

EXPLORE!

TRIP NOTES



Journey Through the Balkans (YD 2017)



TRIPDURATION
12
DAYS



Tour Style: Classic
Tour Pace: Full On

Tour Type: Small Groups
Accommodation
Grade: Standard

Trip Code: YD

Trip Highlights - Journey Through the Balkans

- ✓ Kotor, Mostar and Trebinje - Discover the glittering cultural heritage of these picturesque cities
- ✓ Mount Zlatibor - Visit Sirogojno's famous open air museum and travel on the historic Sargan Eight Railway
- ✓ Visegrad - See the UNESCO listed Bridge Over the Drina - the subject of Ivo Andric's famous novel
- ✓ Sarajevo - Enjoy the cultural highlights of the city known as the 'Jerusalem of Europe'
- ✓ Dubrovnik - Explore one of the finest Medieval cities in the world

Trip Essentials

Accommodation: 9 nights Standard Hotel
2 nights Simple Guesthouse

Included Meals: 10 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners

Start Point: Join trip: Dobrota
End Point: Trip ends: Cavtat

Transport: Bus, Train, Boat

Countries: Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Journey Through The Balkans

Travelling through the heart of former Yugoslavia, we discover four countries that have been shaped by a rich but turbulent history. Against a backdrop of jagged mountain peaks and dramatic coastlines, we explore several UNESCO World Heritage Sites, fascinating old towns and enjoy the beautiful scenery of Durmitor National Park. We'll also ride the rails on the historic Sargan Eight Railway, see traditional sweater making in Sirogojno Open Air Museum and go underground in Tito's Nuclear Bunker.

Why Book this trip

With a rich and varied history, we can really get under the skin of this once troubled area whilst discovering the beauty of its national parks and historic cities. Travelling by road, water and rail this trip is great if you want to visit 4 countries in under 2 weeks.

Suitability

We've given each of our tours a comfort rating and a tour pace, walking or cycling grade to give you a general idea about the level of activity on each tour and the standard of accommodation you will be staying in at the end of your day's adventure.

Often you'll stay in different styles of accommodation during your tour; so we make an average rating across the entire tour. For more information on where you'll stay each night, please refer to the day by day tour itinerary.

Accommodation Grade: Standard

Our mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en-suite facilities.

Tour Style: Classic

Packed with adventure, these tours offer inspiring destinations and authentic travel experiences at a reasonable price. Using all kinds of transport and accommodation, we'll take you off the beaten track to discover the true heart of the people and places you visit.

Tour Pace: Full On

These fast paced tours move on quickly from place to place and with lots of early starts and long busy days, they're packed with experiences.

Your trip itinerary

Tour itinerary notes

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day itinerary as printed below, a degree of flexibility is built in. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested.

Your Tour Leader

An Explore Leader is an integral part of any Explore trip and your trip will be led by one of our experienced Explore Leaders who have been handpicked and expertly trained. We believe that our Explore Leaders are the key to the success of our trips; they are passionate travellers who are bursting with first-hand local knowledge which they love to share. Your Explore Leader will also take care of all the planning and organisation throughout your journey. Their passionate approach will make this trip fun and inspiring, bringing the destination to life whether you're travelling alone or with others.

DAY 1 Join trip in Dobrota

Our trip begins in Montenegro and the small, beautiful coastal town of Dobrota. On arrival at our hotel, the rest of the evening is free

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available



 **Included Meals:** None

DAY 2 Walking tour of Medieval Kotor and a boat trip in the bay

This morning we travel the short distance to the Medieval city of Kotor, lying beneath the slopes of Mount Lovcen. With its engaging mix of European and Byzantine influences, Kotor was once an independent city republic, until the threat of Ottoman attacks saw it join with the Venetians. We'll take a wander through the old city, walking its walls to enjoy the views across the traditional rooftops and out over the fjord from the Ivan Tower. Under the Venetians, Kotor became one of the best fortified cities in the region, boasting walls twice the length of Dubrovnik; walls which today provide us with a fascinating glimpse into its turbulent past. After lunch, we will take to the waters of Kotor Bay, to explore some of the small islands that occupy the turquoise waters of what is essentially the southernmost fjord in Europe. An inspiration for artists and poets, the bay is considered one of the most beautiful in the world. Its breathtaking mix of rugged mountains and azure waters compliment its rich scattering of charming coastal towns that attest to its former domination by the Venetians and the Ottoman Turks.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 3 Swimming at Budva Town; opportunity of a boat trip on Skadar Lake

