and per diems in the industry.

People-to-People Experiences: Discover what life was like during the Balkan War of the 1990s as we learn about this **Controversial Topic** through the eyes of a survivor and learn how it continues to impact the daily lives of Dubrovnik residents. We'll also sit down with a local family in smaller groups of 4-6 travelers for a **Home-Hosted Dinner** in Sarajevo, dining with a family that has lived in "Sniper Alley" since before the siege of the city for a perspective of life before, during, and after the war.

O.A.T. Exclusives: Stay overnight on a family-owned farm in the Croatian village of Karanac. Help out with farm chores, and enjoy a home-cooked meal—one of only two overnight **A Day in the Life** experiences offered on any O.A.T. adventure. This immersive experience provides an in-depth look into how locals in the region live and work.

PERSONALIZE YOUR ADVENTURE

OPTIONAL EXTENSIONS

Albania: Undiscovered Balkans

PRE-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$1,495**

New! Istria: Croatia's Cultural Crossroads

POST-TRIP: 5 nights from **\$2,095**

ARRIVE EARLY

We recommend that you relax after a long flight or explore more in depth before your trip. Prices shown include accommodations and private airport transfer.

- Arrive early in **Tirana** before your Albania pre-trip extension from **\$160** per room, per night
- Arrive early in **Dubrovnik** before your main adventure from **\$170** per room, per night

Crossroads of the Adriatic: Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Slovenia

YOUR DETAILED ITINERARY

BEGIN YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL PRE-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in *Albania: Undiscovered Balkans*

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Day 2 Arrive Tirana, Albania

Day 3 Explore Tirana

Day 4 Tirana • Optional Berat excursion

Day 5 Tirana • Overland to Shkoder •
Explore Mrizi

Day 6 Shkoder • Visit St. Stephen's
Cathedral & Rozafa Castle • Shiroka

Day 7 Transfer to Dubrovnik, Croatia •
Join main trip

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Fly overnight from the U.S. to
Dubrovnik, Croatia.

Day 2 Arrive Dubrovnik, Croatia

- Destination: Dubrovnik
- Included Meals: Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Kompas Dubrovnik
or similar

Afternoon: You'll arrive in the city of
Dubrovnik, Croatia sometime this afternoon.
Upon arrival, you'll meet an O.A.T.
representative who will assist you with your
transfer to your hotel in the city.

At your hotel, you'll meet your fellow travelers,
including those who took our *Albania:*
Undiscovered Balkans pre-trip extension and

those who arrived early in Dubrovnik before
the main adventure. Later, our Trip Experience
Leader will introduce us to the area with an
orientation walk.

Dinner: You will enjoy an included dinner at our
hotel, featuring a selection of international and
Croatian fare.

Evening: The rest of the night is free to rest or
explore independently. Perhaps you'll enjoy a
drink at the hotel bar with your fellow travelers,
or stroll along one of Dubrovnik's many seaside
promenades.

Day 3 Explore Dubrovnik

- Destination: Dubrovnik
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Kompas Dubrovnik or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Start the day with a Welcome Briefing with our Trip Experience Leader in the hotel.

Then, we'll board a city bus and ride by public transportation to the gates of Dubrovnik's Old Town, Croatia's crowning jewel. Situated on a rocky spur at the country's southernmost tip, Dubrovnik is renowned for its medieval walls and historic monuments. Today, Dubrovnik's character reflects its storied past as an independent city-state that rivaled Venice. Also known by its Latin name, Ragusa, this was a fortress city that served as the base for a fleet of ships that carried trade between much of Europe and the Middle East. The city-state's period of autonomy extended from 1358 to 1808 and endowed it with a wealth of historic architecture.

In spite of heavy damage sustained during the breakup of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, the city has regained its former splendor with the help of UNESCO. O.A.T. contributed to the restoration of Dubrovnik's main promenade, the Placa, through a donation from Grand Circle Foundation. We'll meet our local guide this morning and embark on walking tour which includes visits to the fortified town center.

After our tour, we'll have some free time before lunch to either explore independently, or join our Trip Experience Leader to discover more of Dubrovnik.

Lunch: Gather at a local restaurant for an included Welcome Lunch.

Afternoon: Following lunch, your afternoon is free to explore Dubrovnik. You may wish to remain in Old Town and spend more time along the Placa (also called *Stradun*), visit the 15th-century Rector's Palace, or walk atop the city's ancient ramparts (a little over a mile in length), where you can enjoy views of the rooftops of Old Town and out into the blue Adriatic. Or, you can return to your hotel and use your all-day bus pass to explore another part of the city.

Dinner: On your own during your free afternoon in Dubrovnik. Your Trip Experience Leader will provide recommendations based on their favorite local restaurants. Perhaps you'll sample one of the many restaurants in Old Town, which often specialize in seafood.

Evening: The rest of the evening is yours to rest, write in your travel journal, or reflect on your day in Dubrovnik.

Day 4 Dubrovnik • Excursion to Kotor, Montenegro

- Destination: Dubrovnik
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Kompas Dubrovnik or similar

Activity Note: Today, we'll cross the border from Croatia to Montenegro in the morning, and cross back into Croatia in the afternoon. Please be aware that you will need your passport for all border crossings, and that sometimes crossing the border can take longer than expected—up to several hours depending on traffic. Due to the unpredictable nature of these crossings, the timing of today's activities may vary from the itinerary detailed below.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive south for a full-day excursion to Montenegro, a small country that is home to vast natural beauty—from soaring

alpine mountains to a rugged coastline dotted with historic cities. Montenegro's history is unique in this region in that it managed to avoid being conquered by the Ottoman Turks in the 1300s, when they took control of the rest of the Balkans for the next four centuries.

Our first stop will be the town of Kotor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and well-preserved medieval walled town situated at the head of southern Europe's deepest natural bay—eponymous Bay of Kotor. The city's *Stari Grad*, or Old Town, is filled with ancient churches and former aristocratic mansions that line narrow, cobbled streets. We'll explore Kotor with a local guide on a walking tour.

Lunch: On your own in Kotor. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide recommendations on the best restaurants for your culinary preferences.

Afternoon: Enjoy some time on your own to explore Kotor before returning to Dubrovnik in the mid-afternoon. Along the way, we'll stop to explore Perast, an ancient village along the Bay of Kotor. We'll take advantage of our small group size to explore Kotor Bay aboard a private, small boat for an hour-long cruise before returning to Dubrovnik.

Dinner: On your own in Dubrovnik. Perhaps you'll sample the city's famous black risotto (given its color from squid ink), or the region's beloved mussels and oysters. Whatever your dinner preference, your Trip Experience Leader is sure to have recommendations.

Evening: Tonight, you're free to continue exploring Dubrovnik on your own. You might walk along the nearby Adriatic, or enjoy a nightcap of *rakija* (the brandy of the Balkans) with your fellow travelers.

Day 5 Explore Dubrovnik • Controversial Topic: The impact of the Balkan War on Dubrovnik • Farmstead visit

- Destination: Dubrovnik
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Kompas Dubrovnik or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll begin the day with a drive to the top of Srd Mountain, which lies just behind Dubrovnik. At 1,352 feet high, this peak offers idyllic views of the surrounding area, which we'll take in from different vantage points throughout our drive. We'll have an opportunity to witness sweeping vistas of Dubrovnik's towers and walls, as well as the steel-blue hue of the Adriatic.

Upon reaching the top of the mountain, we'll walk to the nearby War Museum, where we'll speak with a local resident for a firsthand account of the **Controversial Topic** of the Homeland War of the Balkans and the impact it has had—and continues to have—on Dubrovnik, as well as the region. Today, Croatia still contends with having to rebuild war-torn edifices, but beyond crumbling infrastructure, the prejudice and xenophobia at the root of the conflict remains palpable.

The location we'll be visiting is a painfully relevant setting for this conversation; considered a strategic war location, the Fortress in Srd Mountain suffered violent attacks from the Serbs, resulting in countless casualties around the area. We'll learn how this turbulent period has shaped Croatia when we meet with a survivor of the war who can offer their perspective of what it was like to live through this violent period, as well as some historical context for the events leading up to it.

The Homeland War of the Balkans (1991–1995) was fought between Croat forces loyal to the government of Croatia, which sought independence from the republic of Yugoslavia, and the Serb-controlled Yugoslav People’s Army, which vehemently opposed this secession. While Croatia ultimately won its independence, the war sent the country into a tailspin, with an estimated \$37 billion in damaged infrastructure and tens of thousands of people either displaced or killed (most of whom were Muslim Bosniaks and Catholic Croats). Furthermore, by the end of the war, around half of the population had sought asylum in the neighboring country of Bosnia and Herzegovina, leaving Croatia with a broken and dwindling populace. Decades later, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia still works to assist victims, resolve war crimes, and establish punishments for war criminals involved in this prolonged conflict.

After our conversation, we’ll walk to the nearby cable car station where we’ll descend back down to Dubrovnik.

Lunch: On your own. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas. Perhaps you’ll grab a drink at Café Buza, tucked into the Old Town walls, or simply stroll the historic streets.

Afternoon: Enjoy free time to explore the Old City of Dubrovnik this afternoon. Perhaps you’d like to journey through the history of 20th-century Croatia during a visit to the Red History Museum or soak up the medieval charms of St. Joseph Street located inside the defensive stone walls of the city. Or, you might rather spend some time exploring the baroque-style Dubrovnik Cathedral and its renowned array of interior artworks, such as a 16th-century triptych of the Ascension of Mary by the renaissance painter Titian.

Later this afternoon, we’ll gather back together and drive to the rural Konavle region outside of Dubrovnik. Here, we’ll escape the tourists of Old Town to get a more authentic look at the area with a visit to a private, family-owned farmstead and winery. Upon our arrival, we’ll be welcomed by our host, who will introduce us to the estate. Then, our host will take us on a walk around the property, stopping at several points to explain the significance of a particular location, as well as how it has evolved throughout the history of the farm.

Dinner: At the family farmstead, where we’ll enjoy farm-fresh food and local music. Tonight’s meal will consist of veal served “under the bell,” a traditional preparation in which the meat is slow-cooked under a large, iron bell and covered with ashes and embers. The main dish will be served with potatoes and vegetables and followed by a homemade dessert. As you dine, enjoy the live folk music, and if you’d like, learn how to dance the *Lindo*, a traditional celebratory dance of Dubrovnik.

Evening: Return to Dubrovnik, where you’ll be free to enjoy your last night in the city on your own. Following dinner, perhaps you’ll stop at a local restaurant for a nightcap, or consult with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas.

Day 6 Travel to Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina • Explore Mostar

- Destination: Sarajevo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel President or similar

Activity Note: Today, we’ll cross the border from Croatia to Bosnia & Herzegovina. Please be aware that you will need your passport for all border crossings, and that sometimes crossing the border can take longer than expected as lines can be long and busy.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, we say “*dovidenja*” (goodbye) to Dubrovnik and drive northward across the border into Bosnia & Herzegovina.

Upon arrival, we’ll enjoy a discovery walk through Mostar with our Trip Experience Leader. Established by the Ottoman Turks in the late 15th century, the ancient town of Mostar became a place where the cultures of the Middle East and Europe mingled, blending influences from the mainland and the Adriatic Sea. Mostar is named for the former watchtower keepers (*mostari* in Bosnian) of its historic bridge. A masterpiece of Ottoman Turkish architecture, the 16th-century bridge has long spanned the Neretva River, whose waters divided the town into Muslim and Croat sections. Destroyed in 1993 during the breakup of the former Yugoslavia, the bridge and Mostar’s historic city center were restored in 2004 and are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The bridge also represents a symbol of reconciliation and continued peace for the region.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Mostar.

Afternoon: We continue our journey to Sarajevo, arriving at our hotel in the late afternoon. Once you check in, you’ll have some time to relax and settle into your room before our Trip Experience Leader takes us on an orientation walk around Sarajevo.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: The rest of the evening is yours to explore Sarajevo. Maybe you’ll enjoy a pint at the nearby Sarajevo Brewery, or get an ice cream and stroll Sarajevo’s market-lined streets.

Day 7 Explore Sarajevo

- Destination: Sarajevo
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel President or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today, we’ll explore Sarajevo on a walking tour with a local guide. Founded by the Ottomans in the 15th century, Sarajevo flourished as a multicultural haven for Bosniaks, Serbs, Croats, Turks, Jews, and others for hundreds of years. By the late 17th century, Sarajevo was considered the most important city in the Balkans after Istanbul, and it is said to be the only city in the world where prayer calls can be heard simultaneously from mosques, synagogues, and churches. After hosting the 1984 Winter Olympics, Sarajevo, the once-shining example of ethnic diversity, descended into chaos during the Yugoslav wars of the early 1990s. Bosnian Serb artillery pounded the city during a three-and-a-half-year siege—the longest in the history of modern warfare—and scars from this violence can still be seen in the city’s buildings today. However, in modern times, the city is recovering from its tumultuous past to reclaim its spirit of religious tolerance.

In *Bascarsija*, or Old Town, we’ll see examples of the city’s Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian influences, including a 16th-century mosque complex that is considered one of the finest examples of Ottoman architecture in the Balkans. Here, we’ll walk through an old alleyway where coppersmiths still ply their trade. We’ll also explore Ferhadija, the Austrian quarter, along with the historic Latin Bridge—site of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand that set the spark for World War I.

Lunch: On your own in Sarajevo. Perhaps you'll end your meal with *kadayif*, a pastry soaked in sweet syrup. Whatever you're craving, your Trip Experience Leader is sure to provide suggestions.

Afternoon: You'll have a few hours this afternoon to explore Sarajevo on your own. Perhaps you'll walk back to Bascarsija to visit an old Ottoman Market that has been considered the heart of Sarajevo since the city's founding. Through the rich aromas of exotic spices and sizzling meats, you'll find countless rows of one-story shops selling everything from Turkish coffee pots to relics from the Bosnian War.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can provide restaurant suggestions to fit your preferences.

Evening: The rest of the evening is yours to rest, relax, and reflect on a day's worth of discoveries in Sarajevo.

Day 8 Explore Sarajevo Tunnel • Conversation about the impact of the Bosnian War on Sarajevo • Home-Hosted Dinner

- Destination: Sarajevo
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel President or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today's discoveries begin with a focus on Sarajevo's more recent past, including the events that occurred following the violent breakup of former Yugoslavia in 1992. More than 10,000 people were killed during the siege of the city, with shells pouring in from the hills above the city.

We'll learn more about this when we drive to the famous Sarajevo Tunnel (also called the Tunnel of Hope), a vast underground passage

dug in 1993 to ferry people out and bring supplies into the beleaguered city. While here, we will have the opportunity to venture inside an area of the tunnel staged with scenes that portray this dark period. After our discoveries here, we will drive back to the city.

Back in Sarajevo, we'll meet a local resident who will share their perspective on the three-and-a-half year siege of Sarajevo during the Balkan War of the 1990s. We'll join our guest speaker for a conversation about the continued tensions between the Serbian and Bosniak communities in Sarajevo, and gain insights into the dramatic demographic changes that Sarajevo went through as a result of the war: Before the conflict, the population of Serbians in the city made up around 29.9%. Today, they are a minority and represent only about 4% of the total population in this predominantly Muslim city. After our discoveries here, we will drive back to the city.

Lunch: On your own in Sarajevo. You may wish to sample *klepe*—Bosnian dumplings filled with beef, lamb, or cheese and served with garlic sauce or yogurt. Your Trip Experience Leader is sure to provide other suggestions as well.

Afternoon: The afternoon is free to discover Sarajevo at your own pace. As you explore, take in the unique contrasts that earn Sarajevo its moniker as the city where east meets west. It's a fascinating place to find yourself, where you might stroll through what feels like a Turkish bazaar one minute, and find yourself in the midst of Western-style shops and traditional Austro-Hungarian architecture the next minute.

You may choose to head out to the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and the first Saturday of every month between 12pm and 1pm, visitors

are allowed to view the illuminated Jewish codex renowned throughout the world as the Sarajevo Haggadah.

Dinner: Tonight, we'll learn more about the rich culture of Bosnia as we divide into smaller groups and drive by private motorcoach to visit some local families for a **Home-Hosted Dinner**. Our hosts' home is located in a Soviet-style tower block in what was once known as "Sniper Alley." This infamous nickname was given to a main boulevard in Sarajevo which, during the Bosnian War, was lined with snipers' posts, and became an incredibly dangerous place for civilians to live and work in. We are the only travel company to offer this kind of one-on-one experience with a family who lived through the siege of Sarajevo.

As we converse, we'll enjoy authentic, home-cooked Bosnian cuisine.

Evening: Tonight, you can continue exploring Sarajevo on your own, or return to your hotel to rest and reflect on the day's discoveries.

Day 9 Overland to Karanac, Croatia • Dinner with local families

- Destination: Karanac
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Rural Farmstead Sklepici

Activity Note: Today, we'll cross the border from Bosnia & Herzegovina to Croatia. Please be aware that you will need your passport for all border crossings, and that sometimes crossing the border can take longer than expected. We'll be traveling approximately 6.5 hours today, with a stop and a lunch break along the way.

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: We'll depart early this morning for our overland journey to the village of Karanac in the Baranja region of Croatia, a drive of about 6.5 hours, with stops along the way. Baranja

sits in the northeast corner of Croatia, right at the confluence of the Drava and Danube rivers. Despite its history as part of a Roman province, Baranja has been a Slavic state since the sixth century. When Croatia declared its independence in 1991, a struggle for Baranja ensued between Croatia and Serbia—which wasn't too surprising, as its fertile agricultural lands and robust wine industry make it an important part of Croatia's "breadbasket." In contrast to the rugged Croatian coastline, you are sure to notice that the terrain in this region is very flat, which prompts local Croatians to joke that "the highest mountain is a cabbage."

