

Croatia: Walks in Istria for Orchids and Mediaeval Frescos

<http://www.kudutravel.com/tours/istria-walking-tour>

2 – 9 May 2019

Istria, the large heart-shaped peninsula at the head of the Adriatic, is divided between Croatia, Slovenia and Italy. Roman, Venetian and Italian for much of its history, it is a delightful discovery, offering ancient ports and fishing villages along the coast and mediaeval hilltop villages and fresco-filled churches inland. Naturalists will appreciate the region's diverse habitats, ranging from dry Mediterranean grassland and *maquis* to *karst* upland covered by beech and oak forests.

Gastronomy features highly in the Istrian lifestyle. Specially created dishes make the best of fresh fish and seafood. Truffles, both black and white, grow in the forests. Croatia's most innovative wine makers are found in Istria and every farmer makes his or her own sheep's cheeses, olive oil and *pršut*, the distinctive local version of *prosciutto*.

HIGHLIGHTS of our Istria walking tour include:

- Frescos, mosaics and archaeology, found in villages and the smallest town in the world
- Orchids and wildflowers strewn along our paths as we walk daily (2 – 3.5 hrs) through Mediterranean landscapes
- Istrian truffles, olive oil and wine, all accompanied or absorbed by a cuisine that is Italianate, yet distinctly Istrian
- Ancient ports and fishing villages along the Adriatic coast and mediaeval hilltop forts inland

Guests' comments on this trip:

'Well organised and very enjoyable. Paced exactly right, walks were long enough to feel sense of achievement but not too long. Nice to have guides with extensive knowledge. Restaurants and hotels were well chosen.'

Itinerary

DAY 1

L, D included

Meeting at Zagreb airport around midday, we have a scenic drive (3 hrs) to the southern part of the peninsula and our small seafront 4-star hotel in the village of Fažana, one of the favourite haunts of the former president of Yugoslavia, Josip Tito.

DAY 2

B, L, D included

In Nesactium, the deserted and tourist-free home of the King of the Histri, conquered by the Romans in 177 BC, we learn about this local tribe, which gave the peninsula its name. Cape Kamenjak is the southern-most point of Istria and the narrow headland is a nature reserve protecting over 20 species of orchids. We explore the area on foot, looking for species such as Pink Butterfly Orchid, Bertoloni's, Dark or Bumble Bee Ophrys. After a lunch of farm produce, a short drive takes us to Pula, Istria's largest city and a major port, where we visit the 1st century BC Pula Arena, one of the best-preserved Roman amphitheatres in the world.

DAY 3

B, L, D included

Our walk (2.5 hrs) this morning follows a wide track at the bottom of the Lim Canyon, starting from the ruins of the mediaeval fortified town of Dvigrad. While the south facing side of the valley is covered by evergreen vegetation, the north facing walls have a cover of oaks and ashes. In nearby Rovinj, a Venetian port for centuries, we explore the picturesque harbour and the cobbled lanes of the old town leading to the hilltop church of St. Eufemia.

DAY 4

B, L, D included

Moving into the interior of the Istrian peninsula, we follow a woodland path (3 hrs) to the Chapel of our Lady of the Rocks, near Beram. The frescoes, dating from 1475, vividly depict the Adoration of the Magi. We have lunch in a popular country *konoba*, perhaps *fuzi* pasta with wild asparagus. Our ultimate destination today is the hilltop town of Motovun, where we stay for 3 nights at a comfortable 3-star hotel in a reconstructed mediaeval palazzo on the chestnut tree-filled square. We walk around the Venetian 14th century battlements before a dinner featuring local truffles.

DAY 5

B, L, D included

A morning's walk (2.5 hrs) on a marvellous ridge across the heart of Istria leads us to the splendidly sited mediaeval village of Draguć, where we see the frescoes in the little chapel of St. Roche. After a rustic lunch in a village perched at 500 m, with views for miles, we drive to the village of Oprtalj, where we wander through the historic centre. Later we proceed to the start of our walk (1.5 hrs) to the picturesque hilltop village of Grožnjan, well known for its artists and Summer Music School.