This morning's short journey to Budva Town offers a chance to enjoy a swim on the beautiful Budva Riviera - a 35 kilometre-long strip of the Adriatic boasting some of the coast's best beaches. After our swim, we continue to the lovely town of Virpazar on the shores of Skadar Lake, where we will spend the night. The largest lake on the Balkan Peninsula, Skadar stretches for some 44 kilometres, encroaching into neighbouring Albania. You have the option to explore Skadar Lake and its surrounding national park on a boat trip or on dry land. This area is home to some 270 species of birds, including egrets, spoonbills and one of the largest cormorant colonies on the planet. The park is also a haven for rare plants. What's more, its collection of monasteries, villages and sacred monuments span over nine centuries of Montenegrin history.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 4 Visit Moraca Monastery and walk in Durmitor National Park; arrive in Zabljak

Today we drive to Zabljak, on the edge of the Durmitor National Park. Our journey takes us via the monumental 13th century Orthodox monastery at Moraca, as well as the impressive Djurdjevica Tara Bridge. Spanning the gorge over the Tara River, the bridge towers some 135 metres above the river valley. Zabljak lies among the towering peaks, alpine lakes and high pastureland that is sandwiched between the Tara and Piva Canyons. Durmitor National Park is a UNESCO World Heritage Site that presents us with a magnificent setting for an afternoon walk. On arrival, we will hike up through the thick forest towards the waters of Crno Jezero. Translated as the Black Lake, it is so named because of the dark pine landscape that surrounds it. Of the 18 glacial lakes that pepper this spectacular karst landscape, the Black Lake is probably the most famous and is certainly the largest, feeding the river basins of both the Tara and the Komarnica Rivers. Besides its glacial lakes, the park also features 27 peaks that exceed 2200 metres; five canyons; lush expanses of ancient forest and a labyrinthine system of caves and sinkholes. After exploring these natural wonders, we'll return to Zabljak for the evening.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 5 Visit Mileseva Monastery; stay overnight in Sirogojno Open Air Museum (Serbia)

Today we cross into western Serbia and head for the peaks of the Zlatibor massif. Covering some 300 square kilometres, Mount Zlatibor encompasses a range of mountains that stretch for 27 miles and makes up part of the Dinaric Alps. On today's route, we will stop off at the 13th century Mileseva Monastery near Prijepolje. Founded by King Vladislav between 1234 and 1236, the monastery is one of the country's most important spiritual centres. Guided round by a local priest, we will see some of its superb examples of 13th century fresco painting, including the famous 'White Angel', which depicts an angel visiting the grave of Christ. Tonight's accommodation is in the mountain-side village of Sirogojno - home to a remarkable open air museum that was declared a national monument back in 1983. Upon arrival, we will take a tour of this museum. Covering nearly 15 hectares, it contains a collection of traditional 19th century wooden buildings that have been assembled here from across the region, including a bakery, an inn and a dairy. All are authentic and provide a fascinating glimpse into Serbia's rural past.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 6 Drive to Mokra Gora; chance to ride on the historic Sargan Eight Railway

