

Balkan Extended

from Venice to Split 10N/11D
Italy, Slovenia and Croatia

Day 1: Welcome to Venice

Venice (Mestre)

Welcome to Mestre, the gateway to Venice's timeless beauty and enchanting canals. Upon your arrival on the mainland, you'll *check-in* to your hotel and have some time to relax and refresh. In the evening, you'll meet your guide, who will introduce you to the upcoming tour and provide you with a special travel card, which offers unlimited access to Venice's water and land transportation, allowing you to explore the city at your leisure. For those who wish, the guide will accompany you to Venice, where you can enjoy the evening atmosphere of this magical place. You may choose to enjoy a delightful dinner at one of the local restaurants, with the experience being entirely at your own leisure and arrangement.

Overnight: Venice

Day 2: The Timeless Venice

Venice

Prepare for an enchanting journey through Venice, **a city of romance and mystery**. Your adventure begins with a scenic ride along **the Grand Canal**, where the timeless beauty of Venice unfolds with every turn.

Feel the energy of the iconic **St. Mark's Square**, the pulsating heart of Venice, where every step echoes with the grandeur of the past. Admire the splendour of **St. Mark's Basilica** with its luminous mosaics and intricate architecture, a testament to the city's opulence and power during the Middle Ages, while nearby the majestic **Doge's Palace** stands as a symbol of Venice's storied history, where art, politics, and intrigue once intertwined.

As you wander through the labyrinthine streets, cross **the Rialto Bridge**, a centrepiece famously depicted in Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice", offering captivating views of this island-city. Picture the days of Casanova as you meander through narrow alleyways, each turn revealing a new scene of masked figures, hidden courtyards, and artistic treasures.

After the city tour, if you wish to make your day even more special, we suggest taking **a gondola ride** through the canals, where you can admire the fading light reflecting off the water and the elegant architecture that defines this timeless city. As evening falls, Venice transforms into a magical realm. Consider **dining at a local restaurant**, where the flavours of the sea blend with rich Italian traditions. This is Venice - a place where the past and present merge into an unforgettable poetic experience.

Overnight: Venice

Day 3: The Islands of Venice

Venice - Murano - Burano - Ljubljana

After check-out, we continue our Venetian adventure toward the two most famous islands of the Venetian Lagoon.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Murano Glass Factory: *Murano is an island renowned worldwide for its **exquisite glass production**, where you will have an opportunity to visit **a local glass factory**. Here, you'll witness skilled artisans*

*transform molten glass into stunning pieces of art through the interesting process of **glassblowing**. Discover the rich history and learn about the various techniques that have made Murano glass famous for centuries. This experience will deepen your appreciation for the artistry involved, and you may even find a unique **souvenir** to bring home.*

Afterwards, we head to **Burano**, another delightful island in the Venetian Lagoon, famous for its **brightly coloured houses and traditional lace-making**. The vividly coloured buildings, painted in a rainbow of hues, create a cheerful and picturesque backdrop, beautifully reflected in the green waters of the canals. Visit **Galuppi Square**, wander through the quaint streets, explore local shops, and discover the delicate, handcrafted lace that has been a Burano speciality passed down through the generations.

Following our exploration of Venice's rich craft history, we set our sights on **Ljubljana**, the magical capital of Slovenia. You will be greeted by the charming blend of historic architecture and modern sustainability initiatives, reflecting Slovenia's status as an eco-conscious country. After hotel *check-in*, take some time to relax and begin exploring Ljubljana's lively atmosphere. Enjoy a taste of the city with its delightful and diverse restaurant options around you.

Overnight: *Ljubljana*

Day 4: Slovenian Highlights Tour

Ljubljana - Lake Bled - Ljubljana

Start your guided tour around **Ljubljana**, a picturesque city celebrated for its lush greenery, stunning architecture, and laid-back atmosphere. Nestled between the majestic Julian Alps and the Adriatic Sea, it's **one of the greenest capitals in Europe** and home to many tourist attractions, including its dining experiences and numerous museums.

