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GRAND BALKAN TOUR

11 Nights / 12 Days

CROATIA, MONTENEGRO, ALBANIA, MACEDONIA



Day 1 Wednesday ZAGREB – Arrival

Upon arrival at Zagreb Airport, you will be transferred to the hotel where you will stay overnight, meet your tour guide and enjoy your first dinner in Croatia.

Day 2 Thursday ZAGREB – PLITVICE

We wake in a city rich with gorgeous greenery – a city famous for its parks and preserved natural environment – the Croatian capital Zagreb. This is an eminently walkable city and our morning expedition takes explorers through its long history clearly visible in architecture and landscapes. The city tour of Zagreb includes the historic Upper Town where we find St. Mark's Church, with its famous multicoloured mosaic-tiled roof, on the square where both Croatian Parliament and the seat of Government are located. We also pass by the University and visit the typically gothic Cathedral, of great architectural value, whose two spires, visible from locations across the city, help Zagreb explorers find their way. With the fountain in front sculpted by the world famous sculptor Ivan Meštrović, we cannot miss the Croatian National Theatre, housed in the present-day Old City Hall and home to Zagreb's drama, opera and ballet productions, with world and Croatian classics put on stage. Here is a perfect example of the city's diversity: not only a cultural and historical landmark but also a favourite hang-out for skateboarders! All through our expedition, you will find Zagreb society outdoors, in street and square, café and bar, for this is Europe's only capital with a scent of the Adriatic. Following the city experience, we will continue to Plitvice Lakes National Park, one of Croatia's many UNESCO World Heritage sites, to be immersed in peace and serenity. Sixteen lakes – true jewels, each at a different level – are joined by a series of cascading waterfalls. Situated in a dense forest, the Plitvice Lakes are a natural phenomenon of rare beauty. Here, we will have dinner and spend the night.

Day 3 Friday PLITVICE – TROGIR – SPLIT

We wake to morning sun and birds singing and depart for two World Heritage sites. First, Trogir, a pearl-like town in the heart of Dalmatia. Here we touch the story of the Roman Empire in the walls of the Cathedral of St. Lawrence, a Roman

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Catholic triple-naved basilica constructed in Romanesque-Gothic style. Then south to Split, “the most beautiful city in the world”, as its citizens proudly proclaim. In the city tour we explore the UNESCO-listed Diocletian’s Palace with its Peristyle, Temple of Jupiter and Cathedral. Dinner and overnight stay will be in Split.

Day 4 Saturday SPLIT – DUBROVNIK

After breakfast we depart for the jewel that is Dubrovnik and take a sightseeing tour of this spectacular, UNESCO-protected city, fortified by walls on which we walk. Dubrovnik was known as the Republic of Ragusa in the Middle Ages and became the only Adriatic city-state to rival Venice. Supported by skilled diplomacy and wealth, the city achieved a remarkable development, particularly during the 15th and 16th centuries. We will visit the Franciscan Monastery with Europe’s third oldest pharmacy, Rector’s Palace and Cathedral. In Dubrovnik, we will have dinner and spend the night.

Day 5 Sunday DUBROVNIK

You have free time all day to enjoy at your leisure, followed by dinner and overnight stay in Dubrovnik.

Day 6 Monday DUBROVNIK – BUDVA / Montenegro – SHKODRA / Albania – TIRANA

We drive on to Montenegro, heading for Budva known for its Old City and surrounded by walls from the Venetian period. Then on to Albania, crossing the border at Shkodra, once the capital of the Illyrian Kingdom (3rd century B.C.). We will have dinner and spend the night in Tirana.

Day 7 Tuesday TIRANA – OHRID / Macedonia

In the morning we tour the sights of Tirana, the capital of Albania, including Skender Bey Square, the Mosque of Ethem Bey, and the National Museum which depicts Albania’s history and houses archaeological finds from sites across the country. We depart for Macedonia in the afternoon, via Elbasan and the Albanian-Macedonian border at Cafasan. In Ohrid, we will have dinner and spend the night.

Day 8 Wednesday OHRID

Enjoy a full day at the lakeside resort of Ohrid, a UNESCO World Heritage listed site. Thanks to the work of St. Clement and St. Naum, the famous ‘Ohrid Literary School’ was founded here and thus the first pan-Slavic University in Europe. A morning sightseeing tour includes the Church of St. Sofia from the 11th century, with its magnificent Byzantine fresco paintings the pre-eminent mediaeval monument in Macedonia, and then St. Clement Church with its icon of The

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Annunciation. In the afternoon, a short drive takes us to St. Naum Monastery, built on the shores of Lake Ohrid in 900 A.D. and dedicated to the Slavic missionary and educator St. Naum of Ohrid. We return to the hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 9 Thursday OHRID – SKOPJE

In the morning we depart for Skopje, the capital of Macedonia and a birth place of Mother Theresa. We take a sightseeing tour of the city, including the Kale Fortress, the Church of the Holy Saviour with its iconostasis and fine example of traditional walnut woodcarving, the Old Bazaar and the Stone Bridge. We drive to the slopes of the Vodno Mountain where we visit the Monastery of St. Panteleimon with its 12th century iconostasis and frescoes ranking among the highest achievements of Byzantine art. We will have dinner and spend the night in Skopje.

Day 10 Friday SKOPJE – KOLAŠIN / Montenegro

We leave Skopje in the morning, driving via Peć and Berane and along the impressive Morača River Canyon to arrive at Kolašin in the afternoon. We will have dinner and spend the night in Kolašin, 954m high above the River Tara. Surrounded by the lush pine forest of the Bjelasica Mountain, the whole area is a popular skiing and spa resort.

Day 11 Saturday KOLAŠIN – CETINJE – KOTOR – DUBROVNIK

In the morning we depart for Cetinje where we visit the King Nikola Museum, once the residence of the Montenegrin King Nikola I. We continue on to the UNESCO protected Kotor, where we visit its Romanesque Cathedral dedicated to St. Triphon, the city's patron saint. Then we drive along the picturesque Bay of Kotor to Dubrovnik, where we have dinner and stay overnight.

Day 12 Sunday DUBROVNIK – Departure

The tour ends after breakfast with a transfer to Dubrovnik Airport.