Sirogojno is known for its authentic high quality and handmade knitted sweaters. They've been featured in fashion shows all over the world including London, Paris and New York and are highly sought-after. This morning before leaving we will be shown how the jumpers are made and have the chance to try our hand at knitting. Later this morning we drive to Mokra Gora, which in English translates to 'wet mountain' and is a green and beautiful mountain valley. Here we board the historic narrow gauge railway, Sargan Eight. The line is part of the former track that once ran between Sarajevo and Belgrade, until it was closed in 1974. The section over the Sargan Pass was renovated by the Serbian government to recapture something of its 1920's heyday and reopened in 1999. It was once admired around the world as a piece of world-class construction, for it allows the train to make the steep climb through the mountains in a figure of eight weaving through 22 tunnels and covering just over 15 kilometres. Although as the crow flies, the distance between the stations of Mokra Gora and Sargan is a mere 3.5 kilometres. From here we continue our drive to Kustendorf. This distinctive mountain village was built by the international film director, Emir Kusturica, for his movie 'Life is a Miracle'. Everything here is constructed from wood and he wanted to recreate a traditional Serbian village, with the exception that all the streets are named after famous film directors. Now days, it is his home, a hotel and also home to an annual international film and music festival. We stay tonight in this unique location. As well as the chance to enjoy the fantastic mountain scenery, here there is also a gym, indoor swimming pool, restaurant, bar and small art gallery exhibiting local Serbian artists.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 7 Visit the famed Bridge Over the Drina; drive to Sarajevo (Bosnia Herzegovina)

Crossing into Bosnia Herzegovina this morning, we drive to Visegrad on the Drina River. Here, we will find the inspiration for Nobel Prize-winning author, Ivo Andric's novel, 'Bridge over the Drina'. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it has been an iconic symbol of the region for generations and was the scene of some of the worst atrocities of the Bosnian War. In Andric's novel, the bridge is the main protagonist and carries the hope for change for all who encounter it. Later, we continue our journey to Sarajevo, Bosnia Herzegovina's vibrant capital. Famed for its diverse religious heritage and often called the 'Jerusalem of Europe', we can look forward to a two night stay here.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 8 Explore Sarajevo on our guided city tour

Located on the Sarajevo plain and surrounded by mountains, the city is the cultural and administrative heart of the country. This morning we will take a tour of some of its glittering highlights. Although it was a major settlement during the Middle Ages, it was the Ottoman Empire that founded much of the Sarajevo we know today, transforming a collection of villages into the largest city in the region. Annexed by the Habsburgs, Sarajevo became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1908, going on to become the scene of the catalyst for the start of World War I, when Archduke Ferdinand was assassinated here on 28th June 1914. During the time of the Ottoman occupation, the city was home to Muslims, Catholics and Jews and Eastern Orthodox and many of its religious monuments have survived the city's turbulent past. Our tour will take in the beautiful old Serbian Orthodox Church of Saint Michael and Gabriel and the stunning 16th century Gazi Husrev Bey Mosque. Considered the most important Islamic building in the country, this is one of the finest examples of Ottoman architecture anywhere in the world. We'll also see the city's magnificent Gothic cathedral and its pseudo-Moorish styled Town Hall - a particularly grandiose building that dates back to the Austro-Hungarian period. A stroll through the centre of Bascarsija, in the heart of old Sarajevo, then offers a chance to explore something of the city's markets. The alleys that radiate out from the market square reflect the Ottoman tradition of naming streets after the traders who practised there and among these winding alleys and covered markets you can find bargains galore.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 9 Drive to historic Mostar for a city tour and time to explore

We can look forward to spending today and tonight in historic Mostar. Set on the banks of the Neretva River, this is the largest and most important city in the Herzegovina region. Also, one of the most beautiful towns in the entire country, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is divided by the Neretva, with Croats on one side and Muslims on the other, reflecting its rich cultural heritage. Founded by the Turks during the 15th century and expanded by the Habsburgs 300 years later, the town and its historic old bridge (the Stari Most) were badly damaged during the Balkan conflict of the early 1990s. The old Ottoman bridge was rebuilt after the war and much of the old city has also been restored to its former glory. The five year-long programme of reconstruction went a long way to restoring peace to this shattered region, with international and ethnic co-operation helping to rebuild cultural as well as historic bridges. Today, the city is host to a number of international festivals, including prominent music and traditional dance events, as well as the annual bridge jumping festival. After a tour of the city the rest of the day is free to explore this lovely old town at your own pace.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 10 Stop at TvrDOS Monastery with the chance for a wine tasting; city tour of Trebinje