Lunch: We'll stop at a local restaurant for an included lunch on our way to Baranja.

Afternoon: We'll continue our journey and officially cross the border back into Croatia early this afternoon. Our final destination is Karanac, a charming rural village with a population of just about 1,000 outside Baranja's largest city, Osijek. Here, we'll take advantage of our small group size to spend **A Day in the Life** at a farmstead located in this agricultural region—one of only two **A Day in the Life** overnight stays offered by O.A.T.

We'll arrive at our farmstead in the late afternoon, where we'll be greeted by the couple who owns and operates it. Leaving the city to pursue a life in the country, our hosts will tell us about how they came to relocate here and welcome us with some *rakija*, a local brandy. We'll also learn a bit of history about the community, which is home to Serbs, Croatians, and Hungarians—all living together peacefully.

Like many homes in the area, this farmstead is very simple. Wireless Internet connectivity may be weak or even nonexistent. All of its country-style guest rooms have a private bath with a shower. In this intimate setting, we'll have the unique opportunity to spend time with the family who runs our farmstead, and even

Speak with them one-on-one about life in this region of rural Croatia. We are the only travel company that offers this unique overnight stay at a family farm.

After our brief welcome, we'll enjoy a tour of the farm, built in 1910. We'll end in the kitchen, where we have the opportunity to prepare part of breakfast for the following day. As the seasons change, so does the menu, so our preparations will always include the freshest ingredients.

We'll also experience more of the local culture as we learn how to make cheese, which we'll eat with our breakfast tomorrow morning.

Dinner: We'll split into smaller groups and walk to the homes of neighboring families for a shared home-cooked meal, featuring regional specialties of Slavonia and Baranja.

The families we visit reflect the diversity of this village—your host might be Hungarian, Croatian, or Serbian, and practice the Catholic or Orthodox faith. You may be dining with farmers, vineyard workers, car mechanics, hairdressers or other working- or middle-class villagers. Multiple generations of the family are likely to be present for your meal, ranging from young children to elderly grandparents, offering a glimpse into the full spectrum of what life is like in Karanac. Once you regroup with your fellow travelers, be sure to compare stories and perspectives to get a full picture of daily life in rural Croatia.

Together with our hosts, we'll share a home-cooked meal, made from the type of dishes that they would normally enjoy in their day-to-day lives. We might have oven-roasted potatoes and homemade sausages, homemade *ajvar* (roasted red pepper sauce), fresh cheese spiced with paprika, a fresh salad made from seasonal vegetables, and a traditional dessert.

Evening: After dinner, we'll walk back to our farmstead and settle in for the night.

Day 10 *A Day in the Life* of Karanac village

• Travel to Zagreb

- Destination: Zagreb
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Best Western Astoria Hotel or similar

Breakfast: Our *A Day in the Life* experience continues as we share breakfast at the farmstead with our hosts. Don't forget to try the cheese we made yesterday.

Morning: Early risers can choose to wake up before breakfast and help our hosts around the farm. Perhaps you'll join a grocery run, followed by checking on the animals or collecting eggs and vegetables from the garden. You might also head to the kitchen to help get ready for breakfast, either by setting the table or making coffee.

After breakfast together, we'll engage in some hands-on activities around the farmstead. Then, we'll walk around the village with our Trip Experience Leader for a glimpse into daily life here. During our explorations, we may stop at the homes of a few local people—we may even be invited inside for coffee. We also might have the opportunity to meet the village woodcarver, blacksmith, or the tailor—heading inside their workshops for a glimpse at their craft. If we visit the farmstead during the weekend, we also have the chance to attend mass.

Lunch: At the farmstead.

Afternoon: We'll depart Karanac after lunch, leaving village life behind us as we journey overland to Zagreb, Croatia's modern capital. We'll arrive and check in to our hotel in the

mid-afternoon, then our Trip Experience Leader will guide us on an orientation walk around Zagreb.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide restaurant recommendations. Perhaps you'd like to try *knedli*, sweet potato dumplings stuffed with apricots or plums.

Evening: The rest of the evening is yours. Perhaps you'll stroll Zagreb's modern streets with a gelato, or sample some of the city's craft beer, which has become popular in recent years.

Day 11 Explore Zagreb

- Destination: Zagreb
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Best Western Astoria Hotel or similar

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: Explore Zagreb on a walking tour with a local guide. A city of more than 800,000 people, Zagreb has been Croatia's capital, intermittently, since 1557. First, we'll explore Zagreb's modern *Donji Grad*, or Lower Town, whose well-designed street grid was laid out in the 19th century. This area is home to many of Zagreb's civic and historic monuments.

Next, we'll take a ride on a funicular (the shortest in Europe) to view the medieval monuments in the city's *Gornji Grad*, or Upper Town. In this older part of the city, two medieval settlements, Gradec and Kaptol, developed between the eleventh and 14th centuries on neighboring hilltops divided by a brook. Fortified by ramparts and moats, the two rival towns fought over the centuries—the nearby street called *Krvavi Most*, or Bridge of Blood, is a testament to the historic rivalry.

In contemporary times, Gradec and Kaptol form two of the districts that make up Zagreb's hilly Upper Town. Among the highlights of Upper Town are the tall twin spires of the Cathedral of St. Stephen, an ancient church dedicated to the Assumption. The cathedral's neo-Gothic façade was added after an earthquake in 1880 destroyed its dome and bell tower. Our tour concludes with a visit to Dolac Market, a bustling collection of open-air stalls located across from the cathedral near the 14th-century Church of St. Mary.

Lunch: On your own. Perhaps you'll sample Zagreb's popular *štrukli*, a dough filled with cottage cheese and sour cream, or *cuspaž*, a meat and vegetable stew. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide recommendations.

Afternoon: The rest of your afternoon is free in Zagreb. You might choose to visit one of the city's many unique museums, including Upper Town's beloved Museum of Broken Relationships, an eclectic collection of items sent in by heartbroken people from around the world, along with heartfelt stories of their breakups.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Continue your discoveries in Zagreb on your own, perhaps grabbing a nightcap with your fellow travelers in one of the city's many bars.

Day 12 Zagreb • Explore Plitvice Lakes

- Destination: Zagreb
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Best Western Astoria Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll enjoy an excursion to Croatia's famous Plitvice Lakes, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. At the heart of this 114-square-mile national park is a series of 16 turquoise lakes linked by a series of waterfalls and cascades. Bears and wolves call this region home, along with deer, boar, foxes, and more than 120 different species of birds, including hawks, wild ducks, and herons.

The lake system is divided into the upper and lower lakes, with about 440 feet of elevation between them. We'll explore the area on a walking tour with our Trip Experience Leader along some of the wooden footbridges of the lakes. After exploring this natural wonder, we'll sit down to lunch.

Lunch: At a local restaurant.

Afternoon: After returning to Zagreb, the remainder of the day is free to relax or explore on your own.

Dinner: On your own.

Evening: Free to spend as you wish.

Day 13 Overland to Opatija • Pasta-making class

- Destination: Opatija
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Admiral or similar

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel and begin our transfer to Opatija.

Along the way, we'll stop in the village of Viškovo, where we'll meet a local chef for a hands-on pasta-making demonstration. Our host will introduce us to a few local favorites, and guide us through the process of creating a delectable dish from scratch, using fresh ingredients.

Lunch: At the end of our class, we'll share an included meal of the pasta dishes that we spent the morning creating.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Opatija, arriving in the afternoon.

Located in the Kvarner Gulf that separates Dalmatia from Istria, Opatija is a seaside resort town situated in a heart-shaped peninsula just south of Trieste, Italy. Surrounded by landscaped parks and gardens dotted with grand villas with elegant facades, Opatija's history as a Mediterranean resort destination for wealthy European aristocrats, dignitaries, and artists stretches back to 1844.

After we check in to our hotel, you'll have some time to settle in and explore independently. Perhaps you'll grab a coffee at one of the seaside cafés, or take a leisurely stroll along the shore, passing colorful Habsburg-era villas. We'll regroup at the hotel before dinner for a short orientation walk with our Trip Experience Leader to see more of what Opatija has to offer.

Dinner: At the hotel.

Evening: For the rest of the evening, you're welcome to rest and relax or explore Opatija as you wish. Perhaps you'll grab a sweet treat in one of its many shops, such as some of Croatia's famous chocolate or fresh cherry strudel. Or, simply soak in the beauty of the surrounding Adriatic on a moonlit walk.

Day 14 Opatija • Optional Hill Towns of Istria tour

- Destination: Opatija
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Hotel Admiral or similar

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: Today you have the entire day free to explore Opatija at your leisure. Perhaps you'll opt to spend the day relaxing, or take a stroll along a section of the famous *Lungomare*, a 7.5-mile-long waterfront promenade linking Opatija with Lovran, another small resort town dotted with aristocratic villas and manicured gardens.

Or, you may join our optional *Hill Towns of Istria* tour, featuring some of the hilltop villages and towns that surround the region. Those taking this tour will drive to Motovun—one of the region's 136 medieval hill towns, where we'll drive to the top of the city's hill. Here, we'll disembark to walk through town with a local guide, culminating at a family-owned truffle shop where we'll learn about these local delicacies from one of the owners who will offer us a taste as well. After our shop visit, we'll have some free time to enjoy the shops and cafés of Motovun on our own.

Then, we'll depart Motovun and drive to the town of Hum, the next stop on our optional tour.

Lunch: For those not joining our optional tour, lunch is on your own. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to offer suggestions.

Travelers who take our optional tour will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant in Hum, included in the cost of the tour.

Afternoon: For those who did not take the optional tour, continue your free time in Opatija. This afternoon, you may wish to visit St. Jacob's Church, or wander through the historic Volosko neighborhood.

Travelers who take our optional tour will continue their explorations in Hum after lunch. With your Trip Experience Leader, you'll explore the town on a guided tour, featuring local landmarks such as St. Jerome's Chapel, whose interior contains a series of original

medieval frescoes that date back as far as the twelfth century. You'll also visit a local shop for a taste of handmade *rakija* (fruit brandy) and jam before driving back to your hotel in Opatija.

Dinner: On your own. Opatija is famous for its fresh seafood, so perhaps you'll sample it tonight. Ask your Trip Experience Leader for suggestions.

Evening: The rest of the evening is yours to rest, relax, or continue exploring the coastal sights of Opatija.

Day 15 Overland to Ljubljana, Slovenia • Visit Postojna Cave

- Destination: Ljubljana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: uHotel Ljubljana or similar

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: Today, we'll check out of our hotel and transfer to Ljubljana. We'll observe a sharp contrast in the scenery as we journey inland into Slovenia, a forest-clad country of meadows, alpine villages, and soaring mountain peaks. This Slavic nation was the first to claim independence and break away from the Yugoslav federation, and it largely escaped involvement in the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

Along the way, we'll stop at Postojna Cave, a 12-mile-long underground labyrinth in eastern Slovenia that is considered one of the finest karst limestone formations in the world. You'll enter the cave on a brief but informative train ride, and then enjoy an audio tour as you walk on your own through the cave to view a diverse collection of tunnels, sculpted galleries, stalactites and stalagmites, chambers, and cave-dwelling olms—sightless, snake-like amphibians that can only be seen here.

Lunch: Included at a restaurant near Postojna Cave.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Ljubljana and check in to our hotel in the mid-afternoon.

Later in the afternoon, a local guide will lead us through this thriving university town on a walking tour. Our guide will highlight the bridges spanning the river Ljubljanica and the narrow streets of its café-lined Old Town. We'll also see buildings, parks, monuments, and bridges, many of which were designed by innovative local architect Joze Plecnik.

Dinner: On your own. Keep in mind that Slovene cuisine is incredibly diverse, so your Trip Experience Leader can make a recommendation for whatever you're craving.

Evening: Continue to explore Ljubljana on your own. You may wish to settle into your room, or grab a drink at the hotel's bar. Or, you can stroll the streets of Ljubljana, listening to its popular street musicians.

Day 16 Ljubljana • Lake Bled

- Destination: Ljubljana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: uHotel Ljubljana or similar

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: Today you will embark on a full-day excursion to Lake Bled (subject to local weather conditions). As we'll see during a panoramic drive, the resort area of Lake Bled features a 17th-century church perched on an islet in the middle of the lake and an 800-year-old castle clinging to a rocky cliff, all against a backdrop of the Julian Alps.

After exploring the area around the lake, we'll board a *pletna* boat (weather permitting), the locals' version of a gondola, to reach Bled Island, located in the middle of the lake. We'll disembark at the island and join our Trip Experience Leader for a walk, culminating at the island's famous Church of the Assumption. We'll then ride our *pletna* back to the mainland.

Lunch: Included at a local restaurant in the town of Radovljica.

Afternoon: We'll return to our hotel after lunch. The remainder of the day is free for your own discoveries. Check with your Trip Experience Leader for ideas.

Dinner: On your own. Maybe you'll choose to sample local pork sausage, known as *krajnska klobasa*, or savor *jota*, a hearty stew made from sauerkraut, kidney beans, potatoes, and garlic. Just make sure you save room for Slovenia's famous cream cake, *kremna rezina*.

Evening: Tonight, you'll have free time to explore Ljubljana on your own.

Day 17 Ljubljana • Cruise on the Ljubljanica River

- Destination: Ljubljana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: uHotel Ljubljana or similar

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: We'll see the city from a new perspective during a private cruise along the Ljubljanica River (weather permitting). We'll first sail past the suburbs of Ljubljana, a popular place to spot local wildlife such as ducks and, if we are lucky, nutrias (a semi-aquatic rodent similar in appearance to a beaver). We may also see fellow boaters from the local sport club as they practice their strokes aboard their kayaks and canoes. After

passing Gruber's canal—an artificial canal built in the 18th century for water regulation—we'll turn back and take in views of Ljubljana Castle. As we cruise back towards the city, we'll encounter Ljubljana's many interesting bridges.

After we return and disembark, the rest of the morning is yours to spend as you please.

Lunch: On your own. You might want to sample *štruklji*, a traditional Slovenian boiled or baked dough roll with fillings such as tarragon, cottage cheese, or walnuts. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to provide other local suggestions as well.

Afternoon: Continue to explore Ljubljana on your own. Perhaps you'll choose to rent a bike for the day and leisurely cycle around the city. Or maybe you'll visit Ljubljana Castle, originally built as a fortress in the eleventh century.

Later, we'll reconvene with our fellow travelers for a farewell drink before setting off for dinner.

Dinner: Included at a local restaurant, where we'll enjoy a Farewell Dinner and toast to our discoveries.

Evening: The evening is yours. Perhaps you'd like to pack for your return trip home, or sample a last glass of the region's wine.

Day 18 Return to U.S. or begin post-trip extension

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: Included at the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, depart to the airport for your return flight home.

Or, begin your post-trip extension to *Istria: Croatia's Cultural Crossroads*.

END YOUR ADVENTURE WITH AN OPTIONAL POST-TRIP EXTENSION

5 nights in Istria: Croatia's Cultural Crossroads

Day 1 Overland to Poreč • Visit local *prosciutteria*

Day 2 Explore Poreč • Optional Traditions of Istria: *supa* & bowling tour

Day 3 Explore Pula

Day 4 Discover Rovinj • Visit local winery

Day 5 Visit olive oil mill in Bale

Day 6 Return to U.S.

OPTIONAL TOURS

During your trip you will be able to book optional tours directly with your Trip Experience Leader. He or she will ask you to confirm the payment for these tours by filling out a payment form. Optional tours can only be purchased with a credit or debit card. We accept Visa, MasterCard, and Discover credit cards. We also accept Visa and MasterCard debit cards, but it must be a debit card that allows you to sign for purchases.

In order to correctly process these charges, there can be a delay of 2–3 months from the date of your return for the charges to be posted to your account. Therefore we ask that you use a card that will not expire in the 2–3 months following your return.

Please note: *Optional tour prices are listed in U.S. dollar estimates determined at the time of publication and are subject to change. Optional tours may vary.*

Hill Towns of Istria

(Day 14 \$130 per person)

Our full-day *Hill Towns of Istria* tour journeys along a scenic stretch of road through vineyards and fields to visit hilltop villages and towns, some of which were originally occupied by Illyrian tribes when they first settled here almost 3,000 years ago. We'll visit Motovun, one of the region's 136 medieval towns, and head to the town's hilltop, where we can enjoy scenic views of the Mirna Valley and surrounding countryside. The area around Motovun is especially rich in truffles, and during the fall and winter there are said to be some 12,000 dogs wandering the Istrian forests sniffing around for this expensive delicacy—one of which was entered in the *Guinness Book of World Records* as the largest truffle ever found.

We then travel to the medieval town of Hum, where we'll enjoy lunch at a local restaurant (included in the cost of the optional tour). We'll also see the sights of the town, on a guided tour with our Trip Experience Leader, such as St. Jerome's Chapel, whose interior contains a series of original medieval frescoes that date back as far as the twelfth century.

PRE-TRIP

Albania: Undiscovered Balkans

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinner
- » 3 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

PRE-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Explore Albania, one of the last undiscovered pockets of Europe, where progress is balanced against a storied past. Discover hillside castles and a colorful modern capital still throwing off the yoke of communist dictatorship.

Day 1 Depart U.S.

Fly overnight from the U.S. to Tirana, Albania.

Day 2 Arrive Tirana, Albania

- Destination: Tirana
- Accommodations: Oxford Hotel or similar

Afternoon/Evening: Arrive in Tirana sometime today. An O.A.T. representative will meet you at the airport and assist you with your transfer to your hotel, where you'll join travelers who arrived early in Tirana before their pre-trip extension.

