



## CROATIA: SEA KAYAKING THE DALMATIAN COAST

*Itinerary*



<b>MEETING PLACE:</b>	Dubrovnik Airport - Dubrovnik, Croatia
<b>MEETING TIME:</b>	A local representative will meet you at the airport on Day 1
<b>RETURN TIME:</b>	Afternoon Day 9
<b>AGE LIMIT:</b>	Minimum age is 10
<b>TRIP LENGTH:</b>	9 Days / 8 Nights
<b>ACTIVITIES:</b>	Sea kayaking, snorkeling, hiking, touring

The Dalmatian coastline may be the most breathtaking in the entire Mediterranean—rocky headlands, crenellated cliffs, sandy beaches, turquoise bays, and ancient towns that tumble in a cascade of white blocks to the sea. With more than nearly 1200 islands, islets and reefs, this stretch of coast along Croatia and Montenegro could not be better suited for exploring by kayak. Paddling allows us to navigate intimate coves, investigate grottoes, and get close to shore to observe nature on uninhabited islands.

Our diverse itinerary focuses on three very different Balkan countries, each with its own distinctive traditions. We'll paddle around the small collection of islands off Dubrovnik in Croatia, visit Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and kayak the protected waters of Montenegro, our most southerly point. This active, small-group adventure is an immersion in the Adriatic sun—a journey along a stunning coast steeped in history, with some of the best local cuisine in the Mediterranean.

### **AWARD-WINNING NATURE-BASED ADVENTURES SINCE 1969**

O.A.R.S. has been in business for over 40 years and that is no accident. Great trips on some of the world's best rivers and coastlines are the recipe for this success. Always focused on our clients and their vacations, it is our genuine belief that river trips and nature-based adventures are extremely valuable life experiences. With that as our foundation, we have committed ourselves over the years to providing the best trips available, always with an eye on improvement.

## SEA KAYAKING

- The sea kayak is a low-impact, non-technical and self-propelled craft devised by the ancient Inuit peoples in the Arctic Ocean. It has evolved into a stable, efficient and extremely sea-worthy vehicle, which makes wildlife observation easily accessible and totally unobtrusive from the water.
- Sea kayaking allows people of all ages and abilities to participate. The sea kayak is a welcome reprieve for the weary knees and backs of hikers and opens up a new paddling realm for canoeists. Paddle strokes are relatively simple and easy to learn, and all of our trips offer expert instruction from a professional guide.

## ACCOMMODATIONS

- **Pension Ivana, Zaton Bay:** Pension Ivana is a lovely family-owned and operated inn located in the village of Zaton Bay, just a short distance outside the old city of Dubrovnik. All rooms have private bathrooms and balconies overlooking the gardens and sea. A full breakfast spread is served on the terrace, with expansive views of the bay just steps away.
- **Catamaran Huck Finn:** The M/V Huck Finn is a French-built Nautitech catamaran, with spacious interiors and large, comfortable lounge areas. Accommodations are in four double cabins, all with en-suite facilities. The two forward cabins each have access to an additional single berth that can also be accessed through a deck hatch. This 8-passenger catamaran is an intimate yet comfortable vessel for conveying our kayaks and small groups of paddlers. Guests will also enjoy shipboard snacks and meals freshly prepared throughout the trip. While staying on the catamaran, we typically begin our day paddling after breakfast, explore various destinations ashore on foot, and then sail in the late afternoon, to arrive at our next location in the evening.

## CITIES & VILLAGES

- A key feature of this trip is also the time we spend discovering the cities and villages of ancient Dalmatia. From Dubrovnik's romantic old quarter to the stone forts and narrow lanes of Korcula town, to Mostar's elegant single-span bridge, the cultural and architectural treasures of past centuries are as seductive as the beauty of the landscape and sea.

## Sample Itinerary

We pride ourselves in running a relaxed and always flexible schedule. Every trip is different depending upon the group, other trips in the area, and sometimes the weather. Typically we try to paddle after breakfast and again before dinner, sailing around noon. We do this to avoid paddling in the usual afternoon winds and instead use them for sailing. We'll then explore the islands and their quaint towns by foot in the early evening. The following is a sample of what your trip might be like.

