

# Magic Istria

Three countries, one cultural area, 10 days



Composed by the sea

Curated by Thinkers Tours

Delivered to all lovers of true beauty



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## *1 Arrival at Zagreb Airport & Transfer to Hotel*

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Exemplary hotel: Hotel Esplanade <https://www.esplanade.hr>  
Grand hotel with tradition in the best central location



Meet your guide at the airport and check in to your hotel. Have a walk on Zrinjevac, a grand park-like avenue leading to the city center. Enjoy dinner at a typical Zagrebian restaurant, or just rest.



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## DAY 2 Zagreb

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*Take a historic walk uptown*

*Explore Dolac, the dazzling grocery market at the main square*

*Visit Mirogoj cemetery with its arcades and hundred-year old trees*

With a population of approx. 1 million, Croatia's capital Zagreb represents the cultural, political, and economic center of the country. While constantly growing and developing itself, Zagreb is looking back at a long and eventful history.

The architecture was very much influenced by Austro-Hungarian rule in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Engineers and famous architects from Vienna planned the outlook of the city and designed many monuments and buildings. Uptown is one of the most romantic and charming parts of Zagreb and offers a great view over the whole city. The shortest way up is to have a ride with the 150 year old funicular! At Dolac market, farmers from the surrounding areas sell their fresh products. Park Maksimir is one of the biggest and oldest city parks in the Balkan region. Mirogoj 19<sup>th</sup> century cemetery with its artful arcades and opulent graves of Zagreb's aristocracy is also certainly worth a visit. The locals are known to be fashionistas and coffee enthusiasts. Meet them in the countless cafes and bars and get a sip of Zagrebian lifestyle.



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### *DAY 3 Transfer to Trieste via Ljubljana & Postojna*

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*Visit Slovenia's capital and have a street food style snack  
Embark on a thrilling underworld experience at Postojna caves  
Enjoy an Aperol Spritz just at the very spot it was invented - Trieste*

Exemplary hotel: Plitvice holiday resort <https://www.starhotelscollezione.com/en/our-hotels/savoia-excelsior-palace-trieste/>

Beautifully renovated old grand hotel in the heart of the city, offering rooms with sea views



After breakfast hit the road for Slovenia's capital Ljubljana just one hour away from Zagreb. After a stroll through the city center along the Ljubljanica river with its charming cafés, visit one of the ongoing street food festivals and grab a tasty snack. Continue the journey to Postojna, one of the world's largest flowstone caves, discovered by accident about 200 years ago. A little train will transport you 3 kilometers inside the heart of an impressive dripstone ensemble of over 21 kilometers of joint caves, formed by subterranean rivers running through the karst thousands of years ago. Also pay a visit to Postojna's most famous resident: a white olm that has survived since ancient times, lives more than a hundred years, and can be without food up to seven years. After an hour's drive arrive to charming Trieste, seize the day in style with an Aperol Spritz, an elegant orange-colored drink invented here at glorious Piazza Unità d'Italia. Afterwards, linger the vespertine streets of the city in the footsteps of James Joyce and Rainer Maria Rilke.



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## DAY 4 Transfer to Rovinj via Portorož

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*Visit picturesque Portorož*

*Enjoy a Wine tasting at Kozlović winery*

*Arrive in Rovinj and witness its vibrant night scene*

Exemplary hotel: Grand Park Hotel <https://www.maistra.com/grand-park-hotel-rovinj>

The most luxurious hotel on the Croatian Adriatic, offering contemporary design and old town view.



After having an original Espresso in one of the countless bars of Trieste, visit the little coastal town of Portorož - the jewel of Slovenia's small 50 kilometer coastline. After passing the border back into Croatia, take some of the hidden and winding back roads to the mystic hilltop village of Buje and nearby Kozlović winery. This estate offers one of the best Malvazija - Istria's greatest white wine, a stunning modern cellar and facilities, as well as local snacks garnished with a view over the vineyards. Back on the highway enjoy beautiful views of the green hills, and the blue Adriatic before arriving at the hotel just in time to refresh. In the evening, lose yourself in a labyrinth of cobbled, narrow, winding alleys and scenic little squares of old town Rovinj. Join the swanky crowd in one of the waterfront bars for a sundowner on the rocks.