As you stroll along the riverfront, you'll be introduced to the city's stunning landmarks, including the Cathedral of Saint Nicholas, the baroque Town Hall, the medieval **Mestni Trg (Town Square)**, Robba's Fountain, the picturesque central open-air market, and the iconic **Triple Bridge**. The true essence of Ljubljana unfolds along the banks of the **Ljubljanica River**, where numerous bridges span its waters, embodying the city's charm and allure.

During your Slovenia tour, a visit to the alpine gem, **Lake Bled**, is a must - its beautiful island is the most photographed sight in Slovenia. For centuries, this green pearl of **the Slovenian Alps** has captivated visitors with its natural beauty and mystical charm. We will take a boat ride on a traditional boat called pletna towards the **Church of Saint Mary** where you will have a chance to step onto the sacred island and explore its historic church. Use your free time to visit **Bled Castle**, perched high above the lake on a rocky cliff, overlooking the lake. Be sure not to miss out on the famous **Bled "krempita"**, a delectable cream cake best enjoyed against the backdrop of the breathtaking scenery!

Return to Ljubljana and indulge in the city's rich and diverse gastronomic scene which blends traditional Slovenian flavours with modern culinary trends.

Overnight: *Ljubljana*

Day 5: The Diversity of Slovenia

Ljubljana - Postojna Cave - Goriška Hills - Portorož

Say goodbye to the capital of Slovenia after hotel *check-out*.

Just an hour from Ljubljana, Slovenia offers a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity - a visit to the spectacular **limestone Postojna Cave**. Board an electric train to explore this unique underground landscape, where you will encounter awe-inspiring stalactites, stalagmites, limestone pools, subterranean gorges, and mesmerising underground waterfalls. As one of Slovenia's most beloved tourist attractions, a visit to this cave is an absolute must on your journey through Slovenia.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Goriška Hills Wine Tasting: For a full immersion into Slovenian charms, we head towards **the Goriška Hills**, a region shared between Slovenia and Italy, that seamlessly blends with the neighbouring Italian countryside. This area is famous for its wine production, particularly white wines such as Rebula and Sauvignon. The highlight of the region is the **medieval village Šmartno**, dating back to the 14th century, where you can travel back to the captivating and picturesque stories of the past and uncover the essence of Brda's warmth and hospitality. Here, amidst the rolling vineyards and charming views, we will visit an authentic winery where you will sample one of the **region's finest wines**.

Finally, we arrive in **Portorož** (from the Italian "Portorose", meaning "rose port"), an attractive Istrian town in Slovenia and one of the largest tourist centres in the Slovenian coastal region, and *check-in* to our hotel.

Overnight: Portorož

Day 6: Istrian Hilltop Treasures

Portorož - Grožnjan - Motovun - Poreč

Today, we head to **Grožnjan**, a charming hilltop village, renowned for its vibrant arts scene and enchanting medieval charm. This idyllic town, with its cobblestone streets and well-preserved architecture, has become a haven for artists from around the world. Blend along with the locals as you explore the town's galleries and workshops, and enjoy the village charm with a drink in hand, savouring the moment before we journey on to our next destination.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Truffles of Istria: Join us for an exciting **truffle-hunting demonstration** in the picturesque forest, celebrated for its prized **white and black truffles**. Guided by an expert hunter and his skilled dog, you'll learn the secrets of finding these culinary treasures. Finish your adventure with **a tasting** of local truffle-infused cheese and sausages, complemented by a glass of **Istrian wine**. As you savour these delights, you will hear the tales of truffle cultivation and offer fascinating insights into their unique way of life.

Our journey leads us towards the hidden gem called **Motovun**. Perched atop a lush hill, this ancient town boasts sweeping views of the verdant Motovun Forest and the rolling plateaus of the Istrian countryside. As you stroll through its narrow, cobblestone streets, you'll encounter well-preserved **medieval architecture**, including the iconic town walls and the Church of St. Stephen.

Finally, we *check into* a hotel in **Poreč**, where we rest and recharge for the adventures ahead.

