



Istra

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the what to see, where to go, what to do newspaper for tourists supported by the the Istria Tourist Board

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Motovun is just one of so many fascinating towns waiting for you

Istria's dreamy hilltop villages are easy, magical day trips from the coastal cities

Istria's fascinating history can be traced back to the Bronze Age (c. 3300 – c. 1200 BC) and the Illyrian tribes--the Histri (who settled in west Istria), the Iapodes (north Istria) and Liburni (east from the Raša River). Then came the Greeks, the Celts, followed by the Romans who in 177 BC colonized the peninsula and established a lasting social order and a sophisticated network of roads and towns including some that we enjoy even today--Pula, Poreč.



Constructed between 27BC and 68AD Pula is the 6th largest Roman arena

So much history, such gorgeous seaside cities and towns and stunning nature, too!

Whether it's gorgeous seaside villages or dreamy medieval hilltop towns, Istria is a feast for the mind, the soul and the senses. From the green hills that meet the sea in Rt Kamenjak and Rabac (Labin) to the romantic Rovinj riviera; the old town streets and squares in Umag; the endless wine and olive groves of Northern Istria, Poreč's spectacular UNESCO listed Euphrasian Basilica or Pula's magnificent Roman amphitheater; Istria is a feast.



A culinary feast—from truffles to our award-winning olive oils and wines

From a cozy village konoba to Croatia's only 2 star Michelin restaurant, Istria is foodie heaven!

Istria is world famous for its truffles, which you can enjoy shaved or infused in a variety of cheeses, stews and other dishes, like handmade pasta in the shape of *fuži* or *pljukanci*. We love Istrian *ombolo* and sausages with sour cabbage, and *Istarska supa*--homemade toasted bread infused with olive oil, warmed red wine with a touch of sugar or honey and pepper. Wine? Enjoy lush Malvasia (white) and full-bodied, rich Teran (red).



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Welcome to Istria!

With almost 5 million people coming to enjoy our coast, forests and magical interior, Istria has more visitors than anywhere in Croatia!

Perched at the heart of Europe’s largest peninsula, Istria has long captivated visitors with its intoxicating blend of coastal charm and medieval mystique. **This heart-shaped peninsula—shared by Croatia, Slovenia, and Italy—draws food lovers, history buffs, and adventure seekers in equal measure.** From sun-drenched beaches to truffle-rich forests, Istria delivers experiences that linger long after your tan fades.

Coastal charm and medieval mystique

Travelers flock to Istria for its remarkable duality—a coastline that rivals the French Riviera paired with an interior that echoes Tuscany’s rolling hills. Along the shimmering Adriatic, resort towns like Rovinj and Poreč offer pristine beaches and crystalline waters perfect for sailing and diving. Yet it’s not just the seaside allure that entices. **Istria’s rich cultural heritage**, shaped by Roman, Venetian, and Austro-Hungarian empires, **has left an indelible mark** on its architecture, cuisine, and traditions. Here, you can start your morning exploring Roman amphitheaters, spend the afternoon sampling award-winning olive oils at family-run farms, and end your day savoring fresh seafood at a harbor-side konoba (tavern). The region’s wellness tourism is booming too, with luxury spa resorts incorporating local ingredients like lavender, olive oil, and grape seed in their treatments. **Even Hollywood has discovered Istria’s charms**—several major productions have filmed here, drawn by its stunning landscapes and



Throughout Istria you will find a remarkable array of churches, basilicas and cathedrals that showcase the unique artistry of the period with mosaics, paintings and sculpture.



Pula’s Temple of Augustus (27BC-14AD) was built during the lifetime of Rome’s first emperor.

well-preserved medieval towns. From the coast to the countryside, Istria’s geography tells a tale of two worlds. The indented **coastline stretches for over 500 kilometers**, dotted with secluded coves and vibrant fishing villages. Venetian-style towns like Rovinj seem to rise directly from the sea, their bell towers piercing the sky like exclamation points. Inland, the landscape transforms dramatically—terra rossa



Istria’s coastal landscapes are stunning, from charming fishing villages to breathtaking cities.

