

OPTION 1 BOHO BLISS the new

RIVIERA

Sail along the under-the-radar Dalmatian coast – and take advantage of one of Europe's last independent currencies (cheap chic!)

by **Antonia Whyatt**

NOTHING CAN PREPARE YOU for the view of Croatia's beautiful Dalmatian coast from the deck of a sailboat. Tiny churches perch high up on hillsides, bottle-blue water gives way to white sandy beaches on nearly deserted islands, and perfect little villages gently hug horseshoe bays. Set sail on a week-long trip through some of Europe's most stunning scenery. These islands have been luring sightseers since time began.

CROATIA

DAY 1

Dubrovnik: Cannes of the East

Dubrovnik's heavy vowels don't skip along in a sunshiny singsong like Positano, Capri or Santorini, the other European playgrounds it's often compared to – instead, they conjure a post-Communist drabness. But that's what makes the utter, heavenly surprise of this perfectly preserved, honey-coloured city balanced on a promontory over the sun-drenched Adriatic all the more powerful. It's completely walled in, and the streets are paved with limestone so smooth that they literally gleam at night.

Dubrovnik was once occupied by Venice (Lord Byron called it "the pearl of the Adriatic") and, as a result, baroque palaces and churches are everywhere. But despite its grand appearance, the city is buzzy. At night, tables from bars and restaurants spill onto the sidewalks and the air has a happy thrum. Don't miss Café Buža, a bar reached via a tiny opening in the old town ramparts. Marked by a sign that says "Cold Drinks," it tumbles down a series of terraces clinging to the cliff.

WOW FACTOR: A UNESCO World Heritage city in the most sensational seaside setting.

NOTA BENE: Buy your supplies here, as it's probably the only place with a big supermarket that you'll visit.

DAY 2

Korcula: Picture Perfect

When you were young and you pictured the place where Rapunzel let down her hair, it probably looked a bit like Korcula. With its medieval towers, bridges arching over the streets and lanes so narrow you could leap across town on the rooftops, it's the perfect setting for a fairy

SET ADRIFT

Above: Dubrovnik at dusk. Opposite page: one of Mljet's many unspoiled coves and beaches; having a drink at a tiny bar in Dubrovnik's limestone-paved streets.



tale. This is a piney, thickly wooded island with tons of quiet coves and secluded beaches to swim at, so haul in the sails and putter around until you find the perfect spot.

WOW FACTOR: Dubrovnik in a snow globe, this magnificent, Venetian-era town shouldn't be missed.

NOTA BENE: Don't leave without buying some delicious olive oil and the brilliantly named Grk wine. (Who needs vowels?)

DAY 3

Hvar: *Celeb Hangout*

The view as you pull into Hvar for the first time is enough to make you weep, it's so breathtaking. The harbour is edged by bougainvillea and ringed by perfectly faded Renaissance buildings. There's a market overflowing with Mediterranean bounty (figs, olive oil, perfectly ripe peaches), where little old ladies dressed in black haggle over prices, and the lavender, for which the island is famous, gently scents the warm air. But it's not just rustic charm; Hvar is the spot for the in-the-know crowd. They alight from their yachts as the setting sun turns the town pink and stroll along the waterfront to party in the chic quayside bars.

WOW FACTOR: The famous and the fabulously wealthy holiday here (think Gwyneth Paltrow and Bill Gates).

NOTA BENE: Ask your skipper to stop at Vis, a nearby island. Around 500 varieties of herbs grow here, and it's also home to a fantastic restaurant, Konoba Bako.

DAY 4

Mljet: *Unspoiled Paradise*

This is the perfect post-Hvar detox. Over 70 percent of the island is a pristine national



park covered by forest, and the rest is dotted by fields, vineyards and small villages. After lazing around on a sailboat, it's nice to get the blood pumping. Moor the boat off the south side of the island next to Saplnara, and go snorkelling off one of the sandy beaches. Thanks to the lack of development, the sea here is rich in marine life. Or rent a kayak and paddle across stunning inland lakes like Veliko Jezero and Malo Jezero, the latter of which is home to an island with a 12th-century Benedictine monastery turned restaurant.

WOW FACTOR: Untouched wilderness in the Mediterranean is hard to come by.

NOTA BENE: Have dinner on board, moored next to the national park so you can skinny-dip in the phosphorescent sea.