Overnight: Poreč

Day 7: The Soul of Istria

Poreč - Rovinj - Lim Bay - Pula - Poreč

Today, you'll explore the historic town of **Rovinj**, often called **the gem of Istria**. Wander through its picturesque old town, where 18th century Venetian architecture and cobblestone streets weave a tapestry of history and romance. As you explore the winding alleys and vibrant squares, you'll experience firsthand the timeless allure of **Rovinj's Old Town**. From the lively atmosphere of Grisia Street, renowned for its **local art and charming shops**, to the panoramic vistas that showcase the town's scenic Mediterranean beauty, Rovinj offers an unforgettable blend of cultural heritage and natural beauty.

EXPERIENCE MORE / Oyster & Seashell Tasting: *Following the Istrian coastline, we head to the breathtaking Lim Bay, also known as **Lim Channel**, a stunning 11-km-long estuary where freshwater meets seawater, creating a haven for marine life. Here, we have selected one of the best seaside restaurants, located near the oyster farm, where you can **savour the freshest and finest shellfish**, including oysters, mussels, clams, and scallops paired with two glasses of Istrian wine.*

The final stop is **Pula**, a beautiful town possessing a wealth of historical sites and examples of Roman architecture. The star of the show is the remarkably well-preserved **Roman amphitheatre**, the 6th biggest Roman coliseum in the world. The Temple of Augustus, the Triumphal Arch of Sergius, the Twin Gates and other sites of the old town will make you feel like you have stepped back in time.

As evening approaches, we return to **Poreč**, reflecting on the day's discoveries in Istria and the delicious flavours we've enjoyed.

Overnight: *Poreč*

Day 8: The Devil's Garden

Poreč - Opatija - Plitvice Lakes NP

Today, we bid farewell to the stunning Istrian peninsula, and after *check-out* we head towards **Opatija**, an aristocratic town renowned for its distinct history, architecture, and lively atmosphere. Enjoy a relaxing coffee break and soak up the charm of Opatija as you stroll along the famous **Lungomare promenade**, which offers stunning panoramic sea views.

As we proceed on our journey, let the picturesque countryside unfold before you. Pass through charming villages, admire rolling hills, and catch glimpses of the sparkling Adriatic Sea, before entering the mountainous landscape surrounding our next stop.

Start exploring **Plitvice Lakes National Park**, a beautiful park that contains **16 interconnected cascading lakes**. On old maps, it was called "Devil's Garden" and it is the first site in the Balkans to get **UNESCO World Heritage status**. You will enjoy a 3-hour guided tour that includes a visit to the upper and lower lakes. Although swimming is not allowed, you'll have time to relax at one of the nearby restaurants, surrounded by the untouched beauty of this lush paradise.

Soak in the nature as you *check-in* to your hotel, rest and unwind.

Overnight: *Plitvice Lakes NP*

Day 9: Dalmatian Coastal Charm

Plitvice Lakes NP - Trogir - Split

As you leave Plitvice Lakes and *check-out*, the tour continues to the coastal part of Croatia. The first part of the day will be devoted to the beautiful town of **Trogir**. Located on a tiny island, this **UNESCO World Heritage Site** boasts beautiful architecture, stunning sea views, and palm trees that spread along its pleasant waterfront promenade. Watch out, or you will find yourself lost in medieval times. Walking its charming streets, you will find yourself immersed in the blend of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque architecture. Look out for the Cathedral of Saint Lawrence, **the Clock Tower**, the Loggia, the Land Gate, Kamerlengo Castle and Saint Mark's Tower.

The day concludes in **Split**, the largest city in Dalmatia, with 1,700 years of remarkably preserved history. Enter through **the Golden Gate** and wander through narrow cobblestone streets, where bustling markets,

charming cafés, and hidden courtyards reveal the rich history and timeless grandeur of **Diocletian's Palace**. Visit **the former Temple of Jupiter** in the heart of the imperial complex, followed by the Cathedral of Saint Domnius, the oldest Catholic cathedral still in its original structure. Stroll along the lively **Riva promenade**, soaking up the Mediterranean sun and vibrant atmosphere. Whether exploring its rich history, savouring fresh seafood, or simply unwinding by the sea, Split captivates with its unique charm and dynamic energy. End the day with a hotel *check-in*.

Overnight: Split

Day 10: Hvar Island Adventures

Split - Hvar Island - Split

To start your day, you will take a short drive to the ferry port and board a **high-speed catamaran** that brings you to the queen of the Croatian islands - **Hvar**, so much more than just the glitz and glamour of its main town. Take in the azure blue seascape as you journey through the Splitska Vrata to Hvar Island.

