



## Adventurebug Worldwide Ltd

Bespoke adventure travel & events since 2000

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Apto. Correos 1031, 29680 Estepona, Malaga, SPAIN TEL (34) 635 817 819

# The Balkans

## Slovenia - Croatia – Bosnia/Herzegovina - Montenegro DAY HIKING & DISCOVERY TOUR

**The Balkans, including Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia/Herzegovina & Montenegro** are central European countries with beautiful mountainous terrain, Adriatic coastlines and enchanting and at times, tragic histories. Famous for lavish medieval palaces and glacial fed lakes, **Slovenia** is one of Europe's most welcoming nations.

**Croatia**, encompassing more than a thousand islands, is divided by the Dinaric Alps and is a natural wonder itself. Today described as the ideal combination between travels to Italy and Greece, Slovenia & Croatia have bounced back tremendously from a history of strife to become sought after European travel destinations in the modern era. **Bosnia & Herzegovina** offer us a wonderful blend of eastern European traditions, peaceful Islam and Orthodoxy cultures and gorgeous landscapes and architecture. **Montenegro** introduces us to soaring alpine ranges cast over a beautiful Adriatic coastline with wonderful seaside towns, medieval forts and an engaging, friendly society!



We welcome you aboard our Balkans hiking discovery tour and the opportunity to experience wonderful nature, inspiring architecture, delightful cuisine and to gain insights of the unique history of these former Yugoslav nations. This tour is rated as a day hiking experience with comfortable tour-class hotels throughout and a balanced daily program to make the most of both nature and our wonderful locations. Travel by private bus, tour boats and excursions on foot allow us to experience the best the region has to offer!

### TOUR HIGHLIGHTS & WHAT TO EXPECT

*Lake Bled & Slovenia's medieval history / Beautiful Adriatic Coastline & Islands / Verdant National Parks with forests, mountains and waterfalls / diverse hikes in protected nature / Tasty Mediterranean diet and age-old wine production / Abundant architectural delights / Insightful museums and galleries / Friendly, welcoming culture / Knowledgeable and passionate local guides / A pleasant Mediterranean climate perfect for this tour / Daily activities to suit your own pace!*

- 10 nights' comfortable accommodation in excellent tourist-class hotels in central locations
- A selection of dinners; a tasty lunch on our boat tour day and all breakfasts provided (as per itinerary)
- Private transportation in comfortable air-conditioned bus transport
- Tourist boat journeys and some local ferries around selected waters ways & islands in the Adriatic Sea
- Well planned excursions in both urban centers, natural park landscapes and on beautiful islands
- Entrance fees and tickets arranged for all scheduled historic sites & local attractions
- Local English-speaking guide services throughout and specialist guides where applicable
- A wide range of experiences and day hikes that are suitable to all interest levels



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## TOUR ITINERARY

### DAY 1 SLOVENIA (Lake Bled) ARRIVAL

Welcome to *Slovenia*! Easy and economical transfers to Lake Bled (30 min) can be found from Ljubljana Airport or perhaps arrive early and enjoy Ljubljana itself, a wonderful intro to Slovenia! No scheduled activities planned today and perhaps time for a stroll around Lake Bled's charming resort town – enjoying a local *Zgange* (Schnapps) before dinner! **Night:** Lake Bled / Hotel Bled Rose 4 star lakeside <https://bledrose.com/sl/> **Meals:** Welcome Dinner (in Hotel)



### DAY 2 HIKING LAKE BLED CIRCUMFERANCE, OJSTRICA LOOKOUT & LAKE BLED ISLAND VISIT

Today we hike the circumference of Lake Bled, including walking up the 20 minute path to the *Ojstrica Lookout* and taking in panoramic views from here. After we'll descend to the lakeside and enjoy a traditional *Pletna* (single oarsman), boat to Lake Bled's infamous island! Rowing is approximately 20 minutes in either direction and it's a tradition for active visitors to the Lake Bled region. On the Island there is time to visit the *Church of the Assumption of Mary* (entrance fee paid locally / not included) and enjoy the

panoramic views from this pretty location. From here we continue the hike back to our hotel. Note today you can optionally visit a local honey producing family – an age-old specialty of Slovenia! **Distance:** 4 miles approximately **Elevation gain:** 500 feet **Night:** Same Hotel Lake Bled **Meals:** Breakfast