### **Day 1: Arrive in Dubrovnik, Croatia / Welcome Dinner**

- Upon arrival in Dubrovnik, you will be transferred from the airport to the peaceful harborside village of Zaton, a short distance away but a world apart. Many Dubrovnik aristocrats built villas here over the centuries, drawn to the quiet escape Zaton provides. There's time to rest after a long flight before a late afternoon hike to the high limestone cliffs nearby, a perfect vantage point for a glorious sunset. Tonight we'll enjoy a traditional Dalmatian welcome dinner followed by a briefing on the adventures in store for the days ahead. *Pension Ivana, Zaton Bay (D)*

### **Day 2: Dubrovnik / Zaton Bay**

- After breakfast we head to the beach for some paddling instruction and a chance to get familiar with our

kayaks in the calm waters of Zaton Bay. At midday we're off to Dubrovnik for an afternoon in one of the most exquisite cities on the Mediterranean. Called 'The Pearl of the Adriatic' by Lord Byron, Dubrovnik was proclaimed a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1979. Rivaling Venice in beauty and power during the Middle Ages, the Republic of Dubrovnik was a center for Croatian language and literature and still retains much of its historic character today.

- A walk through the marble-paved Stradun, the heart of the city's Stari Grad, or Old Town, offers engaging people-watching as locals stroll and gather at sidewalk cafes. More opportunities to absorb Dubrovnik's ambience wait among the narrow alleyways, small squares and monumental fortresses that once protected this important shipping port. Centuries of stone-cutting, carving and engraving are evident in facades and interiors of the Duke's Palace, ancient libraries, and the oldest pharmacy in southern Europe. More jewels of Croatian heritage are on display in Dubrovnik's many museums, galleries, churches and monasteries, which we have a chance to sample this afternoon. A walk along the town's stone ramparts is a must, with expansive views over the red-tiled rooftops of medieval Dubrovnik and its string of marinas and promenades along the sea front. There's also time to visit historic Lokrum Island, a few minutes away by water taxi, where we can explore the botanical gardens and nature reserve and the deserted Benedictine monastery founded in 1023. Or, take a cable car ride to the top of Mt. Srdj for splendid sunset views over the Old Town and islands, with the option to hike downhill back to town. Lunch and dinner are on your own today, for maximum freedom to choose among Dubrovnik's compelling sights and dining opportunities. Later this evening we drive back to Zaton Bay to spend the night. *Pension Ivana, Zaton Bay* (B)

### **Day 3: Kolocep / Lopud**

- This morning we discover the enchanting Elaphiti Islands with a paddling excursion to Lopud via the island of Kolocep, making frequent stops for swimming, snorkeling, and lunch. The Elaphiti are delightfully free of cars, creating a tranquil oasis for our excursion. Each island is like an open-air museum of history, art, architecture and folklore, with no more than a couple of hundred permanent residents who live in traditional stone houses edged by parks and gardens. The islands bask in a supremely agreeable climate, with constant sunshine and lush, subtropical vegetation. Cypress, lemon, orange, olive and pine trees also create a verdant backdrop for many beautiful beaches. We'll relax at an inviting sandy beach in Lopud where adjacent tall palms and fragrant magnolias provide shade from the midday sun. There's much to explore inland as well, with fortresses, small churches, and monasteries rich in medieval art tucked among the green hills. A stroll along Sunj Beach as the sun sinks into the sea is an idyllic finale to the day. Our catamaran waits in the harbor, and we remain anchored in this quiet bay for the next few days as we get to know the islands more intimately. *M/V Huck Finn* (B, L)