A town built in wonderful **Venetian architecture style**, the island-city of **Hvar** is famous for its traffic-free cobbled streets, filled up with nice restaurants and bars. During the walking tour you'll see the harbour, Renaissance Cathedral, Benedictine Convent, Franciscan monastery, and Church of Our Lady of Mercy.

We've set aside plenty of free time for you to fully enjoy all that the island has to offer. Based on your interests, we recommend you to: embark on a boat excursion to discover the enchanting **Pakleni Islands**, relax on the sun-kissed beaches, explore the picturesque trails to Milna Bay for a memorable adventure or enjoy a delightful Mediterranean lunch at a local restaurant.

In the late afternoon, you'll head back to **Split**. *Please note that the departure timing may vary depending on the season.

Overnight: Split

Day 11: Farewell, Split

Split

After hotel *check-out*, it is time to conclude your Balkan tour. As most of our clients decide to **extend their trip** within their own arrangements, **transfer to the airport** at the end of the tour is not included in the overall price. Any guests who would like Balkan&more to organise a departure transfer on their behalf are welcome to contact us. End of services.

GENERAL INCLUSIONS

Valid for both Standard and Superior packages

Transportation:

- Airport arrival transfer
- Transportation as per the itinerary with modern, comfortable vehicles tailored to your group size

Entrances & tickets:

Vaporetto 48h transportation ticket in Venice, Pletna boat ride on Lake Bled, Church of Saint Mary, Postojna Cave, Pula Arena, NP Plitvice Lakes, Catamaran Split - Hvar - Split

Experiences:

Glass Factory experience on the Murano Island (*Murano Glass Factory*); Wine tasting in a local winery in Western Slovenia (*Goriška Hills Wine Tasting*); Truffle tasting in Croatian Istria (*Truffles of Istria*); Oyster & Seashell Tasting in Croatian Istria with two glasses of local wine (*Oyster & Seashell Tasting*).

Meals:

- 10 x breakfast
- 1 x dinner
- Additional meals included in our experiences

Additional:

- Professional English-speaking tour guidance throughout the tour
- VAT, accommodation taxes and city taxes
- Tour logistics and organization with dedicated service and care
- 1 bottle of water (0.5l) daily for each passenger

HOTELS / STANDARD package

- 2 BB in Venice** in Leonardo Royal Venice Mestre 4* / Best Western Plus Bologna 4* / Elite Hotel Mestre Venice 4* or similar
- 2 BB in Ljubljana** in Best Western Premier Slon 4* / Exe Lev 4* / City Ljubljana 4* or similar
- 1 BB in Portorož** in Neptun 4* / Wellness Apollo 4* / Remisens Metropol 5* or similar
- 2 BB in Poreč** in Valamar Diamant 4* / Valamar Riviera & Residence 4* / BO Palazzo 4* or similar
- 1 HB in Plitvice Lakes National Park** in Zrinka House 4* / Plitvice Inn 4* / Plitvička kuća M 4* or similar
- 2 BB in Split** in Art 4* / Globo 4* / Marul 4* or similar

HOTELS / SUPERIOR package

- 2 BB in Venice** in Leonardo Royal Venice Mestre 4* / Best Western Plus Bologna 4* / Elite Hotel Mestre Venice 4* or similar
- 2 BB in Ljubljana** in Eurostars uHotel 4* / Occidental Ljubljana 4* / Grand Plaza & Congress Center 5* or similar
- 1 BB in Portorož** in Grand Hotel Portorož 4* / Hotel Slovenia - Terme & Wellness 5* / Grand Hotel Bernardin 5* or similar
- 2 BB in Poreč** in Valamar Parentino Hotel 4* / Martis Forum Heritage Hotel & Residence 4* / Hotel Parentium Plava Laguna 4* or similar
- 1 HB in Plitvice Lakes National Park** in Degenija 4* / 16 Lakes 4* / Palcich 4* or similar
- 2 BB in Split** in Luxe 4* / Marmont Heritage 4* / AC Hotel by Marriott Split 4* or similar

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