### DAY 3 VINTGAR GORGE, SLOVENIA

This morning we have a 20-minute transfer to the beautiful *Vintgar Gorge* hiking area within *Triglav National Park*. Carved by the Radovna River, the Vintgar Gorge is one of the most popular and well-known natural sights in the area. It was opened to the public in 1893. Today, it features a hydroelectric dam and a fully preserved stone arch railway bridge. Today's hike is a highlight of any visit to Slovenia's natural wonders! Later this afternoon we can stroll up to Bled's Castle and enjoy its vast history inside the museum (optional entrance fee). This evening you are free to dine in Bled's historic

quarter. **Distance:** 4 miles **Elevation gain:** 650 feet **Night:** Same Hotel Lake Bled **Meals:** Breakfast



### DAY 4 PLITVICE LAKES NATIONAL PARK

An early start and drive 3.5 hours to visit one of the most impressive of all natural sites in Croatia, the *Plitvice Lakes National Park*. Here we'll hike the water pathways and cross the lake by electric boat (or continue on foot), considering a variety of hiking options surrounded by incredible natural beauty. After Plitvice we carry on to the Dalmatian Coast's wonderful seaside community of Zadar for one night's stay. Time permitting, we can visit Zadar's historic Roman quarter and enjoy the unique 'Sea Organ' and sunset over the *Kolovare*



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Islands before us! **Distance:** Hiking options between 3 and 4 miles today. **Elevation gain:** up to 400 feet **Night:** Zadar / Hotel Kolovare beachside <https://hotel-kolovare.com/> **Meals:** Breakfast and Dinner in hotel provided.



### DAY 5 KRKA NATIONAL PARK & SPLIT

A visit to southern Croatia is not complete without a visit to *Krka National Park*. Famous for its pristine waterways, bird life, ethnographic history and board walks, the park is a river paradise to be enjoyed by all! After a morning in Krka, we'll continue to Split and visit the historic quarter with a local historian. Here we find the most imposing of Roman ruins, *Diocletian's Palace* - and it's a site to behold! Our guide will lead us through the 'living' Palace and the rest of the ancient city's most intriguing features - offering insight into Split's tremendous history and alluring architecture, art and cuisine. **Distance in Krka National**

**Park:** between 2 and 4 mile options **Elevation gain:** 300 feet **Night:** Split / Hotel 4 Star *Priska Heritage Rooms* (stylish rooms in a private building), Split historic quarter **Meals:** Breakfast



### DAY 6 HVAR ISLAND EXPLORATION

Today we take to the sea by hydrofoil and explore one of Croatia's most famous islands, *Hvar*. Here we'll hike through island flora and visit some enchanting coastal areas, swim in the azure waters and visit the historic port and old town - where a cold drink or gelato can be enjoyed before ferrying back to Split in the afternoon! The ferry is 1 hour each direction and there are comfortable seats inside. **Distance:** 3-4 miles **Elevation gain:** up to 300 feet **Night:** Split / Same Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast

**DAY 7 MOSTAR (BOSNIA) & THE MAKARSKA RIVIERA** Today we'll set off early and journey from Split to *Mostar* - a historic Bosnian city located inland from the Dalmatian coast.



**Mostar** is situated on the Neretva River and is the fifth-largest city in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Mostar was named after the bridge keepers (*mostari*) who guarded the Stari Most (Old Bridge) over the Neretva during the Ottoman era. The Old Bridge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, commissioned by Suleiman the Magnificent in the 16th century, is one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's most visited landmarks, and is considered an exemplary piece of Islamic architecture in the Balkans.

Upon arrival, we recommend taking lunch in Mostar in a local tavern - trying wonderful regional dishes, before touring the city on foot and later this afternoon, driving along the Croatian Riviera to Dubrovnik where we have a 3-



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night stay in a destination famous on so many levels! Hiking today is simply exploring on foot Mostar town - 2 miles approx. **Night:** Dubrovnik / Hotel Lero Dubrovnik <https://hotel-lero.hr/> **Meals:** Breakfast



### DAY 8 DUBROVNIK Morning Tour

Dubrovnik conjures all sorts of images due to its exotic seaside location and fabulous medieval architecture. For *Game of Thrones* fans, it's the quintessential kingdom and a living film set. For history buffs it served as a crossroads for major events. Our morning is spent exploring this delightful city with a specialist guide and hearing the stories and legends that make Dubrovnik so appealing. *This afternoon you are free to visit the city at your own will.* Perhaps walk the famous ramparts (city walls) and/or cable car up Srd Mountain to the war museum and incredible viewpoints from

the fort. You can also visit *Lokrum Island* (15 min ferry) and stroll through pine forests and swim in fresh pools.