Dinner: On your own, depending on when you arrive in Tirana. Maybe you'll choose to sample *tavë kosi*, a popular quiche-like dish made from eggs, lamb, and yogurt. Or, you can try *speça me gjize*, baked peppers stuffed with rice, cottage cheese, and spices. Your Trip Experience Leader will be happy to offer suggestions.

Day 3 Explore Tirana

- Destination: Tirana
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Oxford Hotel or similar

Activity Note: Today's activities will require a total of 3 hours of walking and standing over a total of 4 miles of flat terrain.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll meet with our Trip Experience Leader for a Welcome Briefing in the hotel, during which we will introduce ourselves and review our itinerary in more detail (including any changes that may need to occur).

With its prime location on the Adriatic and Ionian seas, bounded by Greece, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Kosovo, Albania boasts a history that dates to the Stone Age. Albania's capital city and cultural and economic hub, Tirana, was founded in 1614 by Sulejman

Pasha, who was drawn here by the fertility of this inland region and by its location at the crossroads of caravan routes.

The city flourished until the 19th century, when the unfortunate death of Sulejman Pasha's grand-nephew, Kaplan Pasha, left the city under the control of an insane megalomaniac, Esat Toptani. It was not until the city was named the capital of Albania in 1920 that it began to thrive again. Today, Tirana is rapidly modernizing, and its once mud-brick houses and cobbled alleyways have largely been replaced by modern architecture and wide paved streets. Hills have been reforested, inviting parks have been created, and the gray façades that characterized the communist regime now exude a jumble of bright colors.

We'll get our first experience of Tirana's rebirth during an included walking tour with our Trip Experience Leader, featuring Skanderbeg Square, the heart of the city, where the mosque of Sulejman Pasha once stood and where today you will see the Ethem Bey Mosque, a national monument known for its beautiful minaret. We'll also see the huge statue of Skanderbeg (George Kastrioti) who overthrew the Turkish sultan and founded an independent Albania during the 15th century; view the Soviet-designed Palace of Culture and the National Library; and pass by Tirana Castle, a Byzantine fortress built around a tower that dates to AD 500.

Following our tour, we'll drive to the Bunk'Art Museum, set in a five-story, labyrinthine underground bunker that served as the headquarters for the Ministry of Internal Affairs under communist rule. This era of Albanian history was typified by the heavy hand of the secret police, who enforced the will of the country's totalitarian regime upon its people. Exhibits at the museum offer a visceral

reminder of what life was like during these dark days, and of the brutalities committed by this regime.

After browsing the exhibits, we'll drive to a cable car station. From here, we can relax during a cable car ride up nearby Mount Dajti, and enjoy panoramic views over Tirana and its surroundings.

Lunch: At a restaurant atop Mount Dajti.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll walk around the Mount Dajti area, then make our way back to our Tirana hotel in the mid-afternoon. Along the way, we'll stop to explore the World Headquarters of the Bektashi, the central place of worship for this Islamic Sufi order in Albania. This was where the order made their home after being banned from Turkey in 1925, and construction was completed on this magnificent building in 1941, in the midst of World War II and the Italian occupation of Albania. In 1967 it was closed by order of the communist dictator of the time and finally reopened in 1991. We'll tour the building and the grounds, learning about the history of the Bektashi Order, Islam in Albania, and more. Once we arrive back at the hotel, you'll have free time this afternoon to explore more of Tirana on your own before we reconvene for dinner.

Dinner: We'll enjoy a Welcome Dinner at a local restaurant in Tirana.

Evening: Your evening is free in Tirana. Perhaps you'll enjoy a taste of local life at the old market, near the Palace of Culture. Or take in The Block, former residence of the communist dictator Enver Hoxha. Once forbidden to the public, it now features a mix of shops, galleries, and cafés.

Day 4 Tirana • Optional Berat excursion

- Destination: Tirana
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Oxford Hotel or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Today is yours to continue exploring Tirana on your own. You may wish to venture to Tirana National Park, in the hills near the university, to relax by the man-made lake or explore the botanical garden and zoo. Or, simply stroll the streets, admiring architecture that exhibits a blend of Italian and Turkish influences.

Or, join our optional excursion to Berat, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its stunning collection of Ottoman-style homes. We'll depart our hotel after breakfast and drive to Berat, where we'll enjoy a tour that includes a visit to Berat Castle, a 2,500-year old fortress and "living castle" situated high above the Osum River. We'll walk around the grounds and explore the Onufri Museum inside the castle complex's Cathedral of the Assumption of St. Mary featuring an incredible work of art from one of Albania's 19th-century wood-carving masters.

Lunch: For those not joining the optional tour, lunch is on your own. Perhaps you will sample *kaçkavall*, a yellow, salty cheese that is usually served baked or fried.

For those on our optional tour, lunch is included at a local restaurant within walking distance of the castle.

Afternoon: For those not joining the optional tour, continue exploring on your own. Travelers who have taken our optional tour will board our bus after lunch to begin the journey back to Tirana, making stops along the way to take in panoramic views of Berat's Gorica and

Mangalem neighborhoods. We'll arrive back to the hotel in the late afternoon. The rest of the day is free.

Dinner: All travelers can enjoy dinner on their own. Perhaps you'll sample the local specialty: *byrek*—a pastry filled with feta cheese, vegetables, or meat.

Evening: The evening is free to spend as you choose.

Day 5 Tirana • Overland to Shkoder • Explore Mrizi

- Destination: Shkoder
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Hotel Colosseo & Spa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: After breakfast, we'll check out of our hotel and begin our overland transfer to Shkoder. Along the way, we'll stop en route in Mrizi to stretch our legs and visit a local pottery workshop where we'll have the opportunity to speak with the owner and his family. Then, we'll continue up the road to a family-run farm. This farm, built by an Albanian who returned home after living abroad, is dedicated to supporting the small village community. While here, we'll learn about the different products they create on this self-sufficient farm, like wine, salami, cheese, and more. This is all done at the farm, with products grown and created in the village by workers who live there.

Lunch: We'll enjoy an included lunch at the farm restaurant in Mrizi.

Afternoon: After lunch, we'll have a little time to explore the farm and experience daily life firsthand.

Then, we'll get back on the road to Shkoder, checking in to our hotel in the late afternoon. Take a few moments to unpack and unwind, then join your Trip Experience Leader for an orientation walk of the neighborhood surrounding your hotel.

The rest of the day is free to explore independently. Compared to the hustle and bustle of Tirana, Shkoder has a quiet, laid-back atmosphere.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader is happy to recommend a restaurant where you might try local specialties, such as *tave kosi*, a baked lamb dish made with rice, eggs, and yogurt.

Evening: The rest of the evening is free to continue exploring Shkoder. Perhaps you'll enjoy a cup of coffee or an after-dinner pastry in one of its many cafés.

Day 6 Shkoder • Visit St. Stephen's Cathedral & Rozafa Castle • Shiroka

- Destination: Shkoder
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Hotel Colosseo & Spa or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll embark on a morning walking tour of Shkoder during which we'll witness some of the city's highlights, including St. Stephen's Cathedral. The new St. Stephen's Cathedral—also known to locals as “The Great Church”—was consecrated in 1867. Although Shkoder has been the target of numerous sieges and natural disasters since that time, the cathedral has never fallen (though it was briefly converted into a Palace of Sports during Communist rule between 1967 and 1990), making it a popular symbol of the Albanian people's enduring spirit.

Then, we'll drive by motorcoach to Rozafa Castle, sitting atop a rocky promontory overlooking the Buna and Drin Rivers down below. We'll arrive at the castle and spend some time enjoying the panoramic views, and learning about the legend that surrounds this ancient fortress. According to myth, the castle is named after a woman entombed within the castle walls, who sacrificed herself to fulfill a prophesy so that the fortress walls might never fall. At one time, the castle contained a cathedral—however, the church was converted into a mosque by invading Ottomans in 1478. In the 19th century, the cathedral was rebuilt in the city of Shkoder itself.

We'll depart the castle after our tour for Shiroka, a small fishing village situated on Shkoder Lake whose shores attract many species of birds.

Lunch: On your own in Shiroka. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a café or restaurant. You might try some local seafood, or handmade pizza or pasta.

Afternoon: We'll reconvene after lunch for a walking tour through the quaint fishing village with our Trip Experience Leader and perhaps spot some of the birds that call this village home.

Then, we'll return to our hotel where we'll have the rest of the afternoon free to explore independently. Perhaps you'll visit the Marubi National Museum of Photography, featuring a collection of historic photos—including the first-ever photograph taken in Albania, made by Pjetër Marubi in 1858. Or, make your way out to nearby Lake Skadar, for a peaceful stroll along the water's edge. This idyllic body of water, which borders Albania and Montenegro, is a popular gathering spot for locals looking to get away for a while and enjoy nature. Your Trip Experience Leader can help you arrange transportation.

Dinner: At a local restaurant.

Evening: Your evening is free to spend independently. You might choose to explore more of Shkoder, or prepare for tomorrow's transfer to Dubrovnik.

Day 7 Transfer to Dubrovnik, Croatia • Join main trip

- Destination: Dubrovnik
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

Activity Note: Today, we'll cross the border from Albania to Montenegro in the morning, and cross into Croatia in the afternoon. Please be aware that you will need your passport for all border crossings, and that sometimes crossing the border can take longer than expected depending on how many people are crossing—perhaps up to 1.5 hours each time. Total transfer time will be approximately 8.5 hours with stops along the way.

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll check out of our hotel and depart Albania for Dubrovnik, Croatia, where we'll begin our main trip. While the total drive to Dubrovnik is around 8.5 hours, we'll make several rest stops along the way. In the morning, we'll make our first border crossing as we enter Montenegro. In Montenegro, we'll meet our Trip Experience Leader who will be with us for our main adventure, and will assist us as we continue making our way to Dubrovnik.

Lunch: We'll stop at a local restaurant in Budva, Montenegro—one of the oldest settlements on the Adriatic and a popular beach resort—for lunch en route.

Afternoon: We'll continue our drive to Dubrovnik, crossing the border into Croatia late this afternoon. Once we arrive in the famed city of Dubrovnik, we'll check in to our hotel and meet our fellow travelers. From here, we'll begin Day 2 of our *Crossroads of the Adriatic* itinerary.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Berat excursion

(Day 4 \$130 per person)

This optional tour journeys outside of Tirana to Berat, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known for its stunning collection of Ottoman-style homes. During our visit, we'll see sweeping panoramic views of Berat's Gorica and Mengalem neighborhoods, visit Berat's splendid castle, and view brilliant red and gold wood carvings at the Onufri Museum, housed inside the castle complex's Cathedral of the Assumption of St. Mary.

POST-TRIP

Istria: Croatia's Cultural Crossroads

INCLUDED IN YOUR PRICE

- » 5 nights accommodation
- » 10 meals—5 breakfasts, 3 lunches, and 2 dinners
- » 3 small group activities
- » Services of a local O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader
- » Gratuities for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters
- » All transfers

POST-TRIP EXTENSION ITINERARY

Extend your time in Croatia with 5 nights in Istria, the idyllic, beach-lined peninsula that juts out into the Adriatic Sea. Ruled over the years by the Byzantines, Romans, Italians, and more, the Istrian Peninsula is a melting pot of cultures, cuisines, and architectural styles. Join us to discover the red-roofed villages, vineyard-laced hills, and sunny coastlines that have been drawing visitors to Istria for centuries.

Day 1 Overland to Poreč • Visit local prosciutteria

- Destination: Poreč
- Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner
- Accommodations: Valamar Riviera Hotel & Residence or similar

Morning: Join your Trip Experience Leader in the lobby of your Ljubljana hotel for a short briefing about the discoveries ahead. Then, board your bus and set out for the Istrian Peninsula, a little-known region of Croatia made up of craggy shoreline, rolling hills laced with olive groves and vineyards, and charming, red-roofed towns. Sitting at the crossroads of both history and the Adriatic, Istria's prime location has made it a coveted prize for rulers across the ages. The Romans, Byzantines, Venetians, and most recently, Italians, have all occupied the peninsula—and their marks can be felt in the culture and cuisine of the region today.

We'll get a taste of this unique culinary legacy when we stop in the village of Kobjeglava to visit a local *prosciutteria*, where the family owners have been perfecting the process of making this delectable cured meat for centuries, with each generation improving upon the techniques of their ancestors. We'll learn about the boutique company's humble origins, and how they embraced modern technology to meet the exploding demand for Istrian prosciutto during an included tour, followed by a sampling of some of their fine products.

Lunch: Enjoy an included light lunch at the *prosciutteria*.

Afternoon: We continue our drive through the Istrian Peninsula to reach Poreč, a charming coastal town set around a picturesque harbor. After checking in to our hotel, you'll join your

Trip Experience Leader for an orientation walk, followed by a little time to settle in before dinner.

Dinner: Enjoy an included dinner with your fellow travelers.

Evening: The night is free to rest or explore independently.

Day 2 Explore Poreč • Optional Traditions of Istria: *supa* & bowling tour

- Destination: Poreč
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Valamar Riviera Hotel & Residence or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll enjoy a walking tour of Poreč this morning. The almost 2,000-year-old town is set around a picturesque harbor that is protected from the sea by the small island of Saint Nicholas. In 1861, Poreč (Parenzo in Italian) became the capital of Istria.

On a walking tour with a local guide, we'll explore the cobbled streets known as Decumanus and Cardo Maximus. Admire the beautiful Istrian architecture and peek into the Euphrasian Basilica that was rebuilt in the sixth century under the Byzantine empire. It is a protected World Heritage Site, designated by UNESCO in 1997.

Lunch: At a local restaurant in Poreč.

Afternoon: Enjoy the remainder of the day to relax at the hotel or continue exploring Poreč on your own. Or, join us on an optional tour to discover two of the region's unique cultural traditions: a local dish known as *supa*, and *bocce*, one of the area's most popular pastimes.

First, we'll head to a local restaurant in Rovinj to learn about *supa*. Often mistranslated as "soup," this warm Istrian specialty—especially

popular in the cold winter months—is made with red wine, olive oil, and spices, heated to the perfect temperature, then served in a traditional ceramic jug known as a *bukaleta*. Slices of toasted crusty bread are then soaked in the wine (the name *supa* comes from "posupati", the Croatian word for "soak") and eaten while the wine is sipped. During an included presentation and tasting, you'll learn how to enjoy *supa* like a local, and savor the nuanced flavors of this special Istrian beverage.

Next, we'll get an introduction to another Istrian tradition when we head to a local *bocce* field for a hands-on demonstration of this favorite local game. *Bocce* is an Italian import, with roots in games played by the ancient Romans, and remains a favored sport in this region of Europe today. After a demonstration of how to play the game, you'll have a hands-on opportunity to step onto the court and bowl a few rounds yourself.

After our optional tour ends, you'll head back to your hotel in Poreč, where the rest of the day is yours to spend as you choose.

Dinner: On your own. You can ask your Trip Experience Leader for some local dining options.

Evening: Spend the evening as you wish.

Day 3 Explore Pula

- Destination: Poreč
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch
- Accommodations: Valamar Riviera Hotel & Residence or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: This morning, we set out to explore Pula—Istria's largest city and a major port. Set on the southernmost tip of the peninsula with a protected harbor, Pula is known for its lovely beaches and Roman ruins. Led by a local

guide, we'll explore the city on foot, taking in highlights such as the Pula Cathedral, the Temple of Augustus, and of course, the Roman Amphitheater, which was built between 27 BC and 68 AD. While the amphitheater originally hosted gladiator fights, it's still used today for concerts and movie showings.

Lunch: At a local pizzeria.

Afternoon: You'll have a little time to continue exploring Pula independently after lunch before returning to your hotel in Poreč, where the rest of the day is free to spend as you please.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: Spend the evening resting at the hotel, or exploring Poreč on your own.

Day 4 Discover Rovinj • Visit local winery

- Destination: Poreč
- Included Meals: Breakfast
- Accommodations: Valamar Riviera Hotel & Residence or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: A short drive takes us to Rovinj, the former playground of the Venetian Republic. Led by a local guide, we'll discover its timeless appeal of during a walking tour. This seaside resort town has been a popular getaway along the Adriatic for centuries, hosting glamorous celebrities and dignitaries alike, all while remaining true to its roots as an authentic fishing port.

Once your tour of this pastel-hued town concludes, relish in some free time to make your own discoveries. Perhaps you'll wander to the artisan shops and galleries outlining the pedestrian-only thoroughfare of Carrera Street.

Lunch: On your own in Rovinj. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a café or restaurant.

Afternoon: We'll begin our return to Poreč this afternoon, stopping on the way at a local family-owned winery to learn more about the local varieties that thrive in the unique terroir of the Istrian Peninsula, and to sample a splash or two of wine for ourselves.

Then, we return to our hotel in Poreč, where the rest of the day is at leisure.

Dinner: On your own. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a restaurant.

Evening: Enjoy a free evening to spend as you wish.

Day 5 Visit olive oil mill in Bale

- Destination: Poreč
- Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner
- Accommodations: Valamar Riviera Hotel & Residence or similar

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: We'll drive south to the town of Bale to visit an award-winning family-owned olive oil mill. We'll begin our experience with an introduction to the estate's owners, who will tell us more about their passion for this prized local product, and will answer any questions we may have about their history or day-to-day life. After building up an appetite, we'll also have an opportunity to taste a few of their products to better appreciate the nuances of their subtle flavors.

After our visit to the mill, we'll head back to our hotel in Poreč, where the rest of the day is free until dinner.

Lunch: On your own in Poreč. Your Trip Experience Leader can recommend a café or restaurant.

Afternoon: Spend a final afternoon exploring Poreč independently, or start preparing for your journey back home tomorrow.

