

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Arrive in Zagreb, Croatia, Welcome Dinner

Arrive in Zagreb, Croatia. We will meet you at the airport at 3 p.m. for transfer to our hotel for introductions and overview of our trip before our welcome dinner in Zagreb. If you arrive earlier, we can arrange a private transfer. Zagreb is a beautiful and interesting city and well worth coming a day early if you have the time (not to mention that it will help with jetlag).

Overnight Hotel Central (D)

DAY 2

Warm up hike through the Somorbor Mountains, transfer to Krasno

We will start the day with a wonderful Croatian breakfast to fill us up for a day of adventure. The short drive to the Somobor mountains is our first glimpse into the Croatian back country. We will get our body moving with a 5-mile warm up hike through the mountains. Beautiful vistas will compliment this undulating hike well, and with around 600 feet of elevation gain, it will be a great way to start our Balkan hiking adventure. After the hike, we will drive to Krasno for the night. This idyllic alpine village will be our jumping off point for our next two days of Croatian hiking. We can do a small warm up hike to get your body moving, and hopefully end the day trying some of the famous Krasnarski cheese, made locally in town, along with a glass of local wine. We will sleep well tonight to prepare for our big hike in the morning

Hiking: 5 miles. 2-3 hours. Overnight: Krasno hotel (B, L, D)

DAY 3

Hike on Premuzic Trail from Zavizan to Alan Mountain Hut

Our adventure begins in Northern Velebit National Park. Velebit is the largest range of mountains in Croatia and we start our exploration on the Premuzic Trail. We spend our first day hiking past wide mountain pastures, karst valleys, and towering peaks. Built in 1931 and still an engineering marvel, the Premuzic Trail traverses the main ridge of Velebit with almost non-stop views of the Adriatic below. The Alan Shepherd Houses - our home for the night, with stunning views of the sea and the islands - are situated at the foot of the Alancic peak. Luckily, we carried just our daypacks today and our luggage is waiting for us at the hut. After dinner, we may wander the nearby area, with visible remains of stone walls, old shepherd's summer huts, animal shelters, and rainwater cisterns. This is Mirovo, which was one of the largest seasonal settlements on Velebit.

Hiking: 10 miles, 6 - 7 hours. Elevation gain: 1,230 feet. Overnight: Alan Mountain Hut (B, L, D)

DAY 4

Circular hike in Dabarski Kukovi Area

Alas, this is our final day hiking in Croatia, but it does not disappoint. After a short transfer we start a beautiful circular hike. We'll discover the geomorphological beauties of Dabarski Kukovi area, including an ascent of Visibaba peak (3810 feet), offering amazing panoramas to the Northern Dalmatia coast. The hike ends at Ravni Dabar, where we meet our van and luggage for an hour and a half scenic coastal drive to Starigrad Paklenica, Croatia. This is a village and small port on the Adriatic coast where the mountains seemingly slip into the sea. It's a perfect place to take a dip in the sparkling blue waters and sample freshly caught fish, wine, olive oil, and bread. Often there is live music for a festive evening, if we still have energy.

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Hiking 12 miles, 6 - 7 hours. Elevation gain: 2,100 feet. Overnight: Hotel Vicko, Starigrad (B, L, D)

DAY 5

Transfer to Mostar, city tour

After the last couple days of strenuous hiking, we'll enjoy a day of giving our legs a break. Our destination today is Mostar in Bosnia i Herzegovina (BiH). A 4-hour drive brings us to the middle of the former Yugoslavia which lies at the heart of the Dinaric Alps. Lunch will be at a local winery, the table filled with local delicacies and, of course, wine! After a well-deserved lunch, we'll take a city walking tour of Mostar, famous for its beautiful historic Ottoman-style bridge, which was destroyed in the war. A significant portion of the city has been rebuilt, and this formerly war-torn city is once again a lively destination. A significant portion of the city has been rebuilt, and this formerly war-torn city is once again a lively destination.

Overnight Hotel Almira (B, L, D)

DAY 6

Hike the King's Trail, Transfer to Sarajevo

Today we have a more leisurely morning, before traveling about 45 minutes to the Diva Grabovica Valley. This valley, home to several rare endemic trees and wildflowers, is one of the wildest and most beautiful areas on the Balkan peninsula. We'll hike on one of King Karadjordjevic's old hunting trails, climbing through the ancient forests of Cvrstica Mountain to Zljeb. Starting from the valley of Diva Grabovica, it's a fairly steep climb at times, but truly stunning and refreshing. We'll climb 2.5 hours before reaching our destination, a perch overlooking the largest rock face on the Balkan Peninsula, where we can enjoy a picnic lunch. The peaks of Cvrstica tower around us in every direction from this point. This is a great way to spend the day: spectacular views with a refreshing hike fit for a king, but very much for queens too! After the hike we continue our journey to Sarajevo, a drive of about 1.5 hours, where we spend the next two nights.