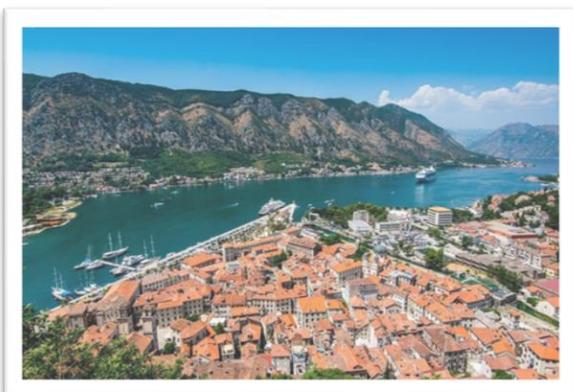
**Distance:** 2.5 miles on stroll to centre & city tour **Elevation gain:** under 200 feet **Night:** Same hotel as previous night

**Meals:** Breakfast



### DAY 9 BOAT TOUR & EXPLORATION OF THE ELAPHITES ISLANDS

A visit to southern Croatia is not complete without a boat excursion to the *Elaphites Islands* of Dubrovnik. Our journey takes us around wonderful landscapes of the Adriatic Sea and opportunities to disembark and do gentle hikes (and light strolls), on the islands themselves - including swim in the clear waters and enjoy a tasty lunch with wine on route. A splendid final day on our tour! Numerous hiking options and routes are mostly short and easy 1-2 miles at a time. **Night:** Dubrovnik / Same Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast, Lunch on boat & dinner in hotel.



### DAY 10 MONTENEGRO DAY EXCURSION

One of Europe's smallest countries, pocket-sized Montenegro is an up-and-coming destination for its other-worldly, mountainous beauty. We'll focus on the *Bay of Kotor*, seeing the historic waterfront town of *Perast* and attractions such as *Our Lady of the Rocks*, an island with a 17th-century church, and exploring Kotor Old City. Light hiking opportunities will be on hand today with some free time to stroll through Kotor or climb to the high Fort overlooking the city and harbour. **Night:** Dubrovnik / Same Hotel **Meals:** Breakfast & Farewell dinner



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## DAY 10 DUBROVNIK / TOUR DEPARTURE

After breakfast our tour ends and there are options to access Dubrovnik's *Cilipi International Airport* (DBV), including a direct airport bus and shared taxi options. There are no guided activities today. **Meals:** Breakfast only

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### **YOUR TRIP EXPERIENCE – WHAT TO KNOW**

This trip is best defined as a discovery tour that has day hiking experiences nearly every day. We aim to see the authentic parts of the country via the use of our private bus, ferry boats and of course with local guides in selected areas – offering the best insights of their wonderful region! Although we do have to transfer by private coach between destinations, this is certainly not a bus tour but instead, an active walking holiday!

### **Hikes & Daily Activities**

This tour is primarily a hiking trip and you are expected to spend the better part of the day walking in both rural (countryside), settings and at times urban areas as well. The days hikes are rated easy to light-moderate and should average 4 miles minimum per day with less than 800 feet elevation gain. Once we know the group abilities (as a whole), we can gauge the daily hikes – adjusting mileage to make the most of our destination(s), and energy levels! Note that both countries (like many Mediterranean destinations), consider hiking routes to be a mixture of trail, forestry tracks and at times tarmac lanes (to connect trails).

### **Transport**

Private Air-Conditioned Coach for all overland visits and transfers & boat (local tour class ferries).

### **Meals & non-included Meals**

We have balanced your tour with various group dinners (often tasty local buffet or a la carte choices) – leaving you free to dine in the wonderful towns independently and/or with fellow group members. Also included are all breakfasts (buffet style). No lunches (*with the exception of one on our boat tour in Dubrovnik*), are provided and many options are available such as hotel-prepared packed lunches (where available TBC), supermarkets, bakeries and cafes. For all non-included meals, Adventurebug feels you'll benefit from getting out, mixing with the locals and discovering the local cuisine and / or shopping locally to support local economies!