Dinner: Cap off your Istrian adventure with an included Farewell Dinner at a local restaurant.

Evening: Enjoy a free evening to pack for your flight home, or to make final independent discoveries in Poreč.

Day 6 Return to U.S.

- Included Meals: Breakfast

Breakfast: At the hotel.

Morning: Transfer to the airport in Trieste, Italy for your return flight home.

OPTIONAL TOUR

Traditions of Istria: *supa* & bowling

(Day 2 \$125 per person)

Join an afternoon optional tour to discover two of Istria's unique cultural traditions: a local dish known as *supa*, and *bocce*, one of the area's most popular pastimes. During an included presentation and tasting at a local restaurant, you'll be introduced to *supa*, a warm drink made of red wine, olive oil, and spices, served with slices of toasted bread meant to be soaked and eaten while sipping at the beverage. Next, head to a local *bocce* field for a hands-on demonstration of this game that is a favored sport in this region of Europe. After a demonstration of how to play the game, you'll have a hands-on opportunity to step onto the court and bowl a few rounds yourself.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS & ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Your Passport

- Must be in good condition
- Must be valid for at least 6 months after your scheduled return to the U.S.
- Must have the required number of blank pages (details below)
- The blank pages must be labeled “Visas” at the top. Pages labeled “Amendments and Endorsements” are not acceptable

Need to Renew Your Passport?

Contact the National Passport Information Center (NPIC) at **1-877-487-2778**, or visit the U.S. Department of State’s official website at **www.travel.state.gov** for information on obtaining a new passport or renewing your existing passport. The U.S. Department of State allows for passport renewal by mail or, for applicable citizens, renewal online. We advise you review the process and requirements for online passport renewal on the official website.

You may also contact our recommended visa service company, PVS International, at **1-800-556-9990** for help with your passport.

Recommended Blank Pages

Please confirm that your passport has enough blank pages for this vacation.

- **Main trip only:** If you are taking only the main trip, you will need 5 blank passport pages.
- **Pre-trip extension to Tirana, Albania:** You will need an additional page for a total of 6 blank passport pages. Albanian immigrations officials can be particularly strict about passport expiration dates. For this extension, your passport must be valid for at least 6 months after your date of departure.
- **Post-trip extension to Croatia:** No additional pages are needed.
- **Both a pre- and a post-trip extension:** You will need a total of 6 blank pages.

Visa Required

We’ll be sending you information with instructions, application forms, and fees about 100 days prior to your departure. In the meantime, we’re providing the information below as a guideline on what to expect. This information is for U.S. citizens only. All visas and fees are subject to change.

- **Europe (Croatia, Slovenia):** Starting in 2025, U.S. citizens will be required to fill out an online European Travel Information and Authorization System (ETIAS) visa-waiver to enter countries in the European Union. There is no confirmed start date for the ETIAS at the time of printing. The ETIAS will be valid for 3 years.
- **Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina:** No visa required.

Traveling Without a U.S. Passport?

If you are not a U.S. citizen, or if your passport is from any country other than the U.S., it is your responsibility to check with your local consulate, embassy, or a visa services company about visa requirements. We recommend the services of PVS International, a national visa service located in Washington D.C.; they can be reached at **1-800-556-9990** or **www.pvsinternational.org**.

Traveling With a Minor?

Some governments may require certain documentation for minors to enter and depart the country or to obtain a visa (if applicable). For further detail on the required documentation, please contact your local embassy or consulate.

Emergency Photocopies of Key Documents

We recommend you carry color photocopies of key documents including the photo page of your passport plus any applicable visas, air itinerary, credit cards (front and back), and an alternative form of ID. Add emergency phone numbers like your credit card company and the number for your travel protection plan. Store copies separate from the originals.

If you plan to email this information to yourself, please keep in mind that email is not always secure; consider using password protection or encryption. Also email is not always available worldwide. As an alternative, you could load these documents onto a flash drive instead, which can do double-duty as a place to backup photos during your trip.

Overseas Taxes & Fees

This tour may have taxes and fees that cannot be included in your airline ticket price because you are required to pay them in person onsite. All taxes are subject to change without notice and can be paid in cash (either U.S. or local currency). If applicable, you will receive a list of these fees with your Final Documents.

RIGORS, VACCINES & GENERAL HEALTH

Is This Adventure Right for You?

Please review the information below prior to departing on this adventure. We reserve the right for our Trip Experience Leaders to modify participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their condition would adversely affect the health, safety, or enjoyment of themselves or of other travelers.

PACING

- 6 locations in 17 days with one 1-night stay

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Not appropriate for travelers using wheelchairs, walkers, or other mobility aids
- You must be able to walk 3 miles unassisted and participate in 6–8 hours of physical activities each day
- We reserve the right for Trip Experience Leaders to restrict participation, or in some circumstances send travelers home, if their limitations impact the group's experience
- You may encounter animals on this trip. We make every effort to keep these encounters safe, however animals may behave unpredictably or dangerously at times. Please use caution when interacting with animals on this trip: Keep a safe distance, stay alert, and respect the animals

CLIMATE

- Temperatures are mild and seasonable year round, with the hottest temperatures in July and August averaging 80°F; although please be aware that temperatures in Croatia have been known to reach as high as 100°F during summer months
- Temperatures in Slovenia's caves are between 46 and 50°F year round

TERRAIN & TRANSPORTATION

- Walk on rugged paths and cobblestoned streets, and travel by bus over rural roads that may be bumpy and narrow
- Hike up and down hills
- Agility and balance are required for boarding or disembarking boats on Lake Bled tour
- Travel by air-conditioned bus and funicular, as well as small boat in Montenegro and on Lake Bled tour
- This adventure features up to 10 border crossings. Border crossing times are unpredictable and may take up to several hours depending on traffic

FLIGHT INFORMATION

- Travel time will be 12–20 hours and your return from Ljubljana or Belgrade may require three flights

ACCOMMODATIONS & FACILITIES

- Hotel rooms are smaller than those in the U.S. and offer basic amenities
- 1-night stay in Karanac village at a small family-run accommodation
- All accommodations feature private baths with showers

Steps to Take Before Your Trip

Before you leave on this adventure, we recommend the following:

- Check with the CDC for their recommendations for the countries you'll be visiting. You can contact them online at **www.cdc.gov/travel** or by phone at **1-800-232-4636**.
- Have a medical checkup with your doctor at least 6 weeks before your trip.
- Pick up any necessary medications, both prescription and over-the-counter.
- Have a dental and/or eye checkup. (Recommended, but less urgent)

No Vaccines Required

Recommended Vaccines

At the time of writing there were no required vaccines for this trip. The CDC recommends that all travelers be up to date on their routine vaccinations and on basic travel vaccines like Hepatitis A and Typhoid, but these are suggestions only. However, this could change in future so we encourage you to check with the CDC yourself before meeting with your doctor.

Medication Suggestions

- An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- Prescription pain medication in the unlikely event of an injury in a remote location

Traveling with Medications

- **Pack medications in your carry-on bag** to avoid loss and to have them handy.
- **Keep medicines in their original, labeled containers** for a quicker security screen at the airport and a better experience if you get stopped by customs while overseas.
- **Bring copies of your prescriptions**, written using the generic drug name rather than a brand name to be prepared for any unforeseen loss of your medications.

We recommend checking with the State Department for medication restrictions by country: **travel.state.gov** (Go to “Find International Travel Information”, select “Country Information”, then enter the country into the search bar; if you don’t see any medications specifically mentioned under the “Health” section, then you can presume major U.S. brands should be OK).

Staying Healthy on Your Trip

Jet Lag Tips

- Start your trip well-rested.
- Begin a gradual transition to your new time zone before you leave or switch to your destination time zone when you get on the plane.
- Attempt to sleep and eat according to the new schedule.
- Avoid heavy eating and drinking caffeine or alcoholic beverages right before—and during—your flight.
- Drink plenty of water and/or fruit juice while flying
- Stretch your legs, neck, and back periodically while seated on the plane.
- After arrival, avoid the temptation to nap.
- Don’t push yourself to see a lot on your first day.
- Try to stay awake your first day until after dinner.

Allergies

If you have any serious allergies or dietary restrictions, we advise you to notify us at least 30 days prior to your departure. Please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**, and we will communicate them to our regional office. Every effort will be made to accommodate you.

Water

- Tap water in the region is safe to drink, but is processed differently than in the U.S. so it can still upset your stomach or feel “heavy”. Therefore, we suggest drinking bottle water instead.
- Bottled water is readily available and inexpensive. (Bottled water is not included in the price of your tour.)
- Inspect each bottle before you buy it to make sure the cap is sealed properly.
- When in doubt about the water, salads, or ice, just ask the restaurant or your Trip Experience Leader.
- It is OK to brush your teeth with tap water.

Food

- We've carefully chosen the restaurants for your group meals. Your Trip Experience Leader can suggest restaurants for the meal you take on your own.
- Be very careful with food sold from vendors on the street, and with uncooked foods.

MONEY MATTERS: LOCAL CURRENCY & TIPPING GUIDELINES

Top Three Tips

- **Carry a mix of different types of payments**, such as local currency, an ATM card, and a credit card
- **Traveler's checks are not accepted** in the countries that you will visit on this trip.
- **You will not be able to pay with U.S. dollars on this trip**; you will need local currency.

Local Currency

For current exchange rates, please refer to an online converter tool like www.xe.com/currencyconverter, your bank, or the financial section of your newspaper.

Euro Countries: European Euro (€)

Montenegro: European Euro (€)

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Bosnian Mark (KM)

Albania: Albanian Lek (L)

How to Exchange Money

If you want to exchange money before your trip, you can usually do so through your bank or at an exchange office. Your departure airport in the U.S., a travel agent, or an AAA office are also possible outlets. Or you can wait and change money on the trip instead—but it might be helpful to arrive with some local currency in case you run into a bank holiday or an “out of order” ATM.

On your trip, the easiest way is to withdraw funds from a local ATM. The ATM will give you local money and your bank at home will convert that into U.S. dollars.

You can also exchange cash at some hotels, large post offices, and money exchange offices. To exchange cash, you'll usually need your passport and bills in good condition (not worn, torn, or dirty). New bills (post 2004) are best.

Please note that many banks in Europe will only exchange money for their own customers. Never exchange money on the street. All exchange methods involve fees, which may be built into the conversion rate; ask beforehand.

ATMs

When using the ATM, keep in mind that it may only accept cards from local banks, and may not allow cash advances on credit cards; you might need to try more than one ATM or more than one card.

Many banks charge a fee of \$1–\$10 each time you use a foreign ATM. Others may charge you a percentage of the amount you withdraw. We recommend that you check with your bank before you depart.

Lastly, don't forget to memorize the actual digits of your card's PIN number (many keypads at foreign ATMs do not include letters on their keys—they only display numbers.)

In most countries, ATMs are widely available in major cities. If you are in a rural location, it will likely be harder to find an ATM.

Albania: ATMs can be easily found in large cities and small towns but can be scarce in rural villages.

Credit & Debit Cards

While traveling, most countries and major cities will accept credit cards. Even if you don't plan on using a credit card during your trip, we still suggest that you bring one or two as a backup, especially if you are planning a large purchase (artwork, jewelry). We also suggest that you bring more than one brand of card (i.e. Visa, MasterCard, American Express) if possible, because not every shop will take every card. For example, although Discover and American Express cards are accepted in some countries outside the U.S., they are not widely adopted, so other brands will work at a much larger range of stores, restaurants, etc.

If you are visiting a country that does not commonly accept credit cards, they will be listed below.

Chip Cards

Many countries have adopted credit cards that have an embedded computer chip. These cards are inserted into the reader instead of swiped. The card owner then authorizes the purchase using a PIN instead of signing.

Though this technology is common in the U.S., occasionally there are machines in other countries that can't read U.S. cards or the machine can read the card, but asks for a PIN. This doesn't happen often, and is nothing to worry about. You can usually resolve the situation by asking the cashier to let you sign. (If you don't speak the language, just mime signing on your hand.) If you are not able to sign for a purchase, such as at an automated ticket booth, you can use another form of payment, such as a debit card that has a PIN.

Notify Card Providers of Upcoming Travel

Many credit card companies and banks have fraud alert departments that will freeze your card if they see suspicious charges—such as charges or withdrawals from another country. To avoid an accidental security block, it is a good idea to notify your credit card company and/or bank you will be using your cards abroad. You can do this by calling their customer service number a week or two before your departure. Some banks or credit card companies will also let you do this online.

You should also double-check what phone number you could call if you have a problem with a card while you are abroad. Don't assume you can use the 1-800 number printed on the back of your card—most 1 800 numbers don't work outside of the U.S.!

Tipping Guidelines

Of course, whether you tip, and how much, is always at your own discretion. But for those of you who have asked for tipping suggestions, we offer these guidelines:

- **O.A.T. Trip Experience Leader:** It is customary to express a personal “thank you” to your Trip Experience Leader at the end of your trip. As a guideline, many travelers give \$10–\$14 USD (or equivalent in local currency) per person for each day their Trip Experience Leader is with them. *Please note that these tips can only be in cash. If you are taking any of the optional extensions, your Trip Experience Leader during the extension(s) may not be the same as the one on your main trip.*
- **Housekeeping staff at hotels:** \$1–2 per room, per night
- **Waiters:** When dining as a group, your tip is included—there is no need for you to leave an additional tip. When dining on your own, you can simply round up the bill. Or if you want to leave a really nice tip for excellent service 5–10% of the check is suggested.
- **Taxi drivers:** Tipping is not customary, but many locals will round up the fare and let the driver keep the change.

Please Note: Your tour price includes gratuities on the main trip and optional extensions for local guides, drivers, and luggage porters that may assist you during the scheduled activities on your adventure. All tips are quoted in U.S. dollars; tips can be converted and paid in local currency or in U.S. dollars. Please do not use personal or traveler's checks for tips.

AIR, OPTIONAL TOURS & STAYING IN TOUCH

Land Only Travelers & Personalized Air

Quick Definitions

- **Land Only:** You will be booking your own international flights. Airport transfers are not included.
- **Air-Inclusive:** You booked international air with us. Airport transfers are included as long as you didn't customize your trip's dates (see next bullet).
- **Arrive Early or Stopover (select adventures only):** If you chose one of these Personalization options and purchased air through O.A.T, accommodations and airport transfers are included. However, if you chose one of our Personalization options, but did not purchase air through O.A.T., accommodations are included, but airport transfers are not. If you chose one of our Personalization options, and purchase air through O.A.T. but not the accommodations, the airport transfers are not included. We have included transfer options below.
- **Personalization on Your Own:** If you have not purchased air through O.A.T. and decided to arrive early, stay longer, or stop in a connecting city on your own, you are responsible for airport transfers and accommodations. For your convenience, a preliminary list of your included hotels is available on your My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner under "My Reservations" to help you with selecting a hotel for your additional time.

Air Inclusive Travelers

If you have purchased international air with us, there are some points that may be helpful for you to know.

- **U.S. Departure:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who depart the U.S. from your international gateway city, it is our goal to have an O.A.T. Representative assist you at the U.S. airport with the check-in of your flight. Unless there are extenuating circumstances beyond our control, the Representative will be at the check-in counter three hours before your departure time. If you are flying domestically before your international flight, the representative will be stationed at the check-in counter for your departing international flight, not at the domestic arrival gate.
- **U.S. Return:** If you are among a group of ten or more travelers who return to the same U.S. gateway city, an O.A.T. Representative will meet you as you exit Customs and help you find taxis, buses, hotel accommodations, or connecting flights. Again, it is our goal to have our Representative waiting to assist your group. In rare instances, unforeseen circumstances may prevent this service.

- **Flying with a Travel Companion:** If you're traveling with a companion from a different household, and both of you are beginning and ending your trip at the same airport on the same dates, let us know you'd like to travel together and we'll make every effort to arrange this (please note, however, that this is not always possible). If you request any changes to your flights, please be sure that both you and your companion tell us that you still want to fly together.
- **Selecting Your Seats:** If your airline allows pre-assigned seats, you will be able to select and view them directly from the airline's website after booking. Some airlines will not allow seat confirmation until your reservation is ticketed 45–30 days prior to departure, and/or they may charge a nominal fee. You may locate your itinerary on an airline's website utilizing the Record Locator Number found on the Air Itinerary in your My Planner.

Airport Transfers Can Be Purchased

For eligible flights, airport transfers may be purchased separately as an optional add-on, subject to availability. To be eligible, your flight(s) must meet the following requirements:

- You must fly into or fly home from the same airport as O.A.T. travelers who purchased included airfare.
- Your flight(s) must arrive/depart on the same day that the group arrives or departs.
- If you are arriving early, you must have arranged the hotels through our Arrive Early personalization option

Airport transfers can be purchased up to 45 days prior to your departure; they are not available for purchase onsite. To learn more, or purchase airport transfers, please call our Travel Counselors at **1-800-221-0814**.

If you don't meet the requirements above, you'll need to make your own transfer arrangements. We suggest the Rome to Rio website as a handy resource: www.rome2rio.com

Optional Tours

Optional tours are additional add-on tours that allow you to personalize your adventure by tailoring it to your tastes and needs. And if you decide not to join an optional tour? Then you'll have free time to relax or explore on your own—it's about options, not obligations.

What You Need to Know

- All optional tours are subject to change and availability.
- Optional tours that are reserved with your Trip Experience Leader can be paid for using credit/debit cards only. We accept MasterCard, Visa, and Discover credit cards; we can also take MasterCard or Visa debit cards as long as the card allows you to sign for purchases. (You won't be able to enter a PIN.)