Heading back towards the Adriatic, we pay a visit to the charming 15th century TvrDOS Monastery, located on the cliffs above the town. Belonging to the Serbian Orthodox Church, the monastery has endured a somewhat violent past, having been destroyed by Turks, Venetians and a massive earthquake in the 17th century. The building we see today was reconstructed during the 1920s and is the headquarters of the bishop of Herzegovina, as well as being home to a number of monks who still live behind its monastic walls. It is particularly famous for its wine cellar and there is the opportunity to enjoy a wine tasting during our visit. We will spend the rest of today and tonight in Trebinje and can look forward to a tour of the old city. Lying along the banks of the Trebisnjica River, just across the border from Dubrovnik, this town once commanded the road between Ragusa and Constantinople and its environs are scattered with old mills and bridges. The attractive Ottoman Arsalangic Bridge is of particular note. Built in the 16th century, it is considered by many to be one of the finest of its kind in the country.

Overnight: **Standard Hotel**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 11 Discover Dubrovnik on foot

After enjoying breakfast in a local pastry shop, we set out on your journey to the beautiful city of Dubrovnik. Regarded as one of the finest examples of a fortified Medieval town anywhere in the world, it was granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 1979. The old city is a wonderful mix of monasteries, museums and red-tiled buildings that hark back to the glory days, when it was one of Europe's greatest maritime cities. A guided walking tour will give us a feel of the layout of the town and its wealth of architectural masterpieces. Fully restored to its former grandeur following the Siege of Dubrovnik (1991-92), the old Medieval town still exudes a unique atmosphere and charm. George Bernard Shaw once wrote, 'those who seek paradise on earth should come to Dubrovnik'. So, in the company of a local guide, we will discover the majesty of its Pile Gate, the city's Dominican church and the great Franciscan monastery, as well as the old port and the Rector's Palace. This afternoon is free to continue exploring in your own time, perhaps taking a walk around the city walls to take in the views across the twisting alleyways and the glittering waters of the Adriatic. Later, we will transfer to the beautiful coastal town of Cavtat, a picturesque fishing village that once found favour among the wealthy families of Europe. The old town still retains much of its endearing charm and it is a fitting place in which to enjoy our last evening of the trip. Tonight we will be staying in one of number of private pensions (guesthouses). Each guesthouse and bedrooms within it are unique, so the size and decor of the rooms will vary. Most rooms are en suite but some do have shared facilities.

Overnight: **Simple Guesthouse**
Single Room Available

 **Included Meals:** Breakfast

DAY 12 Trip ends in Cavtat

Our trip ends after breakfast this morning in Cavtat.

 **Included Meals:** None

Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation Notes

On day 5 of our trip we will be staying in the mountain-side village of Sirogojno, which is home to a remarkable open air museum. It covers nearly 15 hectares and contains a collection of traditional 19th century authentic wooden buildings. We will be accommodated in small historical mountain houses. Each house has two to five beds, but they are in separate rooms rather than being dormitory style. So for example a house with five beds would usually have three bedrooms. Every house has a shared bathroom.

In Cavtat on day 11 you will be staying in one of number of private pensions (guesthouses). Unfortunately it isn't possible to specify the exact guesthouse name that you will be staying in ahead of your arrival, but they are in the same area and of a similar standard. Each guesthouse and bedrooms within it are however unique, so the size and decor of the rooms will vary. Most rooms are en suite but some do have shared facilities. If you decide to extend you stay at the end of your holiday then our local agent will endeavour to make the booking for you in the same guesthouse as you stayed in on the final night of the trip.

The majority of hotels used on this trip don't have a lift.