### **Day 4: Sipan / Ston**

- The island of Sipan, largest in the Elaphiti archipelago, feels like a languid dream. We'll spend 3–4 hours paddling its transparent aqua waters, then go ashore to explore its rural interior on foot. On the landward side of the island there are many sheltered natural anchorages. On the seaward side, however, the ocean's constant lapping against the stone shore has carved the rocks and cliffs into dramatic forms, which we explore up close in our kayaks. Inland, Sipan's cultural heritage is apparent at every turn. Vineyards and olive orchards create a hilly green quilt, while more than 30 chapels, 15th-century monasteries, and numerous Gothic and Renaissance summer villas dot the countryside.
- Life in the island's two villages, Sudjuradj and Sipanska Luka, feels little changed by time, and we lose ourselves wandering the well-worn pathways that cross the bucolic landscape. The few hundred residents who live here are famous for their hospitality and enjoy sharing the organically grown food

and wine produced on their fertile island. We'll indulge in such fare during lunch at Marko's, the local restaurant on Sipan Harbor that is also noted for superb seafood.

- This afternoon we sail into Ston Bay, which we'll discover by kayak. This little-visited area off the standard Dalmatian tourist path is known for the oldest salt works in the Mediterranean and salt mining continues today. It also boasts the World's second-longest defensive wall (after China) that stretches across the Peljesac Peninsula between two villages. Built in the 14th and 15th centuries to provide a bulwark against the expanding Ottoman Empire, the wall is fortified with 10 round and 30 rectangular towers. More than three miles of the original wall remain standing.
- The waters of Ston Bay are calm, becoming marshland as they head toward the far end of the bay. We paddle up a small, slow stream and through the square-shaped pools of the ancient salt works. Birds abound, and we'll likely see herons, ducks, kingfishers, seagulls and cormorants as we make our way. The bay on the other side of the peninsula is exceptionally clean and clear, supporting a vital mussel and oyster industry. We'll have a chance to sample them, along with other fresh seafood, when we dine on an idyllic garden terrace at the popular Stagnum restaurant tonight. *M/V Huck Finn* (B, D)

#### **Day 5: Mljet National Park**

- Early this morning we motor/sail 3–4 hours to the island of Mljet, where we'll spend the day kayaking around one of the Croatia's most enchanting natural locations. Breakfast is served as we cruise the turquoise waters of Prozura Bay, a seductive spot for swimming and snorkeling. Much of the 62-square-mile island is covered in original Mediterranean forest, with the wild western side designated a national park in 1960, the first formal effort to protect an ecosystem in the Adriatic. According to legend, the Greek explorer Odysseus fell so in love with the island on a holiday visit that he stayed for seven years. One of the highlights of our day in Mljet is paddling through the island's saltwater lakes to the sanctuary of Saint Mary, a 12th-century Benedictine monastery that sits on a tiny islet in the middle of the Great Lake. We will also poke around the many intriguing caves on the island's exposed outer coast, formed over centuries by the battering of the waves.
- We stop for lunch in the fishing village of Soline, where we can savor the fresh catch of the day along with other dishes made in time-honored ways with local products. Since the Middle Ages the island has been well known for its exceptional goat cheese, wine and honey, after which it was named: 'Melita' and 'Meleda' are ancient names for Mljet, both derived from the word 'mel'—honey. After lunch, we can swim in the warm waters of island's two large freshwater lakes, which are nearby. Later—as if we hadn't had enough fabulous food already!—we indulge in a traditional farmer's dinner served by a family of local winemakers and divers in the quiet village of Zuljana. The women who are our hosts are both scuba-diving instructors, and one is also a noted marine biologist, always enthusiastic to share her knowledge about the undersea wildlife we may have observed while snorkeling. Replete with an excellent meal, plenty of wine and lively conversation, we finally retire to our catamaran to spend the night. *M/V Huck Finn* (B, L)

#### **Day 6: Zuljana / Korcula**

- This morning we discover the Bay of Zuljana, with some of the most beautiful small beaches found anywhere in the Adriatic. The bay is a magnet for divers who are drawn to its 20 impressive scuba-diving locations, including the German WWII torpedo boat S-57 sunk by British Royal Air Force Spitfire planes in 1944. PADI Open Water certified divers (or equal and higher) can opt to explore it at 40 meters (133 feet). Non-divers will have plenty of opportunities to encounter the underwater world on numerous beaches that we will reach via kayak.