- To ensure that you are charged in U.S. dollars, your payment will be processed by our U.S. headquarters in Boston. This process can take up to three months, so we ask that you only use a card that will still be valid three months after your trip is over. The charge may appear on your credit card statement as being from Boston, MA or may be labeled as “OPT Boston”.
- Your Trip Experience Leader will give you details on the optional tours while you’re on the trip. But if you’d like to look over descriptions of them earlier, you can do so at any time by referring to your Day-to-Day Itinerary (available online by signing into My Planner at www.oattravel.com/myplanner).

Communicating with Home from Abroad

To ensure you are available during your trip to friends and relatives at home, you will receive two copies of your hotel list, including phone numbers, with your Final Documents. One copy is for you to bring, and one to leave behind with friends or relatives in case they need to contact you during the trip.

Cell Phones

If you want to use your cell phone on the trip, check with your phone provider to see if your phone and service will work outside of the U.S. It may turn out to be cheaper to rent an international phone or buy a SIM card onsite. If you want to use a local SIM, just make certain your phone can accept one.

Calling Apps

We recommend you use WhatsApp while abroad to communicate home and with your Trip Experience Leader while onsite. You will need a Wi-Fi connection if you do not have international coverage. Other calling options include smartphone apps such as Skype or FaceTime. You will need a Wi-Fi connection for these apps and the calls may count towards your phone plan’s data allowance. Many smartphones—and some tablets or laptops—come with one of these apps pre-installed or you can download them for free from the appropriate apps store.

Calling Cards and 1-800 Numbers

When calling the U.S. from a foreign country, a prepaid calling card can be useful because it circumvents unexpected charges from the hotel. Calling cards purchased locally are typically the best (less expensive, more likely to work with the local phones, etc.).

One reminder: Do not call U.S. 1-800 numbers outside the continental United States. This can result in costly long distance fees, since 1-800 numbers do not work outside the country.

Internet

Most hotels in the Balkans will have Internet services available, some for free, some for an hourly charge. WiFi service is fairly common, but may be limited to a public area, like the lobby. If you'd like to use WiFi when and where it is available, you'll need to bring your own device. Or you could chose to rely on hotel computers instead—many hotels will also offer a limited number of computers in the lobby or business center for guests to use.

How to Call Overseas

When calling overseas from the U.S., dial 011 for international exchange, then the country code (indicated by a plus sign: +), and then the number. Note that foreign phone numbers may not have the same number of digits as U.S. numbers; even within a country the number of digits can vary depending on the city and if the phone is a land line or cell phone.

Croatia: +385

Slovenia: +386

Montenegro: +382

Albania: +355

Bosnia and Herzegovina: +387

PACKING: WHAT TO BRING & LUGGAGE LIMITS

Luggage Limits

MAIN TRIP LIMITS	
Pieces per person	One checked bag and one carry-on per person.
Weight restrictions	Varies by international airline. The current industry standard is 50 lbs for checked luggage and 15 lbs for carry-ons .
Size Restrictions	Standard airline size: checked luggage should not exceed 62 linear inches (length+ width + depth) and carry-on should not exceed 45 linear inches.
Luggage Type	Duffel bag or soft-sided suitcase.
TRIP EXTENSION(S) LIMITS	
Same as the main trip.	
REMARKS/SUGGESTIONS	
<p>Luggage rules: Luggage rules and limits are set by governmental and airline policy. Enforcement of the rules may include spot checks or may be inconsistent. However one thing is the same across the board: If you are found to have oversized or overweight luggage, you will be subject to additional fees, to be assessed by—and paid to—the airline in question.</p>	

Don't Forget:

- **These luggage limits may change.** If the airline(s) notify us of any changes, we will include an update in your Final Documents booklet.
- It's a good idea to reconfirm baggage restrictions and fees directly with the airline a week or so prior to departure. For your convenience, we maintain a list of the toll-free numbers for the most common airlines on our website in the FAQ section.
- **Baggage fees are not included in your trip price;** they are payable directly to the airlines.

Your Luggage

- **Checked Luggage:** One duffel bag or suitcase. Look for one with heavy nylon fabric, wrap-around handles, built-in wheels, and a heavy duty lockable zipper. Please do not bring a rigid (plastic shell) suitcase.

- **Carry-on Bag:** You are allowed one carry-on bag per person. We suggest a tote or small backpack that can be used as both a carry-on bag for your flight and to carry your daily necessities—water bottle, camera, etc—during your daily activities.
- **Locks:** For flights that originate in the U.S., you can either use a TSA-approved lock or leave your luggage unlocked. Outside of the U.S. we strongly recommend locking your luggage as a theft-prevention measure.

Clothing Suggestions: Functional Tips

As you will experience a wide range of temperatures and weather conditions, we suggest several layers of clothing. If you like to hand-wash your clothes, look for fabrics that will dry out overnight. You can buy clothing designed especially for travel, with features like wrinkle-resistant fabric or built-in sun protection.

- **Footwear:** You'll be on your feet a lot during the trip, hiking and walking over some rough and slippery surfaces. The soles of your shoes should offer good traction. Sturdy and comfortable hiking shoes with arch support are suggested.
- **Light rain gear is recommended.** Regardless of when you travel, rainfall is a possibility. While it may not rain on your trip, we suggest you bring a waterproof shell or coat, preferably with a hood. This might be a better choice than a folding umbrella, which is usually less effective in wind. (Plus it can be tricky to try to hold onto an umbrella and take photos at the same time.)
- **Layers are key.** We suggest wearing layers, so you can adjust to warmer and cooler conditions as needed.

Style Hints

- Dress on our trip is functional and casual.
- Comfortable, informal apparel is perfectly acceptable in the countries on this adventure.
- Basic pants, shirts, sportswear, everyday dresses/skirts, supportive shoes, and functional outdoor clothes that are relatively easy to care for are recommended.
- You might want to bring one slightly dressier outfit for dining on your own at nicer restaurants or for the Farewell Dinner, but that is completely up to you.
- Some religious sites, like Orthodox churches and Muslim mosques, strongly prefer that visitors of both genders dress modestly. In this context, “modestly dressed” usually means covered from shoulders to below the knees—no shorts, no sleeveless shirts, and no low or revealing necklines.
- In many Orthodox churches or Muslim mosques, local women will cover their hair with a scarf; as a visitor you are usually not required to do the same, but doing so would be a nice way to show respect.

Suggested Packing Lists

We have included suggestions from Trip Experience Leaders and former travelers to help you pack. These packing lists are only jumping-off points—they offer recommendations based on experience, but not requirements. We recommend using www.weather.com and consulting the “Climate” chapter of this handbook.

And don’t forget a reusable water bottle—you’ll need it to take advantage of any refills we offer as we are working to eliminate single-use plastic bottles on all of our trips.

Recommended Clothing

- ☐ Shirts: A mixture of short and long-sleeved shirts in a breathable fabric, like cotton or cotton-blend. Polo shirts are more versatile than T-shirts.
- ☐ Trousers and/or jeans.
- ☐ Shoes and socks: Shoes should be comfortable walking/ running shoes or low-cut hiking shoes, with arch support. Bring at least a couple pairs of medium- to heavy-weight socks for hiking.
- ☐ Underwear and sleepwear
- ☐ Light rain jacket/windbreaker with hood
- ☐ Wide-brim sun hat
- ☐ Swimsuit for hotel pools or saunas

Seasonal Clothing Recommendations

For summer departures (late May–September):

- ☐ Although high temperatures tend to be in the 80s, temperatures can easily spike into the 90s or higher in this region, especially in Croatia. A few shorts and some lightweight tops will help you cope with an unexpected heat wave.
- ☐ Despite the potential for higher temperatures, you’ll also want at least one piece to layer—a light sweater, a vest, or jacket—in case it gets cool at night or in case you are somewhere where the air conditioning is chilly.

For spring and fall departures (April–early May):

- ☐ Light sweater and/or a warm jacket, gloves, and a scarf

For winter departures (November–March):

- ☐ Winter coat, hat, warm gloves, scarf, and long underwear

Essential Items

- ☐ Daily essentials: toothbrush, toothpaste, floss, hairbrush or comb, shaving items, deodorant, etc. Our hotels will provide the basics like soap and shampoo, but if you are sensitive to fragrances or new products, you may wish to bring your preferred brands. Most hotels do not provide a washcloth, so you may wish to pack one.
- ☐ Spare eyeglasses/contact lenses/ Sunglasses, 100% UV block
- ☐ Sunscreen, SPF 15 or stronger
- ☐ Cold-water hand-wash laundry soap such as Woolite and plastic hang-up clothespins
- ☐ Light folding umbrella
- ☐ Moisturizer and sun-blocking lip balm
- ☐ Packets of pocket-size tissues or small roll of toilet paper
- ☐ Moist towelettes and/or anti-bacterial “water-free” hand cleanser
- ☐ Electrical converter & plug adapters
- ☐ Camera gear with extra batteries or battery charger
- ☐ Folding walking staff or trekking pole (if needed)

Medicines & First Aid Gear

- ☐ Your own prescription medicines
- ☐ Travel first aid kit: Band-Aids, headache and pain relief, laxatives and anti-diarrhea tablets, something for upset stomach. Maybe a cold remedy, moleskin foot pads, antibiotic cream, or allergy medication.
- ☐ An antibiotic medication for gastrointestinal illness
- ☐ Optional: A strong prescription pain medication for rare emergency purposes

Home-Hosted Visits

Many of our adventures feature a visit with a local family. It is customary, though not necessary, to return your hosts' generosity with a small gift. If you do bring a gift, we recommend that you bring something the whole family can enjoy, or something that represents your region, state, or hometown. Get creative and keep it small—peach jelly from Georgia, maple sugar candy from New England, orange blossom soap from California; something that can be used or used up is best. When choosing a gift, be certain to consider the local culture as well. For example, we do

not recommend alcohol in Muslim countries because it is forbidden in Islam, and your hosts may be religious. Your Trip Experience Leaders can provide you with recommendations. Not all O.A.T. adventures include a Home-Hosted Visit; please check your final itinerary before you depart.

Electricity Abroad

When traveling overseas, the voltage is usually different and the plugs might not be the same shape.

Voltage

Electricity in this region is 220–240 volts. In the U.S. it is 110 volts. Most of the things a traveler will want to plug in—battery chargers, smartphones, tablets or computers—can run off both 110 and 220–240. But you should check the item or the owner’s guide first to confirm this before you plug it in. If you have something that needs 110 volts—like a shaver or a hairdryer—you can bring a transformer to change the current. (But transformers tend to burn out, so it might be better to leave whatever it is at home.)

Plugs

The shape of plugs will vary from country to country, and sometimes even within a country depending on when that building was built. To plug something from the U.S. into a local socket you’ll need an adapter that fits between the plug and the socket. Because there are multiple plug types in this region, it may be easier to purchase an all-in-one, universal adapter/converter combo. Versatile and lightweight, these can usually be found at your local electronics goods or hardware stores. Sometimes you can buy them at large retailers too, like Target or Walmart. If you forget to bring an adapter, you might also find them for sale at the airport when you arrive at your destination.

Different plug shapes are named by letters of the alphabet. Standard U.S. plugs are Type A and Type B. Here is the list of plugs for the countries on this trip:

Note that a Type C adapter will fit both a C and an F plug.

Croatia: C and/or F

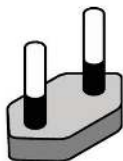
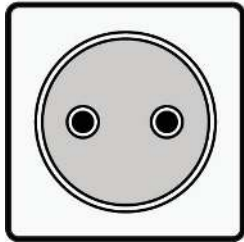
Montenegro: C and/or F

Bosnia and Herzegovina: C and/or F

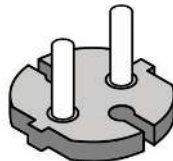
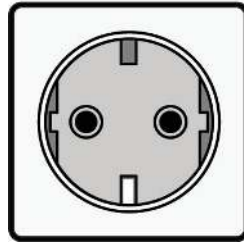
Slovenia: C and/or F

Albania: C and/or F

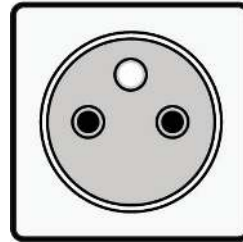
Type C



Type F



Type E



Availability

Barring the occasional and unpredictable power outage, electricity is as readily available on this adventure as it is in the U.S.

CLIMATE & AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

Dubrovnik, Croatia: Located in the southern region of Croatia's Adriatic coast, where lush vegetation slopes down to the clear turquoise of the Adriatic Sea, Dubrovnik boasts a pleasant Mediterranean climate characterized by wet winters and hot, dry summers. A winter wind, the bura, is the strongest wind along the Adriatic coast. In Croatia, temperatures can hit peaks as high as 100 from June to October with July and August being the hottest months. Water temperatures are warm enough for swimming June–September, but are too cold the rest of the year.

Sarajevo, Bosnia–Herzegovina: Sarajevo has a continental climate, lying between the climate zones of central Europe to the North and the Mediterranean to the South. Sarajevo experiences warm summers, with temperatures of 95°F not being uncommon, and cold winters, when snow is guaranteed due to the city's high altitude. The average year-round temperature is 45 °F. Sarajevo receives about 36 inches of precipitation a year. The rainiest month is October when the city receives 3.5 inches of rainfall. The driest is February when the city gets only 2.4 inches of precipitation.

Zagreb, Croatia: Because it is located further north and inland, Zagreb has a continental climate. Winters can be cold, sometimes snowy, autumn can be rainy and changeable, and spring can be very unpredictable. In late fall, winter, and early spring, it will get noticeably cooler in Zagreb than it does along the Adriatic seacoast.

Ljubljana, Slovenia: Ljubljana, capital of Slovenia, is situated between the Alps and the Adriatic Sea; both the warmth of the sea and the cool air of the mountains influence its climate. Although coastal regions of the country have a Mediterranean climate with hot summers and mild winters, Ljubljana's weather reflects a continental climate. The city's summer days from June to September are moderately warm and dry, with comfortably cool evenings, while autumn brings mornings of sunshine occasionally interspersed with some showers or haze. Winter months, beginning in January, can be quite cold with temperatures dropping below freezing, while the warmth of spring brings refreshing breezes. This continental climate is changeable, and a day with some passing showers is to be expected during any two-week interval.

Albania: Albania's location in a transition zone means its climate is a cross between the typical warm Mediterranean climate and a cooler continental climate. Rainy winters and dry, hot summers are typical of the coastal plain. Away from the coast, summer rainfall is more frequent and the winters are colder, especially in the mountainous areas. In Tirana, summers are hot and humid while the winters tend to be mild.

Heat Waves in July & August

This region (particularly Croatia) may experience unpredictable heat waves in July and August, bringing extreme temperatures that have been known to reach 100°F.

Please keep in mind that extreme heat may exacerbate existing medical conditions. If you have a known health issue that may be made worse by the heat, we recommend that you travel during a different time of year when temperatures are milder.

Climate Averages & Online Forecast

The following charts reflect the **average** climate as opposed to exact weather conditions. This means they serve only as general indicators of what can reasonably be expected. An extreme heat wave or cold snap could fall outside these ranges. As your departure approaches, we encourage you to use **www.weather.com** for a more accurate forecast of the locations you visit.

Average Daily High/Low Temperatures (°F), Humidity & Monthly Rainfall

MONTH	DUBROVNIK, CROATIA			SARAJEVO, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Average # of Days with Rainfall	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	52 to 41	66 to 62	14	36 to 23	92 to 79	0.8
FEB	53 to 41	66 to 62	13	42 to 26	91 to 68	0.8
MAR	57 to 45	68 to 60	14	52 to 33	90 to 55	1.2
APR	62 to 50	66 to 58	14	58 to 39	88 to 54	1.2
MAY	70 to 57	66 to 58	12	68 to 47	88 to 53	0.8
JUN	77 to 64	60 to 55	9	73 to 53	88 to 54	0.8
JUL	82 to 69	52 to 49	6	78 to 56	89 to 50	0.8
AUG	82 to 69	55 to 51	6	78 to 55	91 to 52	0.8
SEP	76 to 64	62 to 56	8	72 to 49	94 to 54	0.8
OCT	69 to 56	69 to 62	12	61 to 42	94 to 62	1.2
NOV	59 to 48	70 to 64	14	46 to 33	93 to 76	1.2
DEC	54 to 43	68 to 65	14	37 to 26	92 to 83	1.2

MONTH	ZAGREB, CROATIA			LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	37 to 27	--	2.0	36 to 23	91 to 77	1.6
FEB	46 to 30	--	1.9	40 to 25	90 to 65	1.6
MAR	56 to 36	--	2.2	50 to 31	91 to 57	1.6
APR	58 to 39	--	2.7	57 to 37	88 to 52	2.0
MAY	67 to 50	--	3.2	67 to 45	86 to 52	2.0
JUN	73 to 56	--	3.7	73 to 52	87 to 55	2.0
JUL	81 to 60	--	3.1	77 to 55	87 to 53	2.0
AUG	81 to 59	--	3.1	77 to 55	90 to 53	2.0
SEP	71 to 51	--	3.1	69 to 49	95 to 60	2.4
OCT	59 to 44	--	3.7	58 to 41	95 to 68	2.8
NOV	46 to 35	--	3.4	44 to 31	93 to 78	2.8
DEC	39 to 30	--	2.6	37 to 26	92 to 84	2.0

MONTH	TIRANA, ALBANIA		
	Temp. High-Low	% Relative Humidity (am-pm)	Monthly Rainfall (inches)
JAN	53 to 36	--	5.1
FEB	55 to 37	--	5.8
MAR	57 to 38	--	4.2
APR	65 to 46	--	5.8
MAY	73 to 54	--	5.7
JUN	82 to 60	--	3.1
JUL	88 to 63	--	1.5
AUG	90 to 63	--	0.5
SEP	82 to 57	--	1.6
OCT	73 to 50	--	4.9
NOV	62 to 46	--	6.0
DEC	56 to 38	--	5.3

ABOUT YOUR DESTINATIONS: CULTURE, ETIQUETTE & MORE

O.A.T. Trip Experience Leaders: A World of Difference

During your adventure, you'll be accompanied by one of our local, Trip Experience Leaders. All are fluent in English and possess the skills, certification, and experience necessary to ensure an enriching adventure. As locals of the regions you'll explore with them, our Trip Experience Leaders provide the kind of firsthand knowledge and insight that make local history, culture, and wildlife come alive. Coupled with their unbridled enthusiasm, caring personalities, and ability to bring diverse groups of travelers together, our Trip Experience Leaders ensure that your experience with O.A.T. is one you'll remember for a lifetime.

