

**"THE SECRETS OF NORTHERN CROATIA - FROM ZAGREB TO ISTRIA THROUGH THE DINARIC MASSIF, THE KVARNER BAY ISLANDS AND THE PLAIN MARSHES" IN 8 DAYS**

**YOUR ITINERARY**



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## **PROGRAM**

### **Day 1: Arrival in Zagreb – overnight in Samobor**

Arrival at Zagreb airport in Croatia.

Vehicle pick up.

Road to Samobor, near Zagreb. Travel time: 30min

Check into hotel Lavica. The hotel is listed as a historical monument, set on the banks of the Samobor river and bordered by a beautiful promenade, a few steps from the town's baroque square. Samobor is a privileged spot for day breaks of Zagreb's inhabitants due to its typical setting and renowned restaurants offering specialties such as salami and the "kremšnita" cake.

Dinner in hotel restaurant.



### **Day 2: Zagreb, Samobor nature park with the Okić fortress and wine tasting – overnight in Buzet**

Breakfast.

Road to Zagreb. Travel time: 45min

Visit Zagreb.

*We suggest visiting the two hills that mark the history of the Croatian capital and the green market. The Bishop's Hill Kaptol and the Lords' Hill Gradec or Grič, where the Croatian government and Parliament are still located today.*

For lunch, in order to experience the authentic life of the capital, we recommend the Medvedgrad microbrewery offering local specialties and a very original beer choice.



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Continue to the town of Klake. Travel time: 1h

Walk along the "educational path" around the impressive mountain where the Okić fortress is set. You will cross a pretty forest to the mountain refuge, then by a short and somewhat adventurous climb you will reach the ruins of the Okić fortress (altitude 411m). The fortress was a strategic defense point against the Ottomans from the 12th to the 17th century when it was abandoned. From the peak you will enjoy a beautiful scenic view on the city of Zagreb and the region.

Descend from mount Okić and continue through the forest to the ethnographic house.

Walking time: 1h30 – Level: easy/medium: 2/5 (ascent to mount Okić: 3/5) – Elevation: 100m



Leave the Samobor valley and head to the town Plešivica.

Travel time: 10min

The region of Žumberak is marked by amphitheatre shaped landscape, hills with steep slopes forming different microclimates. The clay soils and the right altitude are perfect for viticulture. In the Žumberak region we can find very old typical sorts of wine such as their sparkling wine and Portugizac, a wine beloved by the Zagreb's elite.



We suggest visiting the Jagunić family wine production, renowned for white and sparkling wines. From the Jagunić estate you will enjoy a splendid view on Žumberak and Zagreb plains.

Continue to the town of Buzet. Travel time: 2h

Check into hotel Fontana 3\*. Dinner in hotel restaurant.

*Buzet is the finest example of fortified hilltop villages in Istria. The ascent towards the town offers splendid views on the Istrian peninsula bringing detachment and inciting dreams of past times. According to local legends, once upon the time giants lived with men in Istria. The giants helped the villagers in building and fortifying their towns, they also brought water by digging the canyon where the Mirna river flows today. However, an impossible love between the children of the giant and villagers' leaders made the giants disappear forever. Standing on the Buzet's ramparts and overlooking the river valley really gives you the impression of being a giant.*



The forests of the Mirna valley abound in truffles. The biggest truffle in the world weighing 1.3 kg was found in these forests by a local truffle-hunter. The village has kept its medieval character with twisted alleys offering a vast choice of specialty stores including truffle specialties and other original products.



### **Day 3: Istria with mount Učka nature park and Pula – overnight in Buzet**

Breakfast.

Drive to 995m high Poklon mountain's pass (travel time: 45min). Climb to the Vojak peak (1395m) offering splendid views on the Kvarner gulf, Istria and Slovenia. Continue to the village of Mala Učka known for the cheese makers, then return to Poklon mountain's pass following the southern slope of the Učka massif, through a pretty chestnut forest.

Distance 12km - Walking time: 4h - Elevation: 475m - Level: medium 3/5

After the hike we recommend lunch in the Učka guesthouse: Boškarin steak (autochthonous Istrian bovine) with wild asparagus.



Continue to Pula. Travel time: 1h

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Visit Pula.

Pula is a Roman city with one of the best-preserved amphitheatres in the world dating back to the 1st century AD. The amphitheatre is still in use for concerts and theatre performances. The nearby old town has also beautiful monuments from the Roman past. You can enter the old town through the Roman triumphal arch, the main square is a Roman forum with the temple of Augustus, now converted into a museum. You can also visit the 17th century Austrian fort in the upper part of the city.

The beaches of Fažana, small fishing town located near Pula, are pleasant for a swim.



Return to the hotel. Travel time: 30min

Dinner in hotel restaurant.

#### **Day 4: The island of Krk with the Lunar plateau – overnight in Senj**

Breakfast.

Drive to the island of Krk. Cross the impressive bridge connecting the island to the mainland and continue to the town of Baška, known for its 2km long sandy beach. Travel time: 2h



Climb through the maquis to the Stražice peak (380m), the entry point to the Lunar Plateau. You will enjoy splendid views of Baška bay and the Kvarner Islands.