- This afternoon we'll visit the small village of Trstenik on the opposite side of the bay, making a stop at the Grgich family winery. If the name sounds familiar, it may be because one family member, Miljenko 'Mike' Grgich, left his native Croatia after studying viticulture at the university in Zagreb and landed in the Napa Valley in 1958. He went on to establish a world-renowned winery, Grgich Hills Estate. Over the past 50 years Grgich wines from Napa have become legendary—but we challenge you to sample our hosts' excellent no-name vintages right here on the Dalmatian Coast and see if you can tell any difference between these and the California wines that sell for more than \$100 a bottle! Through DNA analysis, Mike Grgich proved that his Zinfandel originated from grapes grown on the Peljesac Peninsula—the same grapes our host uses to produce wines for \$5-10 a bottle. (Unfortunately, we are not allowed to take more than two bottles home through U.S. customs—so we'll just have to savor as much as we can, right here!)
- An option for this evening is a visit to Korcula, rightfully one of the most celebrated islands on the Dalmatian coast. It's just an hour via car and ferry from Zuljana. Like most of the Croatian islands, Korcula was first settled by the Greeks, who called it Korkyra Melaina, or 'Black Corfu,' for its dark and densely wooded appearance. Still covered in forest today, Korcula is one of the greenest islands in the Adriatic. Its hilly terrain offers magnificent views of the intricate coastline with its many small bays, secluded beaches and tiny uninhabited neighboring islands. Korcula Town, sometimes called a “mini Dubrovnik,” is a typical medieval walled Dalmatian city, with its defensive towers and red-roofed houses constructed in the shape of fish-bone to mitigate the effects of wind and sun on citizens. The island is reputedly the birthplace of Marco Polo, and the house in the Old Town believed to be his residence is being restored by the town authority as a museum. Korcula abounds in art, with museums, galleries and festivals offering culture and entertainment for locals and visitors alike. We may have a chance to see a performance of the Moreska, a traditional sabre dance common throughout the Mediterranean in the Middle Ages. In Dalmatia it dramatized the struggles of Christianity against the Ottoman Empire and is now found only in Korcula, where it has been performed for almost 500 years. *M/V Huck Finn* (B)

### **Day 7: Orebic / Mostar**

- Our day begins early with a last breakfast aboard before disembarking and driving into Bosnia-Herzegovina. Our destination is the city of Mostar, named for the mostari, or bridgekeepers, who looked after the famous bridge over the River Neretva. The old bridge—called the Stari Most—was an elegant single-arch stone span designed by Turkish architect Mimar Hayruddin. Completed in 1566 after nine years' labor, it was hailed as one of the greatest architectural achievements in the Ottoman Empire. Long a symbol of Mostar, the original bridge was destroyed in 1993 during the Balkan wars but has since been rebuilt with international support, using some of the original limestone that fell into the river when the bridge was bombarded. It is still a wonder to walk across, and one is hard-pressed to tell that the current bridge is a reconstruction.
- Crossing from the west bank to the east we will also be traversing the ancient line where East and West symbolically met, a divide that has long fomented ethnic and religious divisions in this region of the world, yet the bridge has historically stood as a point of unity and, today, healing. We'll also wander through Mostar's Old Bazaar, the Kujundziluk, named after the goldsmiths who traditionally created and sold their wares on this street. It's the best place in town to find authentic paintings and copper or bronze carvings of the Stari Most, pomegranates (the symbol of Herzegovina) and the famed stecaks—(engraved medieval tombstones). This evening is free to find an appealing spot for dinner on your own. Afterward, we drive two hours back to Zaton Bay in Croatia. *Pension Ivana, Zaton Bay* (B, L)