South Slavic Culture

The term "Balkan" has been used to refer to this region, but the Balkan Mountains are contained almost entirely within Bulgaria; and technically, the "Balkan Peninsula" is not even a true peninsula. More important, since the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the term "Balkanization" has had negative connotations that the people of these new, vibrant nations are eager to overcome. So today, they prefer to define this area as "Southeastern Europe."

The people of Southeastern Europe are mostly South Slavs, who are all descended from the same ancestors and speak closely related languages. (Albanians comprise a separate ethnic group descended from Indo-European tribes.) South Slavic people identify with sub-ethnic groups such as Serbs, Croats, or Bosniaks, but their presence is not necessarily confined to specific countries, as they have historically migrated and intermingled. Remember, the states of Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Slovenia are fairly recent, but the cultural pluralism within them is not.

The region has been a crossroads of cultures for millennia, a place where peoples of Slavic, Latin, Finno-Ugric, Greek and Turkish origin have settled. Where Roman, Byzantine, Ottoman, Habsburg, and Soviet empires have left their imprint. And where Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, Islam, and (up until the post World War II period) Judaism all meet.

With all that diversity, you will find that there are many words common across the spoken languages, similar culinary traditions, shared folk beliefs and mutual artistic, musical, literary and artisanal styles. Most important, across all South Slavic groups, family is of the utmost importance, and that includes extended family. Three-generation households are common, and even when people move away (usually, for economic reasons), they retain close ties to their hometowns. It is all bound up in the concept of *narod*, which roughly means "nation" or "folk" and has mythic and romantic overtones.

South Slavic people are known to be down-to-earth, and the rhythm of daily life here is easygoing. They are passionate about sports—the most popular being soccer, followed by basketball. You'll notice that the people are very social and love to gather for long visits in cafes and village squares. There's an especially vibrant coffee culture throughout the region, a holdover from centuries of Ottoman rule. South Slavs stand close to each other and can be loud

and expressive when they talk. But with strangers, they tend to be more formal. At the same time, hospitality is a point of family honor, and people will go out of their way to make you feel welcome.

Religion and Religious Observances

It is virtually impossible to separate the role of religion from the historic, political and cultural development of all the countries visited on this adventure. This goes back to the 4th century AD, when the Roman Empire was split along religious lines between the Western (Roman Catholic) and Eastern (Orthodox) churches. That line fell directly down the middle of southeastern Europe, roughly along today's Bosnia-Serbia border. Then, in the 14th century, the Ottoman Turks invaded and settled in for five centuries, during which time Islam was widely embraced.

During the Communist era, the Yugoslav government was quite effective at secularizing the country and suppressing all religions. That completely changed with the fall of the former Yugoslav nation, and today, the vast majority of people in Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Slovenia declare themselves to be religiously observant.

Religion here is not just a matter of faith, it's the single most important differentiator among the various ethnic groups. Croats and Slovenes are mainly Roman Catholic. (Slovenia also has a small Lutheran community.) Orthodox Christian Serbs live in Serbia, but also have significant minorities throughout southeastern Europe. Montenegro has no single ethnic majority, but most of its people are Orthodox Christians (about 72%), with the rest being mostly Muslim.

Muslim Bosniaks descend from people who converted to Islam under the Ottomans. They represent nearly 50% of the population in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which also has large Serbian and Croat minorities. The style of Islam practiced in Bosnia is more liberal and western-oriented than what is prevalent in the Middle East, and Bosniak Muslims have historically been very tolerant of other faiths. Inter-marriage between Muslims and Christians has been common here for centuries.

Historically, there were Jewish communities throughout Southeastern Europe, mainly descended from Sephardic Jews who'd been expelled from Iberia in 1492, and resettled here. Under Ottoman rule, the Jews were granted some protections. But in the 19th century, when independent Slavic states arose, things became more restrictive. With World War II, most of the Jews residing in what was then Yugoslavia were deported to concentration camps and murdered. Only in Montenegro was the story different, for here, the occupying Italians made efforts to protect them, and some 5,000 Jews were saved. Today, the Jewish community here is very small.

Christmas and Easter are the most important religious holidays. All Saint's Day (November 1) is when families gather at cemeteries with flowers and candles to honor departed ancestors, then return home to visit other relatives and enjoy a family feast. Members of the Serbian Orthodox church practice a very solemn and sacred tradition called *Slava*. It is the celebration of a family's patron saint on his or her saint's day, and it represents the family's affirmation of Christianity, the Orthodox Church, and by extension, the Serbian national identity. It includes several rituals and folk practices, and always ends with a lavish banquet.

Visiting Places of Worship

Many churches run special services that you are welcome to attend. Otherwise, you are welcome to visit outside of services. Most churches have a dress code, but it is loosely enforced. Out of respect, you should try to cover your shoulders and wear long pants or shorts or skirts that reach the knee. If you'll be traveling during warm weather and want to go sleeveless or wear a tank top, then we suggest that you throw a light sweater or cover-up into your daypack. A pashmina-type shawl is ideal for covering shoulders or low-cut blouses, or even wrapping around the waist as a sarong.

In Bosnia, non-Muslims are usually welcome to visit mosques outside of prayer time. The same dress guidelines apply. You may be required to remove your shoes.

Language

When all these countries were part of Yugoslavia, the official language was Serbo-Croatian, which is still widely spoken and understood. But since the 1990s, most countries have re-asserted their original national tongues. Croatian, Serbian, Slovenian, Montenegrin and Bosnian are all very similar in both spoken and written forms. Some linguists have described their differences as being similar to the differences between American, British and Australian English.

Most people here are multilingual, and English is widely spoken, especially among young people. In a pinch, you can always converse using gestures and body language. To break the ice, bring along some family photographs, or a few postcards of your hometown. But please do learn a few phrases in the local language. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated, even if your pronunciation is off.

Smoking

Please note that in Croatia, smoking is permitted in most public places, including bars and nightclubs but not indoors in restaurants. In Bosnia & Herzegovina, smoking is allowed in public spaces, including restaurants and bars. In Montenegro, smoking is banned in all indoor public places. Slovenia permits public smoking only in designated smoking rooms.

Taking Photographs

The etiquette of photographing people in most countries is about the same as it would be on the streets of your hometown. You need permission to take a close-up, but not for a crowd scene. Be especially polite if you want to photograph children or older women. If you want to shoot a great portrait, show interest in your subject and try to have a bit of social interaction first. Then use sign language to inquire if a picture is OK.

Please do not take photographs of military personnel, military compounds, or other official institutions/personnel (such as police). This may result in the confiscation of your camera.

In museums or at archaeological sites, there may be restrictions on using your flash. Please obey any signs or directions by staff; the no-flash rule protects the fragile artifacts and artwork from damage by repeated exposure to light. Occasionally, there may also be a small fee levied by the museum or site for the privilege of taking photos.

Safety & Security

As you travel, exercise the same caution and awareness that you would in a large American city. Don't be overly nervous or suspicious, but keep your eyes open. If you are venturing out after dark, go with one or two other people.

Carry a one-day supply of cash, and your passport, in a travel pouch. Don't leave valuables unattended in your hotel room. Most hotels will offer use of a hotel safe at the front desk or an electronic in-room safe (for which you can set your own personal number). Please utilize this.

Pickpockets may create a sudden distraction. In any sort of puzzling street situation, try to keep one hand on your wallet or money belt. If an encounter with a local turns out to be long and complicated and involves money or your valuables, be very careful.

Croatian Cuisine

Are Croatia's **Ston oysters** the best in the world? You can decide when you are exploring the Dalmatian coast, which is also famous for mussels, prawns, and all manner of fish and shellfish. The Zinfandel grape originated here, so you may want to try a local wine made from it. Croatia also has a stronger alcoholic beverage, **rakija**, in several differently flavored or spiced varieties, such as **travarica**, which has added herbs is one regional specialty. Pair it with some well known dishes like:

- **Crni rizot:** A black risotto made with squid.
- **Brudet:** A flavorful fish and tomato stew.
- **Pasticada:** A dish loved by carnivores, is this stuffed beef cooked in wine.
- **Rozata:** This sweet caramel cream is a Dubrovnik specialty.
- **Gregada:** A fish stew often made with fresh scorpion fish or grouper chopped into large chunks with sliced potatoes and lashings of olive oil.
- **Štrukli:** Delicious pillows of dough filled with cottage cheese and slathered in cream that are enjoyed as a dessert or a mid-morning snack.
- **Burek:** Flaky pastries layered with cheese, spinach, apple or meat that are enjoyed any time of day.

Montenegrin Cuisine

Here you will find delicious Adriatic dishes. You might try the salted sheep's cheese that is arranged around a platter of veggies. While you are waiting for your food you can order a **jardum**, a drink made with only sheep milk and salt. Some other popular dishes include:

- **Buzara:** Shrimp, prawns and other shellfish simmered in red or white wine and herbs.
- **Sarma:** Cabbage leaves stuffed with ground meat served with fresh-caught octopus, grilled and drizzled with olive oil.
- **Njeguski Steak:** A veal or pork schnitzel filled with prosciutto and smothered with melted kajmak cheese.

Bosnian and Herzegovinian Cuisine

With strong Ottoman influences, Bosnian food emphasizes halal beef and lamb, fresh vegetables, and hearty soups.

- **Cevap:** Oblong-shaped kebabs served in somun bread with raw onions.
- **Sogan dolma:** Instead of the traditional grape leaf wrapping, this dish uses an onion, then stuffs it with rice or meat and dresses it with a lemony sauce.
- **Begova corba** (Bey's soup): A slow-cooked chicken and vegetable stew thickened with egg yolks and sour cream.
- **Klepe:** The Bosnian version of minced meat dumplings, similar in size and shape to ravioli, but served with a yogurt or garlic sauce.
- **Bosanski lonac:** A stew/casserole that is cooked in alternating layers of meat, vegetables, and meat again.
- **Tufahija:** A sugar-glazed poached apple with walnuts and whipped cream, and a Greek-style coffee.

Slovenian Cuisine

Slovenia may only be the size of Massachusetts, but it still boasts 24 distinct gastronomic regions, and many dishes with EU protected status. Here are some dishes to try:

- **Idrijski zlikrofi:** Heavenly pasta pockets filled with potato, bacon and herbs.
- **Kremšnita:** This Bled Cream Cake is a confection of flaky crust, vanilla custard, icing sugar and whipped cream.
- **Kraški pršut:** (prosciutto from the karst lands) and Istrian olive oil give their Italian cousins a run for the money.
- **Štruklji:** Slovenia's version of strudel, filled with either savory or sweet ingredients like cheese, walnuts, apples and poppy seeds. In spring and summer, try it with fresh tarragon.

Albanian Cuisine

In the last 30 years due to massive immigration to Italy, Albanian cuisine has been also heavily influenced by Italian cuisine. The Italian restaurants in the bigger towns are easily noticeable and very good. Albanian food has many Greek and Turkish influences, so you'll see familiar dishes like spinach in filo pastry (**byrek**), sweet **baklava**, and grilled **qofte** meatballs. But it differs in its use of dairy, creating unique dishes like these:

- **Darilike tave kosi:** A popular quiche-like dish.
- **Perime ne zgate:** This vegetarian dish is a mix of grilled eggplant, zucchini, onions, and peppers.
- **Specia me gjize:** Another vegetarian dish that is made with peppers stuffed with rice, cottage cheese, and spices.
- **Tarator:** A cold soup of cucumber, garlic, walnut, fennel, vinegar, and spices. This soup is perfect for a hot day.
- **Kackavall:** Fried local cheese.

Shopping: What to Buy, Customs, Shipping & More

There may be scheduled visits to local shops during your adventure. There is no requirement to make a purchase during these stops, and any purchase made is a direct transaction with the shop in question, subject to the vendor's terms of purchase. O.A.T. is not responsible for purchases you make on your trip or for the shipment of your purchases.

Returns

If you discover an issue with an item, you should contact the vendor directly and expect that any resolution will take longer than it would in the U.S. We recommend that you keep a copy of all your receipts, invoices, or contracts, along with the shop's contact information. Keep in mind, local practice may vary from U.S. standards, so don't assume that you have a certain number of days after the purchase to speak up or that you are guaranteed a refund.

Crafts & Souvenirs

Croatia

Typical Croatian souvenirs include gingerbread hearts (*licitar*), lavender oil, olive oil, and red coral jewelry (note that red coral is illegal import into the U.S. but allowed if in jewelry). Dry skin? Locals swear by the lanolin-based *Zagrebacki melem* ointment. Remember that the cravat was invented here, so be on the lookout for unusual and beautifully made neckties.

Montenegro

Popular Montenegrin souvenirs include homemade rakija (a brandy-esque drink produced in the Balkans), grape vinegar, peasant cheese, Yugoslav memorabilia, njeguški pršut (Montenegrin prosciutto), cat-centric souvenirs in Kotor, kapa (traditional men's cap), vranac wine, and brojanica (an Christian Orthodox prayer rope).

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia, you will find quality leatherware, shoes, woolens, brass coffee pots and lots of folk art. While in Sarajevo's old Bascarsija section, look for zvekir. These traditional brass and silver door knockers are a symbol of the city, and are meant to signify Bosnian hospitality.

Slovenia

Handicraft shops in Slovenia feature locally made ceramics, woolens, wood carvings, embroidery, tapestries, filigree jewelry, pumpkin seed oil, hand-painted beehive panels, honey brandy and handmade carpets. The fashion brands Sens and Akultura are popular, and for something more traditional, consider Idrija lace and Rogaska crystal.

Albania

When visiting Albania, souvenirs you will want to keep an eye out for are homemade ceramics with traditional Albanian patterns, çifteli (a traditional guitar-like instrument), olive oil, a qilim (a handwoven rug), pupa (hand-knitted fabric slippers), bunker-shaped ashtrays, skënderbeu cognac, and handmade jewelry. A lot of hand stitching and lace work from women are available in Korca, Berat, Kruja. Another souvenir to consider is Gliko, a type of sweet fruit preserve from Permet that is very unique.

U.S. Customs Regulations & Shipping Charges

For all things related to U.S. Customs, the ultimate authority is the U.S. Bureau of Customs & Border Protection. Their website, www.cbp.gov has the answers to the most frequently asked questions. Or you can call them at **1-877-227-5511**.

The top three points to know are:

- At time of writing, your personal duty-free allowance is \$800 for items brought with you. Items totaling more than \$800 are subject to duty fees.
- **Items shipped home are always subject to duty when received in the U.S.** Even when the shop has offered to include shipping and duties in the price, this typically means shipping to the nearest customs facility and payment of the export duties—not door-to-door shipping or payment of the import duties. All additional duties or shipping charges would be your responsibility. Unless an item is small enough to send by parcel service (like FedEx), chances are you will need to arrange shipping or pick-up once the item is in the U.S. and will need to pay customs duties.

- It is illegal to import products made from endangered animal species. U.S. Customs & Border Protection will seize these items, as well as most furs, coral, tortoise shell, reptile skins, feathers, plants, and items made from animal skins.

DEMOGRAPHICS & HISTORY

Croatia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 21,851 square miles
- **Capital:** Zagreb
- **Government:** Presidential/parliamentary democracy
- **Language:** Croatian (Hrvatski), with Italian, German, and English also spoken by some.
- **Location:** Croatia is situated between the Pannonian Plain and the Adriatic Sea in southeastern Europe. Irregularities of its Adriatic coastline have created over 1,000 islands. The region in the north of Croatia is a highland area with a mountainous climate.
- **Geography:** Croatia is located in Southeastern Europe, bordering the Adriatic Sea, between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. The terrain of Croatia is geographically diverse; flat plains along Hungarian border, low mountains and highlands near Adriatic coast, coastline, and islands.
- **Population:** 3,878,981 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Roman Catholic 79%, Orthodox 3.3%, other Christian 4.5%, Muslim 1.3%, other 1.8%, unspecified 3.8%, none 6.3%
- **Time Zone:** Croatia is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.

National Holidays: Croatia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Croatia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Corpus Christi. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Epiphany

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/30 Statehood Day

08/05 Homeland Thanksgiving Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/08 Independence Day

11/01 All Saints' Day

11/18 Remembrance Day

12/25 Christmas

12/26 St Stephen's Day

Croatia: A Brief History

Though Croatia defines itself along ethno-nationalist lines, the first Croat tribes did not arrive here until the 6th century. Little is known about them, but they were likely Slavic people from the marshlands of Ukraine who migrated to the Pannonian plains and Dalmatian coast.

The Croats came after the Illyrians, Greeks, Celts and Romans, who arrived in 11 BC and ruled for 500 years, expanding their colony from the Adriatic to the Danube. In the decades after the Western Roman Empire fell in 476 AD, the Croats began to move in, banding with other groups in a series of shifting allegiances, and organizing around powerful clans. When Charlemagne came in 800 AD, he Christianized the Dalmatian Croats. Though the Byzantine Empire held political power, the Christian Croats still looked to Rome for cultural and spiritual leadership—a connection that endures today, with most Croats identifying as devout Roman Catholics.