The Lunar Plateau is a typical phenomenon of the Kvarner bay. A northeast wind called Bura descends from the Velebit massif with strong gusts forming sea spray and thus burning vegetation on the eastern part of the island. Only a few aromatic plants can survive in such harsh conditions. Almost all the islands of the Kvarner bay are bare on one side while the west side is green and inhabited. The rocky areas were used as pastures for goats and sheep in the past. You will also see wells and watering ponds set in depressions. The Kuntrep sinkhole is listed as an ornithological reserve, set at the foot of Mount Diviška (471m) marking the highest point of the hike... In the heights you may also see the very rare griffon vulture. The locals have named this barren area “the Lunar plateau”. It offers unforgettable views of the Velebit massif on the mainland, and the Kvarner islands of Cres, Rab... Return to the starting point by the Zakam peak (200m) and descend to the town of Baška for a well-deserved swim.



Distance: 12km - Level: easy/medium 2-3 / 5 -  
Effective walking time: 4h30 - Hiking time with breaks:  
5h30 - Elevation: 400m

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We recommend lunch in one of the restaurants of Baška beach.

Continue to the town of Krk. Travel time: 20min  
Visit Krk.

*Krk is the largest Croatian island with 410 km<sup>2</sup>. It was home of the Frankopans, the most powerful Croatian noble family. The town of Krk is built in stone with ancient lush palaces next to simple fishermen's homes.*



Proceed to the town of Senj by the coastal road. Travel time: 1h40

Check into hotel Art 3\* set in the old fortified warehouses of the medieval town. Art is a small capacity hotel located on the seafront.

Dinner in hotel restaurant.



### **Day 5: Velebit national park and Kuterevo bear refuge – overnight in Otočac**

Breakfast.

Drive to the entrance of the park Babić Šica and then continue to the parking Zavižan. The road offers nice scenic views on the islands of Rab, Pag and Krk. Travel time: 1h15

Velebit is the biggest mountain range in Croatia, stretching on almost 200km with peaks up to 1800m. It encloses the Kvarner bay in the mainland and offers scenic views on the beautiful archipelago. The botanical diversity is exceptional due to steep slopes generating a large number of different niches over short distances. The wildlife is made of brown bears, wolves, lynx, deer, grouse, otters... Walk on the Premužić trail named after its creator, a 19<sup>th</sup> century biologist and forest engineer. The trail offers unforgettable views on the Kvarner bay, meandering between "dolmens with surfaces chiseled by the waters". The trail is a genuine masterpiece of engineering. Descend to Zavižan through wild forests and peculiar valleys.



Distance: 15 km - Level: average 3/5 - Effective walking time: 5h30 - Hiking time with breaks: 6h30 - Elevation: 500m

Plan a picnic lunch. In the middle of the hike you will find a nice mountain hut offering scenic views on the surroundings.

Continue to Kuterevo. Travel time: 30min

Visit the Kasno bear refuge. The refuge is located in the mountain village of Kuterevo and is run by volunteers.

The mission of the refuge is to give the orphaned bears, unable to survive without the mother bear, a second chance. The refuge hosts younger bears and cubs (the youngest is 2 years old). The idea is to preserve one of the most stable bear populations of Europe. You will appreciate the noble adventure and the sharing of values.



Check into Mirni Kutak 3\* hotel. Dinner in hotel restaurant. The hotel is located in the peaceful valley of the Gacka River, 1.5 km from the centre of the town Otočac. Mirni Kutak is a family owned hotel featuring 2 terraces, a swimming pool, a hot tub and a sauna. The restaurant serves local and international specialties.



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**Day 6: The Plitvice lakes national park (UNESCO) – overnight in Graberje Ivaničko**

Breakfast.

Drive to Plitvice lakes national park. Travel time: 1h

Visit the national park with the Upper lakes, the travertine waterfalls, the electric boat on the central lake Kozjak and the Lower lakes with the Big waterfall.



Distance: 8km - Effective walking time: 5h -

Level: 2/5

*The Plitvice Lakes are located in the mountainous Lika region, near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. The national park is a natural phenomenon, part of UNESCO natural world heritage sites. It consists of 16 lakes with crystal clear water which flow into each other in magnificent waterfalls. A paradise of nature.*

Proceed to the Kezele guesthouse, 40 km from Zagreb.

Travel time: 2h30

Traditional rural dinner.

Kezele guesthouse is a farm and an ethnographic house illustrating the traditional building style of the Croatian countryside. The rooms are a blend of modern amenities and old-style furniture. Your hosts are winemakers, so you can visit their farm, cellar and taste their wines.



**Day 7: Lonjsko Polje nature park – overnight in Graberje Ivaničko**

Breakfast.