### **Tipping**

Tips for most aspects of this excursion are included in your trip price. These include: *all included meals in the itinerary, driver trips and the local cultural guides*. Please note that housekeeping and baggage handling services at hotels (if available), are not included. Tips during meals that are not provided are in line with most of Europe – that is leaving a 10% gratuity as the norm on meals – but not normally for café / bar services.



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### What's Included on the tour:

- 10 nights in twin bed or double bed share accommodation / single rooms available (supplement basis)
- Selected Group Dinners and 1 lunch (with wine) on the boat tour
- All breakfasts (buffet) for hotel nights included on tour
- Private shuttles in comfortable, air-conditioned coach
- Ferry & boat transfers as per itinerary
- All hiking routes (led by Adventurebug) and city cultural tours led by local, official city guides
- Excursions & tours as indicated in the itinerary
- Entrance fees to monuments / sites as indicated in the itinerary
- Prices are inclusive of all local taxes, service fees, permits and trip administration
- Tipping is included for meals, local city guides and coach driver(s)

### Not Included on the tour:

- International flights (to/from Slovenia-Croatia including any internal flight connections)
- Airport transfers at beginning and end of tour
- Travel insurance (Now a must to have personal travel and medical insurance)
- Medical insurance or cover related to any pandemic incidences, closures, delays, changes of plans, etc.
- Cancellation and/or trip disruption insurance is **HIGHLY** recommended
- Meals (where not listed as included in the itinerary)
- Optional additional tours or activities during free time (ie. Other excursions, museums, etc.)
- Expenses associated with hotel, room service, mini bar, etc.

### Optional Extras

During free time, there are optional activities to enhance your travel experience. You will need to cover any additional costs yourself. Activities are subject to availability, and it may not be possible to do all the activities at each destination.

### Insurance

**You are required to have travel & health insurance before taking part on this tour.** Standards of medical cover in The Balkans vary and you will benefit by having a *private plan* – rather than relying on the state health service. We strongly recommend cancellation insurance as well as coverage for health and medical issues. With many global disruptions in travel like Covid, natural phenomena or similar – delays and even cancellations can happen. A good insurance policy for travel should cover you for these unexpected expenses from disruptions.

### Responsible Travel

Adventurebug's *Responsible Travel Ethos* is at the heart of everything we do, from getting the basics right like respecting local cultures and the environment, to initiating projects that make positive contributions to communities, to our staff's volunteer efforts on a wide range of events and projects. At some point during our journey, Matt Butler from Adventurebug Travel may provide information on some of the community projects associated with his work in tourism and social entrepreneurial stewardship.



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### Customs and Culture

The Balkans are increasingly modernizing and aiming to catch up with Western Europe – albeit slowly in some areas. In some ways they are typical European nations and at the same time, very backwards compared to what you may be used to – especially in reference to customer service, street noise, traffic and simply the slow way many go about their daily life! Not so long-ago the region was Communist governed. We advise not to come expecting the same levels of service and mannerisms typical of your homeland or other destinations - you may be disappointed. Instead, come with an open mind and take everything in stride – you wouldn't be travelling to foreign lands if you expected everything to be the same as home! Please acknowledge that mass tourism (*with the exception of cruise ships in Dubrovnik*), is not a regular occurrence, thankfully. Many locals still struggle with our fast pace and high demands for customer service... Bear in mind that Croatia has suffered immensely during the Baltic Wars in the 1990's and many families and friends were divided as a result. Be sensitive about this when making enquiries and/or photographing sites and people. English is not as widely spoken in Slovenia and Croatia as in other European and Mediterranean holiday destinations but for the most part, we can use English nearly everywhere there is the tourism industry.

### PLUG IN SOCKETS

Electrical sockets (outlets) in both **Slovenia & Croatia** are one of the two European standard electrical **socket** types: The "Type C" Europlug and the "Type F" Schuko. If your appliance's plug doesn't match the shape of these sockets, you will need a travel plug adapter in order to plug in. (This is the common plug/socket all over Europe now)

TYPE F PLUG



TYPE C EURO PLUG



NOTE – both plugs shown are the same for the wall insert

### Special Dietary Needs and Medicines

Vegetarian diets can generally be accommodated to with some creativity and open-mindedness, but don't be surprised if fish is offered to you as a vegetarian! Special diets such as Vegan (plant-based), gluten free (celiac) and lactose intolerance can be a challenge and we recommended you bring supplements from home just in case. Medicines and reading glasses / contacts subscriptions we strongly recommend you bring as resources can be scarce or just not available in some destinations. Decent sun creams, sunglasses and general cosmetics can be sourced in the region with no problem.