In 925 AD, Tomislav united the Dalmatian and Pannonian Croats, establishing a unified kingdom that included modern-day Croatia, Bosnia and Montenegro. Venice invaded Dalmatia, but the Croat kingdom lasted until 1102, when it merged with the kingdom of Hungary. By the mid-1400s, under widespread Ottoman occupation, the Croatian Assembly invited the Hapsburgs to assume control. The Hapsburgs ousted the Turks by the 18th century. But the dream of an independent Croatia reawakened during the mid 1800s, as Europe was swept by a wave of romantic nationalism. This brought a flowering of Croatian language and art.

Following World War I and the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in 1918 the Kingdom of Serbia and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes united as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The Axis takeover of Yugoslavia during World War II gave power to Croatia's far-right Ustase party, which built eight concentration camps to exterminate hundreds of thousands of Jews, Roma, and Serbs. Antifascist resisters rose up, but many, the Serbian Chetniks among them, enacted massacres against the Croats, exacerbating political and ethnic tensions.

The most effective partisans were led by the communist Josip Broz (aka “Tito”), who forced the Nazi retreat and became the architect of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, established in 1944. Though initially aligned with Moscow, Tito openly critiqued Stalin and continually asserted Yugoslavia’s independence. In 1961, he founded the Non-Aligned Movement, positioning its members as serious bargaining partners between the Soviet and western blocs.

Tito was determined to create a state in which no ethnic group dominated, and where church and state were separated. It was a fragile balance he maintained through a one-party system that suppressed all opposition. When he died in 1980, old tensions among the six Yugoslav republics resumed. In 1989, with the fall of communism, Yugoslavia fell apart. In 1990, Croatian nationalist Franjo Tudjman was elected President, and a year later, Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia. Conflicts between Serbs and Croats escalated, and within a month, war broke out.

The United Nations mediated a cease-fire in 1992, but hostilities resumed the next year when Croatia tried to regain lost territories. Multiple offensives and cease-fires ensued until 1995, when Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian governments signed the Dayton Peace Agreement, committing to a permanent cease-fire, regional cooperation and further democratization. When President Tudjman died in 1999, the subsequent coalition government brought major changes. Since then, Serbs and Croats have maintained a stable, albeit wary peace. Croatia joined NATO in 2009, and since joining the EU in 2014, its economy, powered by tourism, has grown.

Montenegro

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 5,332 square miles
- **Capital:** Podgorica
- **Population:** 621,873 (estimate)
- **Languages:** Serbian 63.6%, Montenegrin (official) 22%, Bosnian 5.5%, Albanian 5.3%, unspecified 3.7%
- **Geography:** Montenegro is in Southeastern Europe, between the Adriatic Sea and Serbia. The country is only 13,812 sq km, which means it is roughly the same size as Connecticut, yet it borders on five countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, and Serbia. The country is mostly rugged high limestone mountains and plateaus that dip down to coastal plains.
- **Religions:** Orthodox 74.2%, Muslim 17.7%, Catholic 3.5%, other 0.6%, unspecified 4%
- **Time Zone:** Montenegro is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of Eastern Time. Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Montenegro

In addition to the holidays listed below, Montenegro celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Orthodox Easter. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/06 Orthodox Christmas Eve

01/07 Orthodox Christmas

01/08 Orthodox Christmas (Day 2)

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

05/02 Labor Day/May Day (Day 2)

05/21 Independence Day

05/22 Independence Day (Day 2)

07/13 Statehood Day

07/14 Statehood Day (Day 2)

Montenegro: A Brief History

Montenegro is only the size of Connecticut, but its status has changed seven times since World War II. This is nothing new, as Montenegro's entire history has been one of dynastic struggle, conquest, and shifting alliances—shot through with a continual quest for independence.

While Montenegro's history is intimately bound with that of its neighbors, there are many unique factors. The first people to settle here in the Bronze Age were Illyrians. Not much is known about them, but they were warlike seafarers who settled the southeastern Adriatic coast. Though Greeks and Celts had settlements here during the 6th and 7th centuries BC, in the 3rd century BC much of Montenegro was part of an indigenous, Illyrian kingdom.

When the Romans arrived in Dalmatia in 168 BC, they mounted expeditions against Illyrian pirates, annexed their lands, and incorporated Montenegro into their larger Illyrium province. But Montenegro was considered a backwater. Rugged and largely inaccessible, devoid of known riches or mineral wealth, it became a haven for various clans who had resisted Romanization.

Once the Slavs arrived in the 7th century, their rival chieftains engaged in shifting alliances, often with outside states like Bulgaria, Venice and Byzantium. The clans who settled around the former Roman hub of Doclea in Montenegro were Serbs, and their realm was called Duklja. Between 931 and 960, the chieftain Cerslav further unified a number of Serb tribes, operating from Zeta near the Gulf of Kotor. The rest of Montenegro's medieval history involved a succession of kingdoms that eventually became the Serbian principality of Zeta in the 14th century. By the late 15th century, Zeta was known as Montenegro, meaning "black mountain"—a reference to Mount Lovćen, the geographic and spiritual heart of the country.

Though Montenegro fell under Ottoman rule from the 14th to the 19th century, it managed to elude tight Ottoman control thanks to the resistance of its people, its rugged terrain, shrewd diplomacy, and the protection afforded to its prince-bishops by the Eastern Orthodox church. The country became an independent constitutional monarchy in 1852. During World War I, Montenegro fought with the Allies but was defeated by Austro-German forces. When King Nicholas fled, the country was annexed to Serbia, which in turn became part of the unified Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918. In 1929, it was renamed Yugoslavia.

Montenegro's World War II history was quite different than its neighbors'. As Axis powers took over Yugoslavia, Italians occupied Montenegro in April, 1941. Three months later, Montenegrin communist partisans fomented Europe's first armed uprising against the Nazis. Some 32,000 Montenegrins succeeded in ousting the Italians. But by August, bolstered by 67,000 Italian troops redeployed from Albania, the Fascists returned. Still, Montenegrin partisans continued their resistance, despite internal schisms between the communist flank and the royalist Chetniks, who eventually collaborated with the Italians. Montenegro was finally liberated in 1944, when it became part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under Josip Broz Tito.

When the Yugoslav republic fell, Montenegro remained part of Serbia, and joined it in attacks against Dubrovnik in the 1991–1995 Bosnian and Croatian war. But in 1996, the new president Milo Dukanovic severed ties with Serbia, and the path to full independence was laid. In 2006, a referendum was narrowly passed declaring Montenegro a fully sovereign state. It became part of NATO in 2017, and aspires to full integration into the European Union by 2025.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 19,767 square miles
- **Capital:** Sarajevo
- **Language:** Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian
- **Geography:** Bosnia (as the country is commonly known) is located in the western Balkans, bordering Croatia to the north and southwest, and Serbia and Montenegro to the east. The country is mostly mountainous, encompassing the central Dinaric Alps. The northeastern parts reach into the Pannonian basin, while in the south it almost borders the Adriatic. The country has only 12 miles of coastline, around the town of Neum in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton, although it's enclosed within Croatian territory.
- **Population:** 3,867,055 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Muslim 40%, Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholic 15%, other 14%
- **Time Zone:** Bosnia-Herzegovina is on Central European Time, which is six hours ahead of U.S. EST: when it's noon in New York, it's 6 pm in Sarajevo. Daylight Saving Time is in effect from the last Sunday of March until the last Sunday of October.

National Holidays: Bosnia and Herzegovina

In addition to the holidays listed below, Bosnia and Herzegovina celebrates a number of optional holidays, such as Orthodox Christmas, Orthodox Easter, and Ramadan. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 New Year's Day (observed)

03/01 Independence Day

05/01 Labor Day

05/02 Labor Day (Day 2)

05/09 Victory Day

11/25 Statehood Day

Bosnia & Herzegovina: A Brief History

Mention Bosnia and Herzegovina, and most Americans will think of the land where some of the most horrific ethnic violence played out during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. It's an image that is hard to shake, even as you discover the nation's fairytale stone villages, idyllic valleys and ancient towns. Walk among the labyrinthine lanes of Sarajevo's old Bascarsija, the 16th-century Ottoman bazaar, and you may see "Sarajevo roses," petal-shaped craters left from mortar shelling. They've been filled with red resin as reminders of the suffering that once was.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is the most ethnically diverse of the former Yugoslav nations, with about 50% of the people identifying as Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), 31% as Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox), and 16% as Croats (Roman Catholic). The nation is surrounded by Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro. But the cultural fault lines were laid long before those nations arose.

In the first century AD, the Romans conquered Illyrian Bosnia, and Christianity soon followed. By the 4th century, the region was aligned with Western Roman Empire, but that affiliation weakened when Goths overran the area. Under the Emperor Justinian, the region was reclaimed by the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire, and neither the resident Slavic Croats nor the Slavic Serbs had a lock on power. Eventually, Bela II of Hungary invaded and created the so-called "Banate of Bosnia." Bosnia became virtually autonomous, and was declared a kingdom in 1377.

The Ottomans invaded in 1463. They introduced political, social and civic changes, and many locals converted to Islam. Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) became the elite, but the society was secular and there was intermarriage among all religions. When the Ottoman Empire fell, the 1878 Congress of Berlin gave Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria-Hungary, enraging the Serbs. The hostility climaxed in 1914 when a Serbian nationalist assassinated the Austrian archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo—precipitating World War I. After the war, Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which became Yugoslavia in 1929.

When the Nazis invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, they gave control of Bosnia to their puppet regime in Croatia, the Ustase government. The Ustase began a campaign of genocide that targeted Jews, Serbs, and Roma. Reprisals by Serbian partisans were similarly grisly, so by the war's end, both Croats and Serbs had more grievances to add to their lists. The new Yugoslav leader, Marshall Tito, kept things in check until he died in 1980. Then things began to unravel.

In a 1992 referendum, Bosnia and Herzegovina declared independence from what remained of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro.) This did not sit well with the Croatian or Serbian presidents, who'd planned to partition Bosnia between themselves. Inside Bosnia, the Serbian minority, bolstered by the Serbian army, took the offensive. The capital, Sarajevo was besieged for four years—longer even than the WWII Siege of Leningrad. The Serbs began a ruthless campaign of ethnic cleansing, and Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks also committed atrocities.

In 1995, the Bosnian Serb army (with support from Serbia) slaughtered 8,000 Bosniaks in the town of Srebrenica. UN troops had been ineffectual in preventing the genocide. Finally, NATO air strikes forced the Bosnian Serb army to its knees. A conference held in Dayton, Ohio, enacted a very fragile peace. Since 2011, Bosnia and Herzegovina has been ruled by a coalition of three presidents from each of the three main ethnic groups. Relations with Croatia have improved, and for now, the possibility of accession to the European Union is spurring the country's commitment to economic and political reform.

Slovenia

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 7,827 square miles
- **Capital:** Ljubljana
- **Population:** 1,983,412 (estimate)
- **Languages:** Slovenian is the official language.
- **Religions:** Catholic 57.8%, Muslim 2.4%, Orthodox 2.3%, other Christian 0.9%, unaffiliated 3.5%, other or unspecified 23%, none 10.1%
- **Time Zone:** Slovenia is on Central European Time, six hours ahead of Eastern Time. Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Slovenia

In addition to the holidays listed below, Slovenia celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Whit Sunday. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit **www.timeanddate.com/holidays**.

01/01 New Year's Day

02/08 Preseren Day

04/27 Day of Uprising Against Occupation

05/01 Labor Day/May Day

06/25 Statehood Day

08/15 Assumption of Mary

10/31 Reformation Day

11/01 Remembrance Day

12/25 Christmas Day

12/26 Independence and Unity Day

Slovenia: A Brief History

While Slovenia experienced many of the same historical events as its neighbors, its development diverged in several important ways. For one thing, we know a little more about the Bronze Age inhabitants who predated the Illyrians here: they were marsh dwellers who lived in huts on stilts south of present-day Ljubljana, trading along the Amber Route that linked the Balkans with the rest of Europe. By 400 BC, the Celts established the first political entity on Slovenian soil, the Noric kingdom. The Romans annexed this and brought Slovenia into its larger province, Illyrium.

As Rome declined, Slavs arrived and eventually joined with the Frankish kingdom to form the Duchy of Carantania. Charlemagne sealed the deal when he made Carantania a vassal state called Carinthia, and established Roman Catholicism as the state religion. This brought Slovenia into the fold of the Holy Roman Empire, and far from the sway of eastern Orthodoxy. By the 10th century, control of the Holy Roman Empire fell to German nobility. They replaced local Slovenian lords with German ones, reduced the peasants to serfs, and divided Slovenia into six provinces that remained intact until 1918: Carniola, Carinthia, Styria, Gorica and the White March.

Between the late 13th and early 16th century, almost all of Slovenia passed to the Hapsburgs, who improved the infrastructure, opened mines, and lifted the economy. But soon, Germanic domination of the political and cultural scene faced a challenge. Slovenia was never occupied by the Ottomans, but under the Hapsburgs, it had to fight many battles against the Turks. Slovenian peasants were required to pay for their own defenses, and also pay tribute to their feudal lords. Between the 14th and 19th centuries there were more than 100 Slovenian peasant revolts.

Another turning point came when the Protestant Reformation reached Slovenia at the end of the 16th century. Many Protestant reformers wrote their treatises in the vernacular, elevating the status of Slovenian language. An awakening of Slovenian identity had begun.

When the Hapsburg dynasty was dismantled after World War I, Slovenia joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. But much of Slovenia's land was ceded to Italy, Austria, and Hungary, and there was dissatisfaction with the government, which was dominated by Serbs. But when the Nazis invaded in 1941, a larger threat had to be dealt with. Communists and other left-wing

groups formed a Liberation Front. The people took up arms, and fought in the best-organized anti-Nazi resistance in Europe. The communist partisan leader, Josip Broz Tito, became the leader of the new Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

When Tito died in 1980, Slovenian dissatisfaction with the Serb-dominated government deepened. In 1987, a Slovenian magazine published an article calling for political pluralism, democracy, a market economy and more Slovenian independence, but stopped short of calling for secession. But Yugoslavia's new de facto leader, Serbia's Slobodan Milošević, resolved to put an end to it. Slovenia doubled down and in 1990, it voted to become an independent republic. The Yugoslav army marched on Slovenia, but after meeting with unexpected resistance, units of the federal army began disintegrating.

Since no territorial or ethnic issues were involved, the Yugoslav government agreed to a truce and finally withdrew in October 1991. Slovenia enacted its own constitution in December, and was recognized by the European Community in January, 1992. In May, 1992, it became the 176th member state of the United Nations, and in 2004, it joined the European Union.

Albania

Facts, Figures & National Holidays

- **Area:** 11,100 square miles
- **Capital:** Tirana
- **Languages:** Albanian
- **Geography:** Occupying an area slightly smaller than Maryland, Albania lies between Greece to the south and Montenegro and Kosovo to the north. The geography is mostly mountains and hills, small plains along the coast, with farmland in between the two.
- **Population:** 3,029,278 (estimate)
- **Religions:** Muslim 56.7%, Roman Catholic 10%, Orthodox 6.8%, atheist 2.5%, Bektashi 2.1%, other 5.7%, unspecified 16.2%
- **Time Zone:** Albania is on Central European Time (six hours ahead of Eastern Time). Summer hours operate from the last Sunday in March until the last weekend in October.

National Holidays: Albania

In addition to the holidays listed below, Albania celebrates a number of national holidays that follow a lunar calendar, such as Easter and Ramadan. To find out if you will be traveling during these holidays, please visit www.timeanddate.com/holidays.

01/01 New Year's Day

01/02 New Year's Day continued

03/14 Summer Day

03/22 Nevruz Day

04/09 Catholic & Orthodox Easter

04/22 Eid al Fitr

05/01 Labour Day/May Day

06/28 Kurban Bajram

09/05 Mother Teresa Beatification Day

11/28 Independence Day

11/29 Liberation Day

12/8 National Youth Day

12/25 Christmas Day

Albania: A Brief History

Though many of the former Yugoslav republics can trace their ancient roots to the Illyrian people, Albania has the strongest connection to these seafaring marauders. The Albanian language is directly descended from Illyrian, and is completely distinct from Serbo-Croatian or any other European language.

When the Roman Empire split into its eastern and western spheres, Illyria fell within the eastern or Byzantine realm. Gradually, Illyrian pantheism was replaced by Eastern Orthodoxy. By the late Middle Ages, urban Albanian society prospered both culturally and economically, thanks to its wealthy mercantile class, and education and the arts flowered.

Byzantine rule declined as waves of Bulgarians, Venetians, Normans and Serbians took over. Then the Turks began invading Illyria in 1388, occupying all of it by 1479. An important effect of this was the Islamization of the people. Under Ottoman Janissary laws, Christian families had to give up one son to convert to Islam and serve in the military, but Muslim families were exempt. As a result, many Albanians embraced the new faith. The Turks ruled for 400 years.

When an Albanian independence movement arose in 1878, it was put down by the Turkish army in 1881. But the dream of nationhood did not die. Uprisings took place in 1910 and 1912 that resulted in the formation of an independent Albania. But the Great Powers (Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary and Italy) intervened, ceding the provinces of Kosovo to Serbia, and Çamëria to Greece. This left many ethnic Albanians outside the national borders. During World War I, the weak new nation was occupied by various neighbors. After the war, a deal to partition Albania among its neighbors was thwarted by US President Woodrow Wilson.