DAY 5

Sipan: *Foodie Haven*

Get your skipper to radio ahead and reserve one of the three mooring spots for Konoba kod Marka, which is, in many people's opinions, the best restaurant in Croatia. It's on the harbourfront of the tiny town of Sipanska

Luka, on the west side of this sleepy island that during the 15th century was *the* place for Dubrovnik's aristocrats to have their summer houses. As a result, there are romantic, crumbling palaces with carved stone lions and dramatic *Romeo and Juliet*-style balconies littering the island. You'll be asked whether you want the meat or the fish option. Go for fish: The local *orhan* is sweet and perfectly grilled, and the shrimp in brown sauce are so mouth-wateringly tender you don't even need to bother peeling them. The best part? Eating outside under the amazingly clear night skies dotted with bright stars.

WOW FACTOR: One of the top restaurants in Croatia.

NOTA BENE: Don't forget to call ahead to make a reservation!

Island Hopping by Sailboat

For up to five people: \$5,300 (seven days, low season) to \$7,595 (high season) on a 42-foot boat including skipper, provisional food (breakfast and snacks), fuel and insurance; 1-888-350-3568, sunsail.com.





OPTION 2 MODERN LUXE

the chic CRUISE

Skip all the planning-induced headaches, border-crossing hassles and even lineups – and embark on a luxe, perfectly curated sampling of the Continent *by Stacy Lee Kong*

CRUISING THE MEDITERRANEAN aboard the luxury-ship line Silversea's *Silver Spirit* is like spending a week firmly ensconced in the good life at the most well-appointed of well-appointed hotels. Only this "hotel" offers up Europe on a platter.

GREECE

DAY 1

Athens: Living History

Spend the morning exploring Plaka, Athens' oldest neighbourhood, walking up the winding (and steep!) pathway that leads to the Acropolis and standing slack-jawed in wonder at the ruins of the Parthenon and the old temple of Athena. But if the morning is a reminder of how old civilization is, the afternoon, when you board the *Silver Spirit*, is evidence of how far we've come: You only stand in line for a few minutes at a time; your luggage is hand-delivered to your cabin; and, speaking of that cabin, with its plush styling, it's hard to believe you're on a ship at all. Forget living out of a suitcase; everything gets hung on sturdy oak hangers or folded neatly in the dresser. The cozy beds beg to be climbed

into and the TVs beg to be watched, or you could order room service from your very own butler — do what you please, because that's what this trip is all about.

WOW FACTOR: The Parthenon. It's almost a mind-blowing 2,500 years old!

NOTA BENE: Even if you go in the off-season, the whole Acropolis will be crawling with other tourists. For the lightest crowds, arrive as the gates open at 8 a.m.

ITALY

DAY 2

Taormina, Sicily: European Charm

After a day at sea, you'll arrive in Taormina, on the east coast of Sicily. The town is sandwiched between the water on one side (long stretches of sand bleed into the warm, salty waters of the Ionian Sea) and Mount Etna on the other (imposing and beautiful at the same time). The streets are full of Euro charm, with cobblestones, wrought-iron accents and window boxes overflowing with brightly coloured blooms.

WOW FACTOR: The tiny town is set into the cliffs and has spectacular views of the sea.

LAND HO!

Above: The famous harbour of Monte Carlo, Monaco. Opposite page: a restaurateur with one of Greece's specialties – goat!; modern Athenian street life meets ancient Greece.





NOTA BENE: Aside from shopping, there's not much to do in Taormina. But you can explore the hiking paths, which wind through the hills surrounding the town, or wander around the Teatro Greco, the ruins of a huge marble amphitheatre.

DAY 3

Capri: Celebrity Getaway

The ship docks in Sorrento, but Capri is just a 20-minute hydrofoil ride across the Gulf of Naples. The island is tiny and stunningly beautiful. At the port, there are "convertible-taxis" waiting to be hired, but Silversea also arranges a pocket-sized coach to navigate the winding roads to Anacapri, a township set high above the rest of the island. Take the chairlift, which scales Monte Solaro (the highest point on Capri). It's slightly terrifying on the way up but breathtaking once you arrive. Feet back on solid ground, have lunch at the Al Grottino restaurant in the town of Capri. The island is known for its lemons, so make sure you sample some Limoncello before leaving.

WOW FACTOR: Capri has been a celeb mecca for decades: It was a fave vacation spot for Jackie O, Brigitte Bardot and Sophia Loren and, more recently, for A-listers like Tom Cruise, JLo, Jay-Z and Beyoncé.

NOTA BENE: You don't have to opt for a taxi. There are public buses; one ride costs €1.30, or buy a day pass for €6.70.

DAY 4

Rome: A Religious Experience

Consider a group tour; it's the only way you'll be able to check off all the must-see sights. Walk through the ruins of the Colosseum? Check. Marvel at the gorgeous mosaics that grace the walls of St. Peter's Basilica? Yup. Explore the Vatican Museums and unashamedly gape at the Sistine Chapel? Uh-huh. That way, you'll even manage to have lunch on Via Veneto, the street made famous by Fellini's *La Dolce Vita*.

WOW FACTOR: Everything. It's impossible to resist being smitten by the city's buildings, art and seriously tasty food.

NOTA BENE: They're not kidding about the dress code at the Vatican — you'll be denied entry if your shoulders or knees show.

MONACO

DAY 5

Monte Carlo: Luxe Life

Maybe you made a mental note of the location of the ship's gym earlier in the week, but faced with a two-desserts-a-day diet, anyone's best intentions would fall by the wayside. A tip? Go look for it after Monaco. You'll sip café au lait and nibble at chocolate croissants at tiny cafés and enjoy gelato as you wander around Monaco-Ville — one of the city's original *quartiers*, it's home to the Prince's Palace and a beautiful maritime museum. It will only get more indulgent back on the ship: High tea



means tiny finger sandwiches and tinier cakes, while dinner is a four-course Italian feast at La Terrazza, one of the ship's six onboard restaurants.

WOW FACTOR: The casino looks more like a palace than a place to play craps.

SPAIN

DAY 6

Barcelona: An Urbanite's Dream

It's hot in Barcelona, and shockingly modern. Elsewhere, you're seduced by cobblestones and ruins, but here past and present coexist naturally: Hundred-year-old casas by renowned designers share the sidewalk with Burberry boutiques. Spend an afternoon searching out the work of legendary architect Antonio Gaudí. Stroll through Park Güell, the proposed playground for the city's rich and famous (it didn't work out — the rich and famous thought his designs were kind of weird). Later, wander the ceramic-tiled rooms of Casa Batlló and marvel at the Sagrada Família, a gorgeous, intricate church that's still being slowly completed, decades after his death. This is the only port where the ship docks overnight, so do as the Spanish do and have a midnight tapas and sangria dinner.

WOW FACTOR: Stroll down Las Ramblas for the perfect intro to Barcelona.

NOTA BENE: It's notorious for pickpockets, so stash your bling onboard the ship.

BUDGET-FRIENDLY TIP: Get luxe for less — Silversea voyages are sometimes discounted by up to 60 percent.



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PREPARE FOR TAKEOFF Cannery Row, Monterey, Calif.; the beautiful streets of San Francisco; El Capitan, Yosemite, Calif.; retro sign, Las Vegas.

cruising the skies

Forget the aggravation of commercial airlines – the latest way to sightsee is by private plane. The best part? This VIP treatment doesn't cost a fortune!

by **Vanessa Milne**

FLYING ALWAYS SEEMS LIKE the least fun part of travelling – the interminable lines, the weird airport food, the strappy-shoe removal – so when we heard about the new chartered-jet tours of North America from Mauiva AirCruise, our excitement was muted, to say the least. But the concept of seeing up to 12 north-eastern or western U.S. cities within a week appealed enough to override our inner grouch (especially with meals, guided tours, tickets to local attractions and four-star hotels taken care of!).

We were pleasantly surprised to discover it's not flying that's the problem – it's airports. Fortunately, the tour's private airports, part of the chartered-jet life,

replace frustration with luxury: latte machines, tiny mints, helpful staff, plush waiting rooms filled with captains, gleeful rumours of Air Force Two having landed there and on-plane (and nearly non-existent) security. And – oh joy! – the coach is waiting on the tarmac when you land to whisk you away.

The rest of the trip maintains that incredibly easy, all-inclusive vibe: After you get on the bus, your guide will take you around the next city (museums, wineries or whatever's on the menu), take your group to dinner and drop you off at your four-star hotel (where, by the way, your bags will be waiting in your room). More independent types can opt to skip the guided tours and take off in a rental car right from the airport, staying at the same hotel and meeting the plane in the morning. *All-American East*, \$1,499; *Western Wonder*, \$1,799; *mauiva.com*.

ALL-AMERICAN EAST TOUR

- DAY 1** Niagara Falls
- DAY 2** Toronto; Niagara-on-the-Lake
- DAY 3** Hershey; Lancaster, Pa.
- DAY 4** Harrisburg, Pa.; Washington, D.C.
- DAY 5** Mount Vernon, Va.; Washington
- DAY 6** Washington

WESTERN WONDER TOUR

- DAY 1** Monterey; Carmel, Calif.
- DAY 2** San Francisco
- DAY 3** Sausalito; Muir Woods; Sonoma County
- DAY 4** Yosemite; Fresno
- DAY 5** Las Vegas; Hoover Dam
- DAY 6** Grand Canyon; Bryce Canyon
- DAY 7** Las Vegas



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