Hiking : 6 miles, 5 - 6 hours. Elevation gain: 2400 feet. Overnight: Pension Kandilj (B, L, D)

DAY 7

Guided tour of Sarajevo, Free Afternoon

This morning we have a guided tour of Sarajevo, one of the most historically interesting and varied cities in Europe. It is a place where the Western and Eastern Roman Empire split and the city is famous for its historic religious diversity, with practitioners of Islam, Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Judaism coexisting here for centuries. Sarajevo has been both an example of historical turbulence and the clash of civilizations, as well as a beacon of hope for peace and tolerance through multi-cultural integration. We have a free afternoon to continue exploring on our own or perhaps relax with a good book, before meeting up for dinner at traditional Bosnian restaurant.

Overnight Sarajevo Pension Kandilj (B, D)

DAY 8

Drive to Sutjeska National Park, Circuit hike to Ugljesin Peak

Today we head to Sutjeska National Park, the oldest park and one of the two last remaining primeval forests in Europe. After dropping our luggage off at our hotel in Tjentiste, we'll drive for an hour to our hike near Donje Bare Lake. Sometimes referred to as the Yosemite of the Balkans, because of its stunning scenery and pristine

habitats, the park is also famous as the location of the Battle of the Sutjeska in 1943 during World War II. Our hike is a loop, first to the tranquil lake of Donje Bare and then continuing through a beech forest and open mountainous terrain to the summit of Ugljesin Peak (6000 feet), for one of the best panoramic views of the Zelengora peaks and the rock-face wall of Volujak. We continue the stunning circuit back to Gornje Bare lake via the Tovarnica ridge with Bosnia's highest peak a constant companion on the horizon.

Hiking 5.6 miles, 3 - 4 hours. Elevation gain: 1,280 feet. Overnight Hotel Mladost (B, L, D)

DAY 9

Climb Maglic Mountain, Highest Mountain in Bosnia

Today is the most challenging hike of the trip: Maglic Mountain (7,828 feet), the highest peak of Bosnia & Herzegovina! We'll keep a look out for wildlife on our four-hour ascent: bear, chamois (a goat-antelope species), boar, wolf, pine marten, and mink marten, wild cat, fox, and wild goats live in the park. Step by step we climb above the surrounding peaks on the well-maintained mountain trail with some steep cliffs, occasionally using chains for extra protection (not recommended if you suffer from vertigo.) Our reward at the summit is a break for lunch and breathtaking views over Montenegro and heart-shaped Trnovacko Lake. Dinner tonight is at a small local family restaurant where most of the food is grown and served by the wife and cooked by the husband.

Hiking: 9 miles, 9 - 10 hours. Elevation gain: 3,700 feet. Overnight at Hotel Mladost (B, L, D)

DAY 10

Travel to Zabljak, Montenegro, Hike around Crno Jezero

Today we travel to Zabljak, a high mountain village in Montenegro, and our home for the next two nights. After a 4-hour drive, we'll have time to drop our bags at the hotel and pick up some picnic food for lunch at the Crno Jezero (Black Lake) in nearby Durmitor National Park. Compared to yesterday, we'll have a mellow day hike around the Crno Jezero, dominated by the rocky peaks of Durmitor on one side and deep forest on the other. Despite the name, its waters take on a variety of colors throughout the day.

Hiking: 3.7 miles, 2 - 3 hours. Elevation gain: 400. Overnight Hotel Soa, Zabljak (B, L, D)

DAY 11

Hike to Bobotov Kuk, highest mountain in Montenegro

This may be the trip's most beautiful hike! We head back to Durmitor National Park for a climb up to the ridge between Lucin Peak (7860 feet) and Montenegro's highest peak, Bobotov Kuk (8,277 feet). You can choose to stay here or to continue up the challenging ridge to the top of Bobotov Kuk. Both have breathtaking views of the surrounding peaks and valleys - there are 48 peaks in the park - and on a clear day you can see all the way to the Adriatic Sea. After our climb we return to Zabljak.

Hiking: to the ridge 7.5 miles, 5-6 hours. Elevation gain: 1,920 feet. OR Bobotov Kuk 8.5 miles, 6 - 7 hours. Elevation gain: 2,500 feet. Overnight Hotel Soa (B, L, D)

DAY 12

River Rafting on Tara River, return to Sarajevo, Farewell Dinner

It's hard to leave Durmitor but it's time to head back to Sarajevo. On our way back we'll stop for a thrilling raft trip on the Tara River. We paddle through the deepest river canyon in Europe with 3,000 foot canyon walls rising above the stunning river wilderness area. After our adventure, we continue back to Sarajevo for a festive

river canyon in Europe with 5,000 feet canyon walls rising above the stunning river wilderness area. After our adventure, we continue back to Sarajevo for a festive farewell dinner and celebration of our trip through the Balkans.

Rafting: 2 to 3 hours of rafting class II-IV rapids. Overnight Sarajevo Pension Kandilj (B, L, D)

DAY 13

Depart anytime for home

What a challenge this has been! We leave satisfied in knowing not only that we have challenged ourselves, but that, simply by hiking on the Via Dinarica at this early stage, we have contributed to its development and to the development of many areas that need and welcome tourism. But now it's time to bid farewell and to go home with new tales of adventure. Hotel reception will help you organize a taxi to the international airport (about 20 minutes away) to fly home or to continue on your travels.

(B)