(red soil) hillsides support vineyards producing the region’s celebrated Malvasia and Teran wines, while dense forests harbor the **prized white truffles that have earned Istria international gastronomic acclaim.** Medieval hilltop towns like Motovun and Grožnjan, once built for defense, now serve as artistic havens, their narrow cobblestone streets hosting galleries, music and film festivals. The region’s karst topography has created

a **wonderland of underground caves and streams**, while the Učka mountain range provides a dramatic backdrop and natural border between the coast and interior. **The Brijuni Islands, an archipelago of 14 islands off the coast, offer another dimension to Istria’s diverse landscape**—once a presidential retreat, they now form a national park where visitors can spot dinosaur footprints and Roman ruins among Mediterranean gardens.

Istria’s fascinating quirks and traditions

Istria’s fascinating quirks and traditions set it apart from other Mediterranean destinations. The region boasts **the world’s smallest town**—Hum, with just 24 residents—yet produces some of Croatia’s most celebrated wines and olive oils. Its forests yield three varieties of truffles, including the precious white truffle that rivals Italy’s Alba region in quality and quantity. The dialect here is unique too—a melodic blend of Croatian, Italian, and ancient Romance languages that reflects centuries of cross-cultural pollination. The peninsula’s strategic position made it a historical crossroads, evidenced by the region’s dual-language road signs and the fact that many locals still switch effortlessly between Croatian and Italian. From the **UNESCO-protected Byzantine mosaics** in Poreč’s Euphrasian Basilica to the perfectly preserved Roman amphitheater in Pula—still hosting concerts today—Istria’s monuments speak to its rich past while embracing a vibrant present. Welcome to Istria!

History and culture

Illyrians, Greeks, Romans, Germanic tribes and Slavs—almost the entire fabric of European history is woven into today’s Istria



The legacies of Rome, the Venetian and Austro-Hungarian Empires as well as 20thC Italy permeate all aspects of contemporary Istrian life.



Internationally admired for its cuisine, Istria has Croatia’s first 2 star Michelin restaurant.

borders left some historically Istrian areas in Italy and Slovenia.

Where past shapes present: Istria’s living cultural legacy

Istria’s layered history ripples through every aspect of contemporary life. Perhaps nowhere is this more evident than in language—**locals easily switch between Croatian and Italian**, while the distinct Istrian dialect incorporates words from Venetian, Germanic, and ancient Romance