Food & Drink

Included meals: 10 breakfasts, 0 lunches, 0 dinners included in the price of this trip. Please be prepared to pay for non-included meals. Please note that costs for drinks and meals can vary depending on location.

Budgeting for your Trip

You will need some extra money to cover meals and drinks not included in the trip price, any optional sightseeing, souvenirs and items of a personal nature such as laundry.

Food

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Croatia

Lunch £: 8.00 - 10.00

Dinner £: 18.00

Montenegro

Lunch £: 9.00

Dinner £: 11.00

Serbia

Lunch £: 8.00

Dinner £: 12.00

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Lunch £: 5.00

Dinner £: 8.00

Drink

The prices for drinks can vary greatly depending upon location and the prices detailed below are an average guide. In general you would expect that drinks purchased in a supermarket or local bar to be less expensive, whilst drinks in an upmarket bar or restaurant may be more expensive.

Croatia

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 1.50

Montenegro

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00

Water £: 1.00 - 2.00

Serbia

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00 - 4.00

Water £: 1.00

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Bottle of Beer £: 2.00 - 4.00

Water £: 1.20

Other Sightseeing & Activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations.

Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Optional Excursions

Skadar Lake - 2.5 hour boat trip on the lake - €18.00 plus €4.00 entrance fee to the park

Tvrdoš monastery and wine tasting - €1.50 per tasting

Tipping - Tour Leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Tipping - Local Crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approximately £25 for gratuities for local staff.

In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Foreign Exchange

Croatia

ATM Availability: Most towns and cities have ATM's for cash withdrawal.

Credit Card Acceptance: Generally accepted throughout including most restaurants and hotels.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can only be exchanged in banks.

Local Currency: Croatian Kuna.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Pound Sterling, US Dollars and Euro cash can all be exchanged for the local currency.

Where to Exchange: Most major towns and cities - your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival. Only exchange money at reputable places like banks, ATM's and official Forex Offices.

Montenegro

ATM Availability: Most towns and cities have ATM's for cash withdrawal.

Credit Card Acceptance: Credit cards are also generally widely accepted.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can only be exchanged in banks.

Local Currency: Euro.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Pound Sterling and US Dollars can be exchanged for local currency. Please note if using Pound Sterling then only Bank of England issued bank notes are accepted. Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not accepted.

Where to Exchange: Banks or Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

Serbia

ATM Availability: Generally widespread, but limited in more rural areas.

Credit Card Acceptance: Accepted in major restaurants and hotels.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can be exchanged for the local currency but only in banks and they are only accepted in major hotels and shops in the main towns and cities.

Local Currency: Dinar.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euros, US Dollars and Pound Sterling can all be exchanged for local currency. However, Euro is the best currency for exchange in most places. Please note if using Pound Sterling then only Bank of England issued bank notes are accepted. Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not accepted. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

Where to Exchange: Banks or official Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. British banks don't generally exchange Dinars, so you should exchange any unwanted local currency before you leave Serbia. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

ATM Availability: Major towns and cities have ATMs for cash withdrawal, but these are limited in more rural areas.

Credit Card Acceptance: Accepted in major restaurants and hotels in Sarajevo, but outside the capital most monetary transactions are made in cash.

Travellers Cheques: Travellers Cheques can only be exchanged in some banks.

Local Currency: Bosnian Mark.

Recommended Currency for Exchange: Euros, US Dollars and Pound Sterling can all be exchanged for local currency. However, Euro is the best currency for exchange in most places. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

Where to Exchange: Banks or Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

Joining your Trip

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found on our website at

www.explore.co.uk, in the tour specific dates and prices section.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer. For more information please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer please refer to <https://www.explore.co.uk/transfers>.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Important Information

Travel Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

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The Adventure Travel Experts

CAMPBELL IRVINE
DIRECT TRAVEL INSURANCE



Travel Insurance is essential. If you have not already arranged cover, please contact our recommended Travel Insurance providers www.campbellirvinedirect.com/Explore who offer Travel Insurance specifically designed to cover travel with Explore or call **Campbell Irvine Direct** on Tel: 020 7938 1734

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Travel Aware

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office Advice follow the link at www.explore.co.uk/travel-safety

We strongly advise that you register with the FCO to receive updates to the travel advice for your chosen destination. A hard copy of the current FCO Travel Advice for your chosen destination is available by contacting cr@explore.co.uk or 01252 379438.

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Visa Information

Croatia: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Bosnia Herzegovina: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

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Serbia: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Montenegro: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant Embassy prior to departure.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on **0208 5431846**.

Vaccinations & Protection

Croatia

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Montenegro

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Serbia

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Bosnia and Herzegovina

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.

Preparing for your Trip

Climate

Croatia

The Croatian Adriatic has a Mediterranean climate with mild winters and warm, dry, sunny summers. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. Hvar Island gets the most sunshine in summer with 10-12 hours each day, followed by Split, Korcula Island and Dubrovnik with around 7-8 hours. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the low to mid 20's (in °C), but can reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August. Trip itineraries with boat cruises can occasionally be disrupted due to bad weather.

Montenegro

Montenegro's coastline has a Mediterranean climate with hot dry summers and mild winters, whereas the more mountainous inland areas have a sub-alpine climate with warm summers and very cold winters with frequent snowfall. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn in the coastal areas, though generally this is in the form of short showers. In the mountains rainfall tends to be more frequent including around the Bay of Kotor. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the low to mid 20's (in °C), but can reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August.

Serbia

Serbia has a continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the low to mid 20's (in °C), but can reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August - although sometimes warm air currents from Africa can reach here and push the temperatures as high as 40°C.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

With only 20 kilometres of coastline on the Adriatic Sea, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a continental climate for the most part, with cold winters and warm summers. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. In spring to autumn the temperatures are normally in the low to mid 20's (in °C). Much of the country is mountainous or hilly, rising to a height of 2,386 metres and winter snow lies for long periods in the higher regions. Mostar is set back from the coastline on a plain, which has a hotter Mediterranean climate with temperatures averaging in the mid to high 20's (in °C) in spring and autumn and July and August in the low 30's (in °C) - although sometimes temperatures here can get up as high as 40°C.

Clothing

July and August are the hottest months, but early and late in the season go prepared with clothing to suit drops in temperature and the odd shower. Please note air conditioning may not be available in some accommodations.

Equipment

A torch, water bottle, insect repellent, sunscreen (at least factor 15), good quality sunglasses and a lipsalve with sun protection. Also bring a swimsuit for swimming opportunities on the trip.

Footwear

Comfortable shoes/trainers plus sandals for relaxing.

Luggage: On Tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

Luggage allowance on trip: 20kg

General Information

Country details

Croatia

Population: 4,190,700

Size of Country: 56,594 square kilometres

Major Language: Croatian

Religion: Roman Catholic

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Montenegro

Population: 620,029

Size of Country: 13,812 square kilometres

Major Language: Montenegrin

Religion: Christian (mainly Serbian Orthodox)

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Serbia

Population: 7,041,599

Size of Country: 88,361 square kilometres

Major Language: Serbian

Religion: Christian (mainly Serbian Orthodox)

Time Difference to GMT: +1

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Population: 3,531,159

Size of Country: 51,197 square kilometres

Major Language: Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian

Religion: Islam (mainly Sunni) and Christian (mainly Serbian Orthodox)

Electric Supply & Plugs

Croatia

2 Pin Round

Montenegro

2 Pin Round

Serbia

2 Pin Round

Bosnia and Herzegovina

2 Pin Round

Why Choose Explore

We've been creating award-winning pioneering adventure holidays for over 30 years, earning the trust of thousands of delighted customers, who feel safe in our hands. Our tour leaders have expert local knowledge and our tours are designed to take you off the beaten track to see the most exotic, inspiring and dramatic places in the world.

