

Croatia & Slovenia

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GREAT ITINERARIES

SPLIT, DUBROVNIK & THE DALMATIAN COAST

Both Split and Dubrovnik have international airports, so this itinerary could be reversed if you want to fly into Dubrovnik. Both cities are popular in summer, so be warned: you won't be sightseeing by yourself in August. In some respects, this itinerary can be best enjoyed without a car, as traffic and parking in high season are frazzling aspects of the southern Dalmatian coast. A little advance research about ferry schedules at the time of your travel (ferry and hydrofoil service is significantly reduced in the off-season) can make this a pleasant, mostly seafaring itinerary. Try to start your weeklong trip on a weekday (Monday to Monday, for example) instead of the weekend, so that your weekends are spent on a quiet island instead of in bustling Split or Dubrovnik.

Day 1: Split

Arrive in Split and head to a hotel (which you booked months ago) or take one of the many private rooms available around town. Accommodations in Split can be surprisingly limited. Spend this first day getting your bearings and exploring the Meštrović Gallery and the Archaeological Museum, two of the city's best museums. Save the full day for Diocletian's Palace tomorrow. ⇨ *Split in Chapter 6.*

Day 2: Diocletian's Palace

Get up early and head into the Grad, the Old Town area that once encompassed Diocletian's palace. You'll need a whole day to explore the palace, but the area is best seen on foot. Sit in the open peristyle and admire the imperial quarters, the Cathedral of St. Domnius, and the Egyptian black sphinx. Walk through the Grad

area noticing all the different styles and materials used in the construction and renovation of the palace. Head out of the eastern Iron Gate to find a good spot for lunch and then continue along the Riva toward Marjan for a relaxing afternoon by the sea. ⇨ *Split in Chapter 6.*

Day 3: Island-Hopping

Take one of the ferries or catamarans from Split to Brač, Hvar, or Vis, and spend the night in an island paradise. This is the heart of Dalmatia, after all, and these islands are the stuff of glossy tourist brochures. Book your accommodations in advance, or try to book a private room through an agency in Split. In summer, ferries, hydrofoils, and catamarans operate regularly to the islands. Rent a bike or scooter once you've landed and tour the back roads where you can find uncrowded coves and beaches. ⇨ *Brač, Hvar & Vis in Chapter 6.*

Days 4 & 5: Dubrovnik

Get back in the car, or, if traveling without one, take the bus or ferry to Dubrovnik. The arrival by ferry is more dramatic, because you'll see one of the prettiest fortified cities in the world as it was meant to be seen: from the sea. From this view, you can tell why Dubrovnik (formerly Ragusa) was once master of all of Dalmatia. Choose a hotel slightly outside the city walls, as the crowds flock there daily in high season. Have lunch in one of the many fish restaurants near the fish market and enjoy some Dalmatian wine. Save the sightseeing for the late afternoon, when the cruise-ship day-trippers have departed. Stroll along the *placa* in the early evening with the locals, stopping along the way for some Italian-style ice cream. ⇨ *Dubrovnik in Chapter 7.*



Day 6: Elafiti Islands

The great thing about the Elafiti islands is that they're very close to Dubrovnik, so you can easily make a day trip out here if you're pressed for time. A trip out to one of the islands is ideal for a final wind-down before the week's end. Most of the islands have no cars and are sparsely populated, so it's just you and the sparkling Adriatic out there. Logun has the best overnight accommodations if you have an extra day, or for wilderness seekers a trip to farther-flung Mljet is rewarding in its forested beauty and serenity. All the islands have regular service in the summer, and hydrofoils and fast catamarans can get you there in half the time the ferry takes. In winter there is limited boat service from Dubrovnik. ⇨ *Elafiti Islands in Chapter 7.*

Day 7: Split

Day 7 will most likely be a travel day, no matter if you travel by car or ferry. Have one last seafood lunch in a restaurant with a view of the sea, buy a bottle of Dalmatian wine to take home, and vow to come back next year. ⇨ *Split in Chapter 6.*

TIPS

- Don't take a car to the islands. Ferry reservations for cars must be made well in advance. Once you're there, it's easy enough to get around by bus or rented scooter.
- Be wary of *soba* (room) offers. Although many are legitimate private rooms, there are unscrupulous vendors out there hard at work in high season. Have a map ready and mark where the accommodation is. Some properties are so far away that your one or two days in Dubrovnik will be spent navigating the local bus routes rather than enjoying the city.
- Ask your concierge or host for local restaurant recommendations. A fair number are closed for the winter months. In high season (and especially during the Dubrovnik Summer Festival) many of the restaurants along the Prijeko aggressively market themselves to tourists, and a meal here can have less than relaxing aspects (overcharging, gruff service).

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