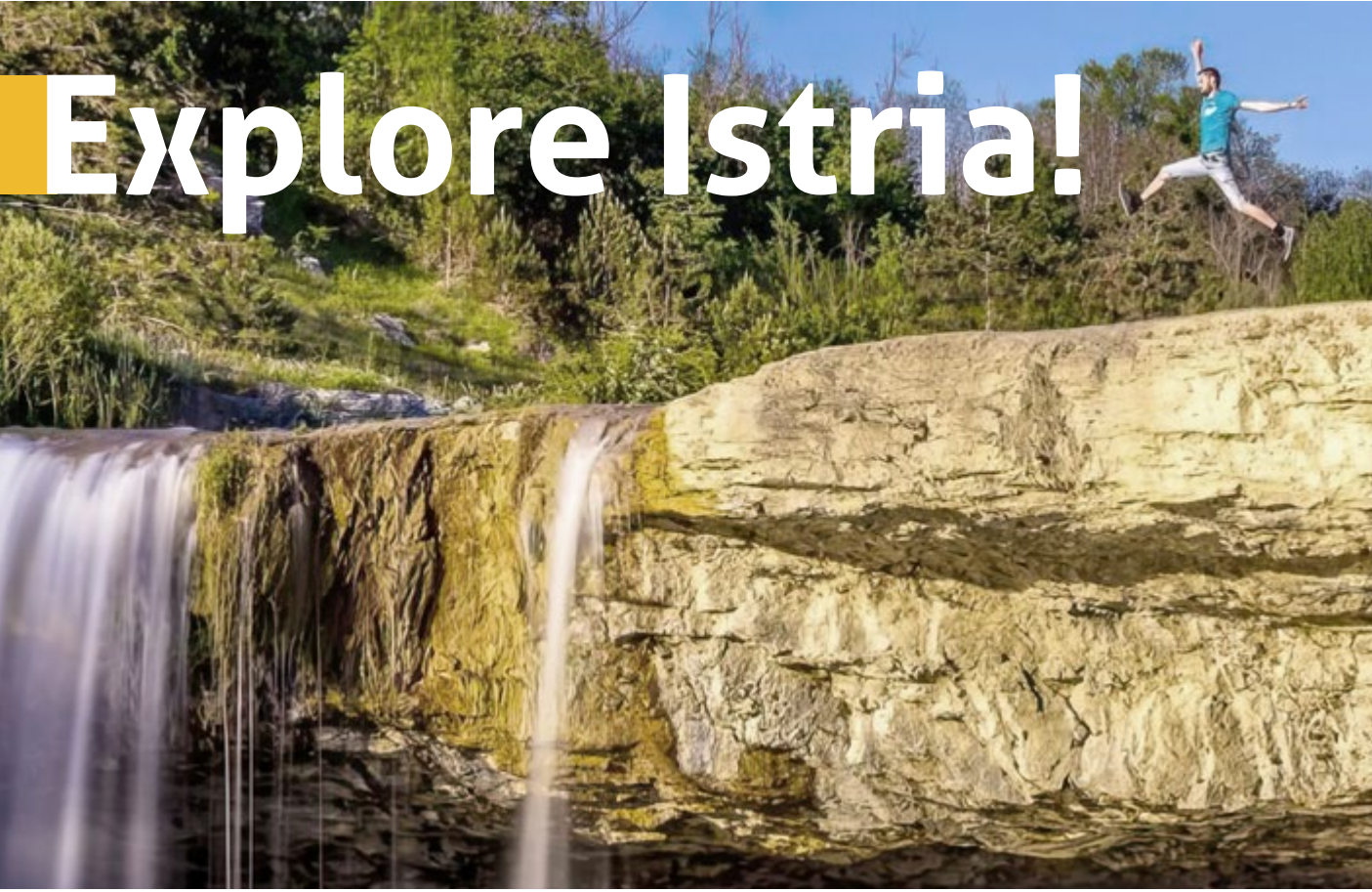
The Istrian countryside, a beautiful discovery beautiful landscapes, vineyards, olive groves.

languages. Many families still have two versions of their surname: one Croatian, one Italian. **This cultural fluidity extends to the arts. Istrian folk music features** the distinctive sound of the roženice (twin flutes) alongside Italian-influenced bitinada vocal harmonies. In medieval hilltop towns contemporary galleries occupy buildings where Venetian merchants once traded. Traditional crafts thrive too—like basamenti, the distinctive

Istrian decorative stonework that adorns churches and palaces. The Motovun Film Festival has transformed a medieval hilltop town into Croatia’s Sundance, while Pula’s Arena (27 BC- AD 68) hosts everyone from Pavarotti to Dua Lipa.

Gastronomy tells its own historical tale

The region’s signature dishes—from *fuži* pasta to *fritule* for dessert—reflect centuries of cultural cross-pollination. The peninsula’s award-winning olive oils and wines, particularly the indigenous Malvasia and Teran varieties, carry forward ancient Roman traditions while embracing modern methods. Traditional konobas (taverns) are being reimagined by innovative chefs who combine grandmother’s recipes with molecular gastronomy techniques. Istria has Croatia’s first 2 star Michelin-starred restaurant—Agli Amici in Rovinj—that showcases this evