

Montenegro ~ Mountain Walks and Wildflowers

<https://www.kudutravel.com/tours/montenegro-walking-tour>

6 – 16 June 2019

Montenegro - little known, unspoilt, beautiful and wild - beckons walkers, wildlife and botany enthusiasts, and history lovers alike. During this 11-day itinerary, we walk through dramatic mountain scenery in several of Montenegro's national parks, our paths bordered by colourful displays of wild flowers and accompanied by soaring birds of prey. We enjoy an afternoon exploring by boat the Balkan's largest lake, Lake Skadar, a national park and a Ramsar designated wetland. Throughout the trip we are immersed in Montenegro's complex and colourful history and culture, culminating in a three-night stay in the captivating coastal town of Kotor - a world heritage site, and one of the gems of the Adriatic.

Exhilarating days are complemented by nights in comfortable hotels, carefully selected for their character and location. Here we enjoy unsurpassed local hospitality as we sample distinctive Balkan cuisine accompanied by eminently drinkable wine.

HIGHLIGHTS of our Montenegro walking tour include:

- Seeing the Tara canyon, the deepest in Europe, and the spectacular Bay of Kotor
- Inspiring upland walk tour in the mountainous interior
- Visiting frescoed Orthodox monasteries, dramatic fortresses, and the Venetian palaces and churches in UNESCO listed Kotor
- A marvellous array of wildflowers, especially orchids, and many birds of prey
- Delicious Balkan cuisine (particularly grilled lamb and fish) and very palatable red wines

Guests' comments on this trip:

'A wonderful and memorable trip with fabulous weather, excellent company and wonderful walking.'

'Very stimulating trip in a fascinating area. Constantly varied programme around the walking makes it very refreshing.'

'Small, friendly and very efficient. It was nice that almost everything was included. A wonderful holiday.'

Itinerary

DAY 1

D included

We meet in the afternoon at Dubrovnik airport from where a short road transfer into the mountains takes us over the border into Bosnia-Herzegovina. Near the town of Trebinje, we visit the monastery of Tvrđos, founded in the 15th century and nowadays particularly renowned for its award-winning wines. We walk along the Trebišnjica river valley past still functioning water mills, and then conclude our afternoon with a walk through the old Ottoman quarter of Trebinje. Our comfortable 3-star hotel in the town overlooks the plane tree-filled square, and has a good restaurant offering typical Balkan dishes, such as lamb with grilled red peppers, garlic and rice.

DAY 2

B, L, D included

A scenic mountain road takes us over a pass into Montenegro. We take a short walk to see a 4th century Roman bridge and have lunch in a rustic restaurant with wooden terraces set above a small river. This afternoon's 2-hour walk begins on a broad, upland plateau and offers extensive views of the Durmitor mountains to the west. We pass flocks of sheep with attendant shepherds and observe Montagu's Harriers hunting the grassland. One of the undoubted highlights of the walk are the 'Bogomil Carvings' - the necropolis of 13th century *stećci*, some of the 60,000 elaborately carved monumental tombstones scattered throughout Montenegro and neighbouring countries. In the village of Zabljak, located at an altitude of 1456 m in the middle of the Durmitor National Park, our modern 3-star hotel (for 2 nights) has well-equipped rooms with mountain views.

DAY 3

B, L, D included

A short drive through pine and birch forest brings us to the start of a walk to the edge of the spectacular Tara canyon, the longest and deepest in Europe (at certain points the drop is a sheer 1,300 metres). Griffon vultures, crossbills, nutcrackers and red squirrels may be seen as we walk through mixed forest and meadows en route to our picnic. In the afternoon, we circumnavigate one of Mount Durmitor's glacial lakes, *Crno Jezero*, the Black Lake, located at an elevation of 1,416 m. We search for wild strawberries and blueberries amongst the gentians, saxifrages and wild thyme.

DAY 4

B, L, D included

A narrow track takes us into the heart of the Durmitor National Park, a magnificent mountain wilderness with 27 peaks over 2,200 metres and healthy populations of (rarely seen) brown bears, wolves and lynx. On foot, we cross a pass where snow finches and alpine choughs are often seen, and we search for high altitude flowers, particularly gentians and crocuses as we gradually descend a wild valley with superb views of the surrounding peaks. Heading east by vehicle, we pause to see the 365-m long bridge which spans the Tara river. In 1942, a Yugoslav Partisan raiding party blew up the central arch thus halting the Italian advance through the country. We follow the Tara canyon down to the isolated Dobrilovina monastery, where the nuns unlock the heavy wooden door to allow us to see the early 17th century frescoes. We check into our 4-star hotel, strikingly designed in wood and stone, for 3 nights.

DAY 5

B, L, D included

A scenic drive along the Bistrica river valley brings us to a village close to the border with Serbia. From here, we walk gradually up (300 m over 6 km) to the 17th century monastery of St Nikola, where we picnic and may sample the local apple or plum *rakija* (brandy). Our return journey takes us into the Biogradska National park, renowned for its huge diversity of flora and fauna and its glacial lakes. Surrounded by magnificent virgin forest, we take a short walk round one of these lakes, before dinner in a typical old tavern.

DAY 6

B, L, D included

We travel to the starting point of today's walk by jeep. Beginning at an altitude of 1,790 metres, our full day's walk crosses the mountain range of Bjelasica, characterised by rounded volcanic tops, valleys filled with primeval beech and hornbeam forest, and upland meadows with cornelian lily, gentians and vanilla orchids. We watch for soaring golden and booted eagles. We are privileged to have lunch with a family of shepherds at their *katun* (wooden

summer shelter), before continuing over two small, steepish passes and gradually down to a mountain tarn.

DAY 7

B, L, D included

Today, we travel south along the Morača river canyon and visit its famous 13th century Serbian Orthodox monastery with outstanding Byzantine frescoes. Late morning, we reach Lake Skadar - a vast freshwater lake straddling the borders of Albania and Montenegro, surrounded by dramatic karst mountains. After lunch, a local guide takes us on a boat trip on the Lake, which has been included in the Ramsar list of wetlands of international importance since 1996. Host to more than 260 species of birds, the lake is noted particularly for pygmy cormorant colonies and rare Dalmatian pelicans. Our 3-star village hotel has a restaurant well known for fish dishes flavoured with mountain herbs collected by the owner.

DAY 8

B, L, D included

Today begins with a visit to the National Park information centre. We travel north on a little-used mountain road with broad vistas and many wildflowers and cross the triple-arched mediaeval bridge at Rijeka Crnojevica. Late morning, we arrive in Cetinje. Founded in the 15th century, Cetinje was the former Royal capital of Montenegro and became both a cradle of Montenegrin culture and an Orthodox religious centre. We take a walk around the town centre, followed by lunch. In the afternoon, we drive down into the beautiful Bay of Kotor, sometimes called Europe's most southerly fjord. We settle into our 4-star hotel in the centre of the walled mediaeval town (a UNESCO World Heritage site). The remainder of the afternoon is free for exploring Kotor's heritage of Venetian architecture, including St Tryphon's Cathedral (completed in 1166) and numerous Renaissance palaces built by wealthy patricians, merchants and sea captains. In the cooler early evening, there is an optional steep walk on the 15th century walls to the Fortress and St Ivan's castle.

DAY 9

B, L, D included

We make our way slowly up the incredible hairpin road above the Bay of Kotor and into the Lovcen National Park. At a striking mountain-top Mausoleum (weather permitting) we pay homage to Njegos, the nineteenth century Prince-Bishop of Montenegro who is widely regarded as the country's most famous son. Our walk today is on rocky mountainous slopes, rewarded by spectacular views and the huge variety of flora and fauna for which the park is famous: within an area of just 60 square km., there are nine different habitats. It is particularly excellent for orchids (lesser butterfly, fragrant, green-winged, Bertolini, woodcock, bug and pyramidal), and for birds (hoopoe, red-backed shrike, peregrine, honey buzzard and wheatears). This evening, we dine in a famous old restaurant on the coast.

DAY 10

B, L, D included

Today begins with a visit to the remains of the Roman *Villa Urbana* in nearby Risan, with fine 3rd and 4th century floor mosaics containing geometrical and vegetable motifs, as well as the exceptionally rare presentation of *Hypnos*, the classical God of Sleep. We then drive onto the top of the massif which dominates the Bay of Kotor, for a spectacular walk following the old Austro-Hungarian packhorse route. After a rest and a snack, enjoying the stupendous views, we descend to Perast. This once rich and powerful waterfront town boasts 16 churches and 17 formerly grand Venetian Gothic palazzi, many of them now just picturesque ruins. A small museum recalls the town's illustrious nautical past. In the 18th century, Perast had a fleet of 1,000 ships and Peter the Great sent his officers to learn marine engineering and cartography here. We take a small boat over to Our Lady of the Rock island to see the votive

church there and return to Kotor for our farewell dinner in the best seafood restaurant on the harbour.

DAY 11

B included

We drive along the coast to cross the border into Croatia en route to Dubrovnik airport for late morning flights home, or on to Dubrovnik itself for an optional extension in this coastal jewel of a city.

Activity Level Standard

8 walking days, 2 – 7 hours daily. Most tracks are rough and stony, so lightweight hiking boots with ankle support and a proper ridged sole are essential. Walking poles are also very useful.

Temperatures

In the mountains in June temperatures vary between 21°C during the day and are as low as 9°C in the evenings. On Lake Skadar and the coast, the range is 16 - 26°C.

Accommodation

- 1 night in Trebinje, in a comfortable 3-star hotel overlooking the plane tree-filled square
- 2 nights in Zabljak, in a comfortable modern 3-star hotel
- 3 nights in Kolasin, in a 4-star hotel strikingly designed in wood and stone
- 1 night in Virpazar, in a 3-star village hotel with a restaurant well known for fish dishes
- 3 nights in Kotor, in a 4-star hotel in the centre of the walled mediaeval town

Trip Price, per person sharing

£2,303.25 until 5th September 2018 **£2,365.50** until 5th December 2018

£2,427.75 until 5th March 2019 **£2,490** after 5th March 2019

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

£220 single room supplement

£400 deposit per person

Please note that the 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. We shall endeavour to obtain double rooms for single occupancy whenever possible, but hotels in some countries do have single rooms that are small and less well positioned - in this case the supplement is simply ensuring your privacy.

Price Includes

- all accommodation for Days 1 through 11, on a twin shared basis
- all meals (with wine at dinners and restaurant lunches) as listed in the daily notation
- all land and water transportation as described except during free periods
- all entrance, sightseeing, guiding and National Park fees except during free periods
- gratuities for local guides and restaurant and hotel staff (appreciation for Kudu tour guides is optional)

Price does not Include

- flights to and from Dubrovnik airport
- trip cancellation, medical or other insurance

- immunisations, prescriptions or other medical requirements
- passport, visa and health documentation
- personal expenses (laundry, alcohol besides wine and beer with group lunches and dinners, free time activities, etc.)
- meals noted as excepted in the daily notation
- transport and transfer of excess baggage
- Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Croatia departure tax, if any

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, USA, Canada and Australia currently require a valid passport, but not a visa, for entry to Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. If you are a national of any other country, please check visa regulations with your nearest relevant Embassies.

At present, there are no specific and compulsory health requirements for entry to Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Croatia. 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 a trip. We can arrange comprehensive cover for UK residents. For further details, please see the brochure, or ask our office.

Size of Party

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