- With over 30 years' experience, we are passionate about what we do.
- Pioneering small group adventures, self-guided, private journeys & tailor-made holidays.
- Award winning tour leaders who you can trust.
- Responsible travel is and always has been one of the driving principles of Explore.

Our adventure holidays are full of exciting things to see and do, exploring in small groups travelling by bus, boat, plane, rickshaw, camel, or any number of unusual forms of transport. Often you will stay in family run hotels and village houses and enjoy authentic local cuisine. In this way, it's easy to discover the true heart of the people and the place you travel to - and make some new friends along the way. Each tour is uniquely different, so please feel free to browse through our tours to see what may whet your appetite.

Cool Earth

Explore are proud to support Cool Earth in their effort to reduce global carbon dioxide levels through the prevention of deforestation in the South America rainforest. Cool Earth focus on areas in immediate danger of deforestation, supporting local communities to be forest guardians. To date 350,000 acres of rainforest has been protected. Saving rainforest also protects rare animals and plants, allows local forest communities to maintain their way of life, and protects a major source of oxygen and fresh water. When you travel on an Explore holiday we make a donation to Cool Earth that exceeds the impact of our customers flights each year.

Earth Matters

We are passionate about sustainable travel and work hard to create tours where your holiday delivers real benefits to the local communities. We minimise our impact by travelling in small groups, respecting local cultures, reducing waste and offsetting 100% of the CO2 from our flights.

When you travel with Explore, you are directly contributing to local economies and helping empower the people you meet. We currently support a range of charities and good causes, including: Toilet Twinning (helping to flush away poverty), Lone Buffalo Foundation (a community project based in Laos providing creative skills for young people) and have recently supported women's cooperatives in Borneo and Morocco. We are a member of Tourism Concern's Ethical Tour Operator Group (www.tourismconcern.org.uk) and support their campaign for fair and ethical tourism. We also care passionately about the world's wildlife and actively support and promote the Born Free Organisation and Mahouts Elephant Foundation.

Booking Your Holiday

Peace of mind - book with confidence

You can book your Explore holiday with confidence, as all monies paid to us for your trip are fully protected. Explore is a fully bonded tour operator licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and by ABTOT.

The air holiday packages (Tours including flights) that we advertise are ATOL protected, since we hold an Air Travel Organiser's Licence granted by the Civil Aviation Authority. Our ATOL number is ATOL 2595. In addition, As a member of the Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust Limited (ABTOT), Explore has provided a bond to meet the requirements of the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992. Please note that packages booked outside the UK are only protected when purchased directly with Explore.

Reserving your place

To reserve your place on this tour you will need to check availability on the Explore website or through our dedicated call centre based in the UK where you can. Our tours can fill up quickly so you are advised to book as early as possible. If your chosen date is 'Available' or 'Guaranteed' we will be able to provisionally hold you a space for up to 48 hours.

For Self-Guided holidays and Private Journeys simply choose your date of travel and let us know so we can confirm all ground services.

The easiest way to confirm your booking is through our website. When you are ready to book, we normally require a 10% non-refundable deposit, but for some holidays this may be more to cover such items as permit fees, internal flights or other non-refundable services. If your travel starts within 60 days of booking, full payment will be required at the time of booking

100% No Surcharge Guarantee

The price paid for our holidays is no longer subject to change. Once booked and confirmed we will guarantee the price you pay will not increase, whatever the circumstances. You will not be approached to pay fuel surcharges unlike the vast majority of other adventure tour operators. The price guarantee applies to all new bookings departing between 1st January 2016 and 31st December 2017.

Trip Itinerary Versions

Itinerary details may vary depending on departure date and alternative itineraries for this tour may exist. Please refer to the dates and prices page on our website to check which itinerary operates on each departure date.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of these tour notes immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from customers. You will be informed of any major changes to your tour but small changes may just be added to these tour notes.

Please note: 2017 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing in 2017. 2018/19 itinerary versions are applicable to tours departing from 1st January to 31st December 2018.

These trip notes were printed on 27/05/2017 02:27:42