A republican government formed in 1920, but was overthrown in 1924 by Ahmed Bey Zogu, who declared himself king. He allied himself with Italy, until Mussolini invaded in 1939. Albania was occupied by the Nazis in 1943, but by 1944, it was liberated by the communist-led resistance. Its leader, Enver Hoxha, became Supreme Comrade of the People's Republic of Albania.

Hoxha undertook a radical modernization program that included agrarian reform, the nationalization of industries, the eradication of poverty and illiteracy, and elevation of women's status. It also instituted brutal purges and suppressed all civil liberties, foreign travel, and religion. Albania received substantial aid from the Soviet Union and China, but over time, Hoxha broke ties with those regimes, accusing them of having betrayed Marxist ideals in favor of rapprochement with the west. An isolated Albania suffered food shortages and widening unrest.

When Hoxha died in 1985, his successor, Ramiz Alia, instituted some democratic reforms, but failed to deliver on most promises and was ousted. The country descended into chaos, as smuggling operations and drug and human trafficking proliferated, and peasants were forced off farms. A 1997 pyramid investment scheme (which may have been supported by the government) robbed about 70% of Albanians of their savings. Widespread rioting ensued.

In the 2005 elections, the Democratic Party staged a comeback, promising to tackle crime and corruption. Progress on these and other fronts gained Albania's entry into NATO in 2009. Since 2015, the Socialist Party has gained power, subsequent elections have been peaceful, and Albania is further integrated with the west. This brings the elusive goal of EU membership more within Albania's reach.

RESOURCES

Suggested Reading

Books about the Former Yugoslavia

The Impossible Country: A Journey through the Last Days of Yugoslavia by Brian Hall (1994, Travel Narrative) As Yugoslavia was deteriorating in the 1990s, the author was touring the region by bicycle, allowing him a unique chance to document the people, politics, and mood of the times.

Balkan Ghosts by Robert D Kaplan (1993, History) Covers Balkan history from World War I to the 1990s. Recommended by our travelers as a good way to understand the divisions in the region.

Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia by Rebecca West (1941, Memoir/History) Widely considered a masterpiece, this memoir was written on the eve of World War II as Dame West embarked on a six-week journey through Yugoslavia. Her intent was “to show the past side by side with the present it created.” The landscape, history, cultures, religions, and politics are brilliantly observed.

Croatia

Girl at War by Sara Novic (2016, Fiction) Ana, a New York college student, flashes back to her childhood in the former Yugoslavia in 1991. As civil war descends, ten-year old Ana’s carefree existence dissolves in tragedy and she must become a child soldier. Later, even as she builds a seemingly normal new life in America, her war never ends. A moving meditation on family, identity, memory and redemption.

Chasing a Croatian Girl by Cody McClain Brown (2015, Memoir) An incisive and often hilarious journey into everyday Croatian culture. The author, an ex-pat American and professor of political science, marries a Croatian woman and struggles to understand his indomitable mother-in-law, endless coffees with friends and neighbors, and a vast catalog of quirky customs.

The Walnut Mansion by Miljenko Jergovic (2015, Fiction) A 97-year-old matriarch recalls five generations of her Yugoslav family—vividly drawn characters whose lives play out against the fall of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, two world wars, the rise of communism, and the dangers of war-torn Dubrovnik as one nation dissolves, and another emerges.

The Hired Man by Aminatta Forna (2014, Fiction) Well reviewed novel about a family of newcomers from England who renovate a farmhouse in the Croatian village of Gost, befriend a local handyman, and unwittingly dredge up secrets of the village’s dark past.

Dubrovnik, A History by Robin Harris (2003, History) A scholarly but readable history of Dubrovnik from its origins in the 7th century, until the collapse of the Republic in 1808. Recommended for the history buff.

Montenegro

Montenegro, A Novel by Starling Lawrence (1997, Literature) Romance, intrigue, and the adventures of a reluctant British spy set in turn-of-the-century Montenegro.

The Black Mountain by Rex Stout (1954, Mystery) Part of the Nero Wolfe series, this book sees Nero leave his comfortable home in New York—something he rarely does—to follow leads in Montenegro.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Cellist of Sarajevo by Steven Galloway (2008, Fiction) This international bestseller tells the haunting tale of four people living in war-torn Sarajevo as their lives are upended, forcing them to explore the very meaning of humanity.

People of the Book by Geraldine Brooks (2008, Fiction) Offered a coveted job to conserve a priceless book known as the Sarajevo Haggadah, rare-book expert Hanna Heath discovers a series of tiny artifacts in the volume's ancient binding that reveal its historically significant origins. By a Pulitzer Prize-winning author.

Between Mountains by Maggie Helwig (2004, Fiction) The lives of a Canadian war correspondent and a Serbian-Albanian translator intersect at a war crimes tribunal at The Hague.

Death and the Dervish by Mesa Selimovic (1966, Fiction) The sad tale set during the Ottoman rule in 18th-century Bosnia. Selimovic was a bestselling Bosnian Muslim author in the 1960s, this is considered a classic in Bosnia.

Slovenia

Slovenology: Living and Traveling in the World's Best Country by Noah Charney (2017, Memoir/Travel) A witty and wise guidebook from an American art historian. The title tells you something about his love for Slovenia's history, food and drink, sights, music and people.

I Saw Her That Night by Drago Jancar (2010, Fiction) Explores the disappearance of a young woman from Ljubljana during a turbulent period in that city's history, as told by five different people.

Forbidden Bread: A Memoir (2009, Memoir) A New York financial analyst leaves her home and job to marry her Slovenian poet-lover. As she struggles to understand her new family and Slovenia's complex history, language, traditions and old-fashioned sexism, Slovenia itself is being transformed. A love story with witty and worldly observations on the birth of a new nation.

Albania

The Sworn Virgin by Kristopher Dukes (2016, Historical Fiction) When Eleanora's father dies in the 1910s, she takes on a new role in her village as a "sworn virgin"—an Albanian tradition that let women take over as the head of the household

The Albanians: An Ethnic History from Prehistoric Times to the Present by Edwin Jacques (1995, History). Albania lies near the center of age-old Balkan conflicts. In this book, Edwin Jacques explores the roots of Albanian civilization and the struggle of Albanians to maintain their cultural and linguistic integrity, as well as the impact of foreign influence on the country.

The Albanians: A Modern History by Miranda Vickers (1995, History) An historical account that traces the history of the Albanian people from the Ottoman era to the formation of the Albanian Communist Party.

Chronicle in Stone by Ismail Kadare (1971, Literature) A fictionalized account of the author's own experiences during World War II, this novel follows a sensitive boy struggling to grow up in an occupied town near the Albanian-Greek border. The author is considered one of Albania's most famous writers.

Suggested Films & Videos

Croatia

The Diary of Diana B. (2019, Drama) This film follows the unique and heartbreaking story of humanitarian Diana Budisavljevic, who rescues thousands of children from the Utasha camps in Nazi-occupied Croatia during World War II. This historical piece combines dramatized reenactments with archival material and interviews with survivors to create a harrowing retelling of Diana's perilous efforts.

The Eighth Commissioner (2018, Comedy) Filmed on the Dalmatian coast islands of Brač, Hvar and Zlarin, this endearing film follows an arrogant politician whose career is derailed by scandal. Banished to a remote island with no telephone or internet, he is given the impossible task of organizing a local government. The islanders are as quirky as their incomprehensible dialect, and other residents include Italian smugglers, a Ukrainian porn star, and the previous Commissioner.

What is a Man Without a Mustache? (2005, Romantic Comedy) A Croatian guest worker suffers a fatal fall in Germany, and his widow Tatjana uses her settlement to purchase a hillside in an idyllic Dalmatian Coast village. Magical things happen, including Tatjana falling madly but inexplicably in love with the hapless village priest. A sunny romance with an even sunnier setting.

Harrison's Flowers (2000, Drama) This French film is about a *Newsweek* photojournalist who travels on his last assignment to Yugoslavia in 1991, during the Croatian War of Independence. He is presumed to be killed, but his wife (played by Andie MacDowell) searches for him through the war-torn landscapes and witnesses some of the horrors of the period. French with English subtitles.

Montenegro

Meet Me in Montenegro (2015, Romantic Comedy) This indie rom-com is a semi-autobiographical account of the two stars, who met on a train and ran off to Montenegro (here blissfully filmed) for a romantic seaside escape. They reunite by accident years later in Berlin, and the Montenegro mood is revived.

Coriolanus (2011, Drama) Ralph Fiennes stars in and directs Shakespeare's classic, here updated to modern times. Though it is set in a nominal "Rome," it feels very much like the war-torn Balkans, and was in fact shot there, mainly in Montenegro.

Force 10 from Navarone (1978, Drama) Shot 18 years after the WWII epic *The Guns of Navarone*, this sequel sees three of the Allied heroes (Harrison Ford, Robert Shaw, and Edward Fox) dispatched to Yugoslavia to destroy a bridge and dam that are crucial to Nazi aims. Most of the film was shot in Montenegro, and the actual bridge used for pivotal scenes was indeed blown up in 1942 by one of its engineers to stop the invading Italian army.

When Father Was Away on Business (1985, Comedy/Drama) An Oscar-nominee for Best Foreign Film, this darkly comic tale unfolds in the 1950s, after Tito broke with Stalin and instituted harsh reprisals against any dissenters. A careless political joke, years of philandering and a lover's vengeance all come crashing down on Mesa, who is carted off to a work camp. But six year-old Malik is told simply that his father is away on business. When Dad returns, Malik learns exactly what that business was about.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Real Men Don't Cry (2017, Drama) Onetime combatants, a group of now middle-aged Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks, reluctantly gather at a Bosnian hotel for an extended group therapy session. None of these macho men want to talk, but all of them need the money they've been paid to attend. In session and in their free time, the remnants of their lives come pouring out in unexpected ways. A powerful commentary on masculinity, war and the post-traumatic stress that a significant proportion of the region's population still battles with.

Slovenia

Good to Go (2012, Comedy/Drama) A weary, disillusioned music teacher in his late 70s decides to retire—not just from his job, but from living. He buys a cemetery plot and moves into a retirement home. But once there, surprising turns make him rethink his decision, and his life.

Cheese and Jam (2004, Comedy) Lovely Slovenian Spela decides to leave her beer-drinking, jobless Bosnian husband, Bozo. Desperate to keep her, Bozo takes a job smuggling illegal immigrants, and things go wildly wrong. A black comedy about stereotypes, village life, and love.

No Man's Land (2002, Comedy/Drama) Filmed in Slovenia, this allegorical look at the Balkan War won the 2002 Golden Globes and the Oscar for Best Foreign Film. Two soldiers, one Bosnian, one Serb, find themselves facing off in a trench in no man's land. Insults and concessions ensue until a third soldier awakens nearby, but cannot move as he is sitting above a bouncing mine. The men forge a truce as they try to get help, and to find common ground.

Albania

The Delegation (2018, Drama). Based in October 1990, before the fall of communism, a delegation from the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe arrives in Tirana, Albania to judge the communist government for entry as a member into the intergovernmental organization. At the same time, Albania's government sends an official to release a political prisoner.

The Forgiveness of Blood (2011, Drama). Medieval mores and modern dreams clash in this tale of teenaged siblings Nik and Rudina. Their lives are upended by Albania's centuries-old tradition of the blood feud, or Kanun, when their father and uncle kill a neighbor during a land dispute.

Dear Enemy (2006, Drama). Based off the true story of the director's grandfather who, during World War II and the German occupation of Albania, befriended a German officer while harboring a partisan, a Jewish watchmaker, and an Italian soldier in his basement.

Useful Websites

Overseas Adventure Travel

www.oattravel.com

Overseas Adventure Travel Frequently Asked Questions

www.oattravel.com/faq

International Health Information/CDC (Centers for Disease Control)

www.cdc.gov/travel

Electricity & Plugs

www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/plugs-and-sockets

Foreign Exchange Rates

www.xe.com/currencyconverter
www.oanda.com/converter/classic

ATM Locators

www.mastercard.com/atm
www.visa.com/atmlocator

World Weather

www.intellicast.com
www.weather.com
www.wunderground.com

Basic Travel Phrases (80 languages)

www.travlang.com/languages

Packing Tips

www.travelite.org

U.S. Customs & Border Protection

www.cbp.gov/travel

Transportation Security

Administration (TSA)

www.tsa.gov

National Passport Information Center

www.travel.state.gov

Holidays Worldwide

www.timeanddate.com/holidays

History & Culture

en.wikipedia.org

Useful Apps

Flight Stats

Track departures, arrivals, and flight status

LoungeBuddy

Get access to premium airport lounges around the world

Timeshifter

Personalized tips for avoiding jetlag, based on neuroscience and your own data

GoogleMaps

Maps and directions anywhere in the world

Triposo

City guides, walking maps, and more – and it works offline

Rome2rio

Where to go, what to see, and what to do in more than 160 countries

Flush or Sit or Squat

Find a clean toilet anywhere

Uber

Ride sharing around the world

Visa Plus and Mastercard Cirrus

ATM locations

Shows the location of the nearest ATM in your network

TunnelBear

Provides a secure VPN (virtual private network) that will encrypt your browsing data when you use a public WiFi network

What's App, Skype, or Signal

WiFi calling anywhere in the world

Duolingo, FLuentU, or Babbel

Learn dozens of foreign languages

Google Translate

Fast and simple translations

XE

Currency conversions

SizeGuide

Clothing and shoe sizes in all countries

Best Units Converter

Converts currency, mileage, weights, and many other units of measurement

Tourlina

For women only, it connects you with other female travelers

Happy Cow

Locate vegan and vegetarian eateries in 195 countries

Eatwith

Dine with locals all over the world

Meetup

Connects you with locals who share your interests

Skyview

Identifies constellations and heavenly bodies

Travello

Find travel friends on the road

ALIX for One

Created by and for women, it identifies solo-friendly dining spots in major international cities

TripWhistle

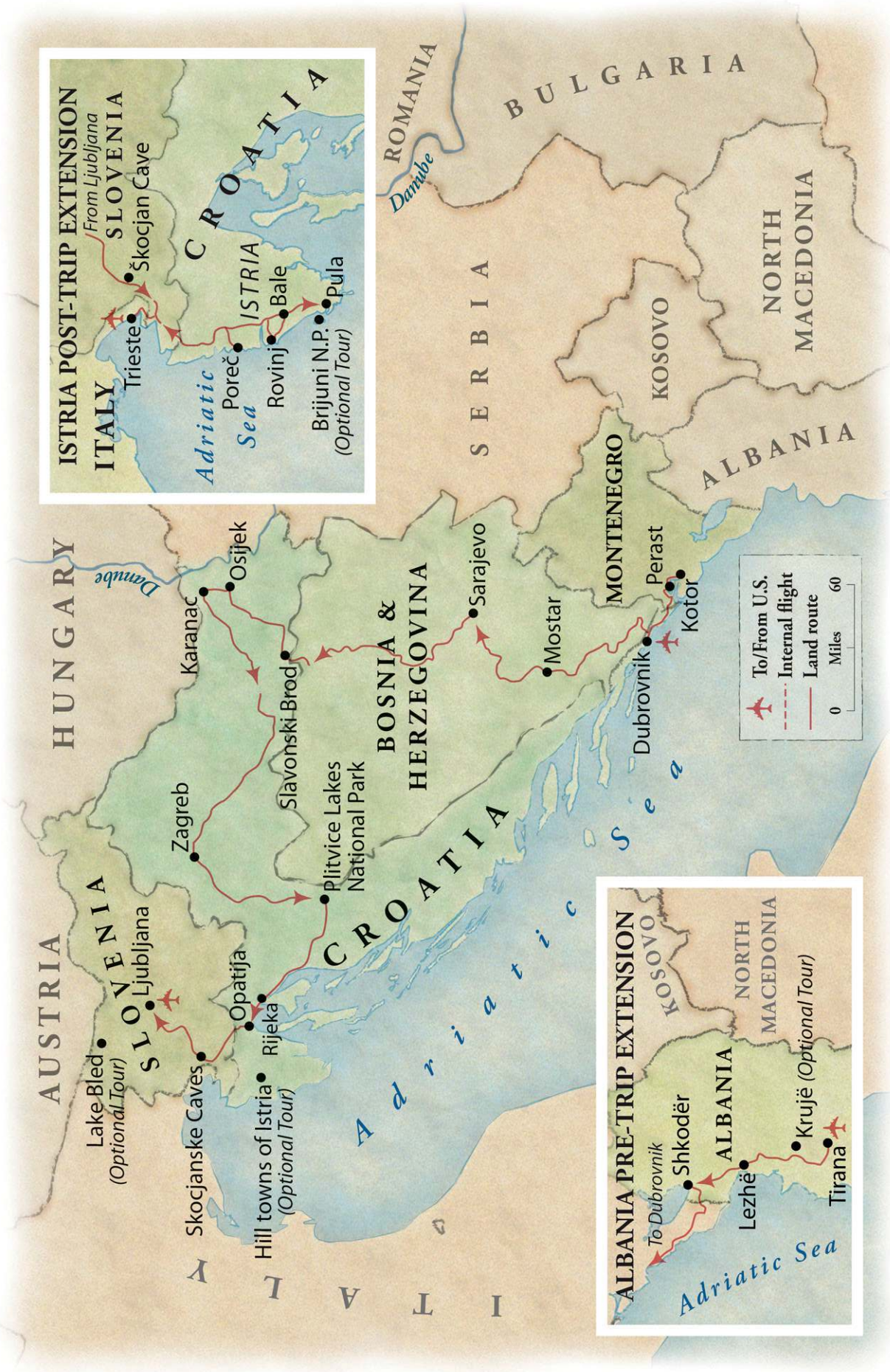
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Safely navigate neighborhoods around the world

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For women only, connect with other women, find out what's safe, meet up, and more



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