### Internet

Internet in The Balkans is widely available and functional. Wi-Fi connection however may be weaker at times in locations of hotels with traditional thicker walls, but this is less common in today's travel culture.

### Ljubljana / Dubrovnik arrival and departure Information

**Remember that the tour starts and finishes in two separate locations.** Ljubljana, Slovenia is your ARRIVAL airport (LJU) and Dubrovnik, Croatia is your DEPARTURE airport (DVB). If you are planning a longer stay in the region, you may also consider Zagreb, Croatia (ZAG), as your arrival airport to start the tour. Zagreb to Lake Bled transfers are possible by EU bus networks and/or rental car. Please plan this accordingly when booking your flights.



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Croatian language is complicated but try to obtain a few basic words and phrases. Here is a list to get you started!

**Hello. (informal)**

Bok (*bok*).

**How are you?**

Kako ste? (*formal*) (*KAH-koh steh?*)

**How are you?**

Kako si? (*informal*) (*KAH-koh see?*)

**Fine, thank you.**

Dobro sam, hvala. (*DOH-broh sahm, HVAH-lah*)

**Please.**

Molim. (*MOH-leem*)

**Thank you.**

Hvala. (*HVAH-lah*)

**Thank you very much**

Hvala lijepa. (*HVAH-lah LYEH-pah*)

**You're welcome.**

Nema na čemu. (*NEH-mah na CHEH-moo*) or Molim. (*MO-leem*)

**Yes.**

Da. (*da*)

**No.**

Ne. (*ne*)

**Good morning.**

Dobro jutro. (*DOH-broh YOO-troh*)

**Good afternoon.**

Dobar dan. (*DOH-bahr dahn*)

**Good evening.**

Dobra večer. (*DOH-brah VEH-cher*)

**Good night.**

Laku noć. (*LAH-koo notch*)

**Good night (to sleep)**

Laku noć. (*LAH-koo nohch*)

**Excuse me. (getting attention)**

Oprostite. (*oh-PROHS-tee-ten*)

**Excuse me. (begging pardon)**

Pardon. (*par-DON*)

**I'm sorry. ("expressing condolence")**

Žao mi je. (*zhaw mee yeh*)

**Goodbye**

Doviđenja (*doh-vee-JEH-nyah*) or Zbogom (*ZBOH-gohm*).

**Goodbye (informal)**

Doviđenja (*doh-vee-JEH-nyah*) or Bok. (*bok*)

**What is your name?**

Kako se zovete? (*formal*) (*KAH-koh seh ZOH-veh-teh*)

### FURTHER READING & MEDIA LINKS

Lonely Planet Guide to Croatia

Rick Steve's Croatia

On The Edge of Reason – *Miroslav Krleža*

Chasing a Croatian Girl : A Survivors Tale – *Cody Brown*

The Culture of Lies - *Dubravka Ugrešić*

Café Europa - *Slavenka Drakulić*

RICK STEVES ADRIATIC DELIGHTS: [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=GVXZAOAEUF4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVXZAOAEUF4)

### GUIDE & TOUR OUTFITTER: MATT BUTLER



Matt Butler will be your specialist guide and logistics coordinator throughout the tour. He was born and raised in [Northern Manitoba](#), Canada and was a former competitive cross country skier, competing at the International level and as a non-competitive forerunner for the Canadian Olympic Team in Calgary 1988. He's worked 9 seasons with Canada's Provincial & National Park service's – the last 5 postings were at the *Columbia Icefield Center* in Jasper National Park where he designed and led interpretive guide programs. He later lived and worked as a teacher in Malawi, China, Great Britain and Spain before retiring from the profession and returning to his roots - *guiding and outdoor leadership training*. Matt is the co-founder of **Adventurebug Worldwide** – an active holiday and training company as well as co-founder for **Rifcom** ([www.rifcom.org](http://www.rifcom.org)), a non-profit charity that works

with disadvantaged communities in rural Morocco. He's published a hiking guide for Spain and when not leading trips, he enjoys making music, surfing, cycling, [climbing](#) and home life on the Mediterranean in Andalucia, Spain with his wife Jules & their 3 children [and an assortment of abandoned dogs and cats](#).