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## *DAY 5 Leisure at Hotel*

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*Relax and enjoy the amenities of your hotel*

*Take the local excursion boat to nearby red island*

*Visit Lim fiord for a plate of fresh mussels*

Relish in this property's amenities such as a refreshing swim at the hotel's nearby beach, lounge by the pool, or relax in the beautiful park surrounding it. Enjoy the down time, stroll through Rovinj, Climb St. Euphemia's church bell tower for the best view of the old town and the surrounding islands. Go for a run at Zlatni Rt, a beautiful park, just a stone's throw of Rovinj's old town, or board one of the local excursion boats for a 20 minute transfer to the red island. In the evening visit the Lim fiord, a 10 kilometers loch, offering crystal clear waters with a relatively low concentration of salt - the best grounds to harvest mussels. Enjoy them right on the platform where they grow - prepared in a small improvised kitchen.



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## DAY 6 Inland Istria

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*Visit the medieval town of Motovun*  
*Stop by Livade Istria's truffle capital*  
*Meet local artists and visit the galleries in Grožnjan*

Just as beautiful as the coast, but not as crowded in the season, is the hinterland of Istria. Magical little villages, vineyards, winding backroads and romantic hidden little taverns that are famous for their homemade, yet world class food, invite you to explore this highly cultivated area with its centuries' old tradition of hospitality. Nested on a hilltop, overlooking the surroundings, Motovun is a beautifully preserved medieval jewel, presenting its changeable history from the Romans, Venetians, French, and the Habsburg monarchy. It's also the hometown of American car racing champion Mario Andretti. About twenty years ago, Giancarlo Zigante founded one of the world's biggest white truffles in a forest near Livade. This discovery marked the beginning of the rise, not only of his private truffle empire, but of the region as one of the hotspots of the gourmet world. Stop by for a plate of linguine with white truffles, accompanied by one of Istria's great white wines. For a proper round up of an authentic inland Istria experience, linger through the cobblestone streets of Grožnjan. A little town picked by international artists as a favored location for their ateliers and galleries, hosting art and music workshops in the summer months.



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## *DAY 7 Venice by High Speed Ferry*

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*Embark the speed catamaran for a full day trip to Venice  
Walk rialto bridge and sip a cappuccino on Piazza San Marco  
Cruise the countless canals by a private Taxi boat*

In the early morning, embark on a high speed ferry for an unforgettable trip to Venice - only 3 hours away from the Istrian shoreline. The ancient republic of Venice was the predominant state in the Adriatic from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. La Serenissima - Venice' nickname - controlled huge parts of the Dalmatian coast for many centuries, highly influencing culture, architecture, trade and food of the region. Built on over 100 islands, connected through more than 400 bridges with countless palaces and churches; only a few cities in the world can claim such a priceless art and history heritage. World renowned Canale Grande, Rialto bridge, Piazza & Basilica San Marco are just a few perfect architectural examples of Venice emerging to a major centre of Renaissance as one of the first global trade powers. For art lovers, Venice offers great Museums such as the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, an impressive 1000-seat theatre Teatro La Fenice, and one of the leading art fairs - the Biennale. Venice is also home to the world famous carnival, originally celebrating its victory over Aquillea in 1162. Take one of the beautiful mahogany wooden taxi-boats to explore even the most labyrinthine canals off the beaten tourist tracks before returning to your ship. Greet the campanile of St. Marco and the Lido from deck, as you sail back into Croatian waters.