DAY 6

B, L, D included

A track following a section of a disused railway brings us to the frescoed Romanesque Church of St. Barnabas in Vižinada (2.5 hrs). After lunch, we continue to Poreč to visit the fine 6th century Euphrasian Basilica. The rest of the afternoon is free to explore Motovun's mediaeval charms, including the parish church erected to a design by Andrea Palladio, buy presents to take home in the truffle shops or relax in the indoor pool of our hotel.

DAY 7

B, L, D included

We explore the 'Glagolitic Way', celebrating the ancient Slavonic script, on our way to the village of Hum, officially the smallest 'town' in the world. 21 inhabitants of Hum enjoy a 1,000 year architectural and civic heritage and the church of St. Hieronymous contains remains of 12th century Byzantine frescoes. Leaving Istria behind, we head for the Kvarner Gulf and the village of Lovran. We follow the coastal path leading past the botanical gardens and fin-de-siècle villas to Opatija, once the favoured Adriatic resort of the Austro-Hungarian Emperor, Franz Joseph, and our seafront 4-star hotel.

DAY 8

B included

A morning transfer (2 hrs) to Zagreb airport concludes our holiday.

Activity Level Standard

6 walking days, 2 – 3.5 hours daily. Good paths on limestone and through woods, occasionally muddy or rough underfoot. Sturdy walking shoes or lightweight boots offering good ankle support are recommended.

Temperatures

In early May, daily high temperatures in Istria range between 18° and 21°C.

Accommodation

- 3 nights in a small seafront 4-star hotel in Fažana
- 3 nights in a comfortable 3-star hotel, a reconstructed mediaeval palazzo, in Motovun
- 1 night in a 4-star hotel in Opatija

Trip Price, per person sharing

£1,933.25 until 1st August 2018

£1,985.50 until 1st November 2018

£2,037.75 until 1st February 2019

£2,090 after 1st February 2019

<https://www.kudutravel.com/faq#discounts>

£290 double for single room supplement

£400 deposit per person

Please note that the double for single room supplement is imposed by the hotels and not by Kudu Travel. If you are willing to share but no other suitable guest books on the trip, we regret that the supplement will be payable.

Price Includes

- Accommodation for Days 1 through 8, on a twin shared basis
- All meals (with wine at dinners and restaurant lunches) as listed in the daily notation
- All land transportation in a private vehicle, as described except during free periods
- All entrance and sightseeing fees, except during free periods
- Gratuities for restaurant and hotel staff (appreciation for tour guides is at your discretion)

Price does not Include

- Flights to and from Zagreb airport
- Trip cancellation, medical or other insurance
- Immunisations, prescriptions or other medical requirements
- Passport, visa and health documentation
- Personal expenses (laundry, alcohol besides wine with group lunches and dinners, free time activities, etc.)
- Meals noted as excepted in the daily notation
- Transport and transfer of excess baggage

VALUE FOR MONEY - SO MUCH IS INCLUDED

On Kudu trips, you will only need money for postcards, presents to take home, the odd G & T or an irresistible ice cream. Festival and opera tickets, museum and gallery entrances, National Park fees, all meals (with a very few exceptions specified in individual itineraries), wine with lunch and dinner, access to specialist books carried by the guides, gratuities for porters and hotel and restaurant staff, boat rides, train trips, internal flights, wine tastings, 4WDs with drivers, the services of skilled local guides and trackers etc. are ALL INCLUDED in the cost of your holiday.

We are confident that, like previous very satisfied guests, you will discover that our tours give you excellent value for money.

Visa and Health Requirements

Visitors from the EU and USA currently require a valid passport, but not a visa, for entry to Croatia. If you are a national of any other country, please check visa regulations with your nearest Embassy of Croatia.

At present, there are no specific and compulsory health requirements for entry to Croatia. Residents of countries in the EU can claim free (emergency) medical treatment in Croatia by presenting their European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

You may also wish to check the advice given to travellers by the Department of Health (www.dh.gov.uk/travellers) and the FCO (www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice).

Insurance

It is essential, and a condition of booking, that you protect yourself with a suitable travel insurance policy as soon as you book this trip. We can arrange comprehensive cover for UK residents. For further details, please see our website or ask our office.

Size of Party

This trip will run with a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 14 guests.