## Day 8: Montenegro

- Today we drive two hours to the tiny principality of Montenegro where we'll visit Perast, Kotor and Budva, some of the most beautiful towns in the Adriatic. Perast's bayside setting is captivating, nestled beneath the hill of St. Elijah, overlooking the Verige Strait and the nearby islands of St. George and Gospa od Skrpjela (Our Lady of the Rock), each with a picturesque chapel. Gospa od Skrpjela is the only manmade island in the Adriatic—it was built atop a rock as a shrine after two Venetian sailors from Perast found a picture of the Virgin Mary there in 1452. Venice controlled Perast between 1420 and 1797, a period during which the city's 16 baroque palaces, 17 Catholic and two Orthodox churches were built. Though Perast does not have the typical fortress wall, the old city is ringed by nine defensive towers built by the Venetian Republic in the 15th and 16th centuries.
- In nearby Kotor, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, we explore the old port first documented in 168 BC. The city is surrounded by an impressive Venetian wall and the influence of medieval Venice remains dominant among its many architectural treasures. The Bay of Kotor, one of the most deeply indented portions of the Adriatic coast, is sometimes called the southernmost fjord in Europe.
- This afternoon we explore the 2,500-year-old town of Budva, one of the oldest settlements on the Adriatic Coast. The heart of Montenegro's vacation Riviera, Budva is favored for its sandy beaches, lively nightlife, and arresting examples of Dalmatian architecture. Both Greeks and Romans have left their imprint on the city. After the fall of Rome, when the Roman Empire was divided into east and west, the defensive barrier that separated the West and Byzantium ran through this area and that border status between empires has had a lasting impact on the cultural identity of Budva.
- On our way back we'll spend the early evening on the seaside promenade under the palm trees in Cavtat, a Croatian town with a long and intriguing history. The original city, called Epidaurus, was founded by the Greeks in the 6th century BC, though fell to the Romans by 228 BC when it became Epidaurum. Centuries later, Byzantine emperor Justinian I sent his fleet to Cavtat during the Gothic War (535-554) and occupied the town. The city was later sacked by the Avars and Slavs in the 7th century, when refugees fled to the nearby island of Laus (Ragusa) which over time evolved into the city of Dubrovnik. The town of Cavtat was reestablished in the Middle Ages, soon coming under the control of its powerful neighbor, the Republic of Ragusa—today's Dubrovnik. Following dinner on your own, we drive back to Zaton Bay for a final night. *Pension Ivana, Zaton Bay (B)*

## Day 9: Depart for home

- After breakfast, enjoy a morning at leisure in Zaton or Dubrovnik before departing Dalmatia. One last interlude at the beach? Some final shopping to be done? The time is yours until you transfer to the airport to connect with your flight home. (B)

## What's Included?

- Skilled professional guide service
- 4 nights lodging / 4 nights accommodation on catamaran (based on double occupancy)
- All meals as indicated in the itinerary (B-breakfast, L-lunch, D-dinner)
- Mljet National Park admission fees
- Guided sightseeing of Dubrovnik
- All kayaking gear and safety equipment
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure dates and ground transportation

## **What's Not Included?**

- Flights to and from Dubrovnik, Croatia
- Airport departure taxes
- Meals not covered in the itinerary
- Alcohol and beverages at restaurants, hotels and onboard
- Single supplement US \$450 (applicable for land accommodation only; catamaran cabins are based on double occupancy and solo travelers will be assigned a roommate of the same gender)
- Insurance of any kind, including **mandatory** medical evacuation and suggested cancellation insurance
- Items of a personal nature (an equipment list will be provided)
- Gratuities

## **SOMETHING VOLUNTARY**

- In reviewing your statement, you'll note a \$1/person/day donation to Waterkeeper Alliance, a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to fishable, swimmable and drinkable waterways worldwide. One-hundred percent of these funds go directly to worldwide watershed protection and your contribution is tax-deductible. This donation is voluntary and may be removed from your invoice if you choose not to participate. Please notify our office if you would prefer to delete the donation from your balance.
- The O.A.R.S. Foundation is a not-for-profit 501 (c) 3 organization with the express goal of providing opportunities for young people to experience the magic of a river trip. Visit [www.oarsfoundation.org](http://www.oarsfoundation.org) to learn more about how your tax deductible donation can change young lives for the better.