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## *DAY 8 Active Outdoor Activities*

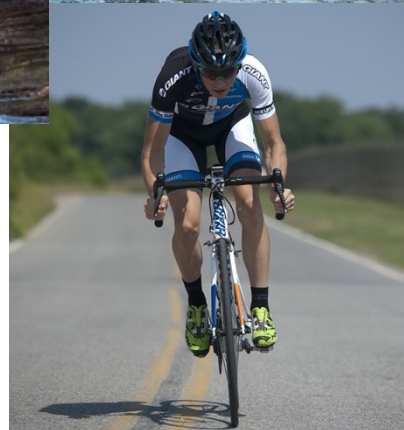
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*Hit the road for an extensive bike tour*

*Visit a horse farm and try horseback riding*

*Climb at Zlatni Rt - one of Croatia's most popular spots*

Around Rovinj you'll find some of the best locations to be active outdoors. Istria is famous for its great biking routes. Whether you prefer to go off road on a mountain bike, or look for a speed kick on a racing bike - routes of different length and difficulty all offering great views, little car traffic, and many opportunities to refresh and snack are the trademark of the region. For horse lovers there's a lot of family owned farms in the area that offer riding classes and guided tours - even for beginners and children. The rocky terrain makes Istria - and Croatia in general - a hot spot for climbers from all over the world. The crag at Zlatni Rt, a park just a couple of minutes outside Rovinj is a great climbing spot for the whole family. Located next to the water, it rewards you with wonderful views over the azure Adriatic, as well as the old town.



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## *DAY 9 Pula, Brioni National Park & Opatija*

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*Explore Pula with its famous Roman Colosseum*

*Pay a visit to Brioni national park – Tito's former private residence*

*Arrive in Opatija, the Habsburg's summer health resort*

Exemplary hotel: Amadria Park <https://www.amadriapark.com/hotel/amadria-park-hotel-milenij-opatija-business-leisure-hotel>

Heritage hotel in a beautifully restored old villa, a stone's throw of the beach and the city center.



After breakfast at your hotel and check out you'll be driving towards Pula, Istria's biggest city and the cultural and political center of the region. Conquered by the Romans in 177 B.C., emperor Augustus built an impressive amphitheater that today is the sixth biggest Colosseum in the world - also one of the best preserved ones. In antiquity it was designed to fit 26.000 people and until today it's frequently used for concerts and cultural manifestations. Stroll through the streets of Pula and refresh in one of the charming taverns at the magnificent arch of the Sergii – built in honor of one of Rome's most powerful Patrician families. The next highlight on your route is the Brioni national park, an archipelago of 14 small islands. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Brioni developed into a preferred hangout for the Viennese upper classes, later to gain fame as the private summer residence of Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito. On the biggest island Veliki Brion you can visit a museum containing memorabilia, such as Tito's old Cadillac Eldorado cabriolet from 1953. The island is populated with all kinds of exotic animals such as zebras and antelopes, even an elephant that Tito received as a present from visiting state guests. Back on the mainland, hit the road for the last destination of your journey Opatija and Rijeka.



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## DAY 10 Opatija & Rijeka

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*Catch a glimpse of the beautiful parks and villas at Opatija*

*Explore the cultural capital of Europe 2020 – Rijeka*

*Explore Rijeka's dazzling night scene*

After breakfast stroll the many little parks and catch a glimpse of the grand Belle Époque villas of Opatija. Due to its special charm and healthy climate, it's no wonder Opatija became a focal point in social life of Habsburg's Austrian Riviera. As the last highlight on this itinerary, head for nearby Rijeka, Croatia's biggest port and a lively metropolis. Rijeka was part of as many as seven different countries during the last centuries, and for that reason remained an open and international city. As the European Capital of Culture in 2020, Rijeka is offering a vast variety of over 600 art & cultural events, and is hosting artists and a cosmopolitan audience from all over the world. Inhale the artsy vibe and boost your energy at the harborside market. Wander along open-air kiosks selling fresh fruits and vegetables, little taverns and cafés inviting you for a Rakija shot, and watch fishermen sell their daily catch right off the boat. In the evening, attend an art performance or check out a Vernissage and dive into Rijeka's pulsating nightlife, curated and accompanied by a young, spirited crowd. Return to Opatija, before heading to either Rijeka or Zagreb airport the next morning.