Drive to the village Krapje, at the entrance of the nature park Lonjsko Polje. Travel time: 1h

*Lonjsko polje is a wetland that has long been managed by man using natural retentions.*

*Here men and nature are nested in a harmonious symbiosis, just like land and water. Lonjsko Polje is an important ornithological reserve. Farmed species are genetically pure and ancient breeds. The park is spread over several localities. For a good overview, we advise the visit of 2 sites: Stara Lonja with the ethnographic village and Krapje where you will discover unique rural and forest landscapes.*



Visit the nature park information centre and walk on the "Graničara" hiking trail (= Borderer's Trail). This area was marked by the wars against the Ottomans, you will see old refurbished watchtowers of that era, hence the name of the trail. You will also discover the ornithological reserve and autochthonous livestock species such as the "podolski" ox and the "turopoljska" pig. We recommend a boat trip in the marshes.



Hike duration: 2h30 / 3h - Level: easy

Continue through the park to the village of Stara Lonja. Travel time: 30min

Visit the ethnographic village Stara Lonja.

For lunch, we advise tasting the local specialties. Proceed to the ethnographic village Čigoč with an impressive stork population. Travel time: 20min



Proceed to the town of Sisak.

Travel time: 1h

Short visit of the Sisak castle.

*Sisak region was an important battlefield during the war against the Ottoman empire. The town was guarded by the fortress Stari Grad and was never conquered. During history Sisak was an important trading centre, and many industries were established here in the second half of the 20th century.*



Return to the hotel. Travel time: 40min

Dinner in the guesthouse restaurant.

### **Day 8: Departure from Zagreb airport**

Breakfast.

Drive to Zagreb airport. Travel time: 30min

Departure flight.

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## **VEHICLE DESCRIPTION**

For 2 persons: air-conditioned B category car, Opel Corsa, Suzuki Swift, Chevrolet Aveo, Renault Clio or similar.



For 4 persons: air-conditioned H standard category car, Skoda Octavia or similar.



For 6 to 8 persons: air-conditioned Van category car, Opel Vivaro 8+1, Renault Trafic 8+1 or similar.



You can of course rent any other category of vehicle.

## **RENTAL CONDITIONS:**

- Unlimited mileage
- Ferry crossings to the islands without extra rental fees (included in price)
- CDW insurance: the car rental company waives the right to collect a high deductible from you if the car is damaged, and most importantly it covers most of the damage in case of an accident. Theft insurance. The cost depends on the category of the vehicle.
- 1 additional driver included without extra rental fees (included in price)

*NB: It is mandatory to own a credit card for the vehicle rental. A security deposit will automatically be pre-authorized on your credit card and will be returned after the rental of the vehicle ends.*

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## **TOUR PRICE**

### **THE PRICE INCLUDES:**

- Accommodation in a double room for 7 nights in hotels and 3\* guesthouses for 7 nights on half-board basis. Namely: 1 night in hotel Lavica 3\* in Samobor, 2 nights in hotel Fontana 3\* in Buzet, 1 night in hotel Art 3\* in Senj, 1 night in hotel Mirni Kutak 3\* in Otočac and 2 nights at Kezele 3\* guesthouse in Graberje Ivaničko
- Car rental for 8 days (please see « vehicle description »)
- GPS tracks for hikes
- A roadbook including the detailed itinerary, a presentation of tourist sites to be visited (history and information) and various practical information on the town or site you visit (references of restaurants, parking lots...)
- 24/7 assistance in English by Sveta Ana travel agency. You will be provided with an emergency telephone number in case of incidents or any other major problem
- Assistance, insurance and organization costs of Sveta Ana travel agency

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NOTE: Sveta Ana travel agency checks the availability of hotels before writing the offer but does not guarantee the availability of the hotels prior to the definitive confirmation from the customer. If at the time of confirmation, the hotels are no longer available, Sveta Ana travel agency will undertake necessary steps to find similar accommodation, nearby the hotels listed in the initial offer.

**THE PRICE DOES NOT INCLUDE:**

- Child seat. <sup>1</sup>
- Fuel.
- Road tolls and parking fees.
- Deductible cancellation and other services.
- Entrances to the monuments and national parks mentioned in the program.
- Flights and airport taxes
- Meals not mentioned in the program as “included”
- Repatriation assistance / insurance
- Drinks and personal expenses
- Tips

<sup>1</sup>. Available on explicit client request.

**OPTIONALS:**

Sveta Ana travel agency provides the following additional optional services:

- Child seat = 7 € per day
- GPS (English) = 7 € per day
- Local English-speaking licensed guides providing visits of tourist sites: 115,00 € per visit of 1.5 hrs approximately
- “Private Travel” package with an English-speaking driver – guide. The package includes driver-guide’s daily costs and the costs of the vehicle (accommodation, food, petrol, tolls, parking fees) = € 330.00

Please note: the above prices are fixed costs are to be divided by the number of participants (the costs are not per person).

**CANCELLATION TERMS**

Cancellations must be written and sent by email to the local agency. Cancellation fees vary depending on when the cancellation occurs:

- more than 30 days prior to departure: 25% of the price of the trip,
- from 30 to 7 days prior to departure: 50% of the price of the trip,
- from 7 days prior to departure to the day of the departure of the trip: 100% of the price of the trip