## **Terms & Conditions**

### **Reservations & Deposit**

- An \$800/person deposit is required at the time of reservation. The balance is due 90 days prior to departure.

### **Cancellations & Refunds**

- If you find it necessary to cancel your trip, please notify us as soon as possible. All payments are nonrefundable and we regret that we cannot make exceptions for personal emergencies. For this reason, **we strongly urge you to investigate trip insurance** (see Insurance).

### **Cancelled Trips**

- Travel Outdoors, Inc. and the outfitter Explorers' Corner reserve the right to cancel any trip due to insufficient sign-ups (**this trip requires a minimum of 4 guests**). In such a case, you will be given a full refund of the tour cost, but Travel Outdoors, Inc. and Explorers' Corner are not responsible for additional expenses incurred in preparation for the trip.

### **Medical**

- Under most circumstances, if you are of an adventurous spirit and in reasonably good health, you should have no problem enjoying a Travel Outdoors trip. People with medical conditions, including pregnancy, should have a physician's approval before taking an adventure travel trip.

### **Insurance**

- Although every effort is made to insure a safe trip for all, we require that you purchase medical evacuation insurance to participate in this expedition. Call Travel Insurance Services at 800-937-1387 or visit their website at [www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635](http://www.travelinsure.com/what/imedhigh.htm?32635) for inexpensive options that cover this requirement. We also strongly recommend that you protect yourself, your belongings, and your vacation through the purchase of a short-term traveler's policy. A trip cancellation policy covers your non-refundable payments in most cases, should you have to cancel your trip at the last minute due to illness or injury, as well as including the coverage required above. Trip participants should realize that in the event of illness or injury on a river trip, evacuation could be prolonged, difficult, and expensive. Personal belongings and cameras are carried entirely at the owner's risk, and we accept no responsibility for lost, damaged, delayed, or stolen property.

**Liability Waiver**

- Everyone is required to sign a standard release form before the trip, acknowledging awareness that some risks are associated with the trip. Safety is of the utmost concern on our trips. However, due to the nature of the activities, a condition of your participation is that you will sign this form and return it to our office before the trip begins. Anyone who refuses to sign the form will not be allowed to participate, and consistent with Travel Outdoors cancellation policy, there will be no refund of the trip fees at that time.

**Responsibility—An Important Notice**

- Travel Outdoors, Inc., Explorers' Corner and cooperating agencies act only in the capacity of agent for the participants in all matters relating to transportation and/or all other related travel services, and assume no responsibility however caused for injury, loss or damage to person or property in connection with any service, including but not limited to that resulting directly or indirectly from acts of God, detention, annoyance, delays and expenses arising from quarantine, strikes, theft, pilferage, force majeure, failure of any means of conveyance to arrive or depart as scheduled, civil disturbances, government restrictions or regulations, and discrepancies or change in transit over which it has no control. Reasonable changes in itinerary may be made where deemed advisable for the comfort and well being of the participants, including cancellation due to water fluctuation, insufficient bookings (we require a minimum of 4 guests) and other factors. There is risk in whitewater rafting, particularly during high-water conditions. Rafts, dories and kayaks do capsize. You could be swept overboard. Your guide will make every attempt to assist, but you must be strong and agile enough to "self-help" and "float-it-out" without further endangering yourself or others. We reserve the right not to accept passengers weighing more than 260 pounds or with a waist/chest size exceeding 56 inches. We may decide, at any time, to exclude any person or group for any reason we feel is related to the safety of our trips. We are experienced at accommodating people with various disabilities. Please give us an opportunity to make you feel welcome. We need to discuss any special requirements ahead of time. On advancement of deposit the depositor agrees to be bound by the above recited terms and conditions. Prices subject to change without notice.

**Explorers Corner**

- Explorers' Corner, a travel partner of Travel Outdoors, Inc. is the operator of this trip. Upon arrival, a representative will meet you and escort you throughout the program. These staff members are the very best and will strive to ensure your complete satisfaction.

© 2011 Travel Outdoors, Inc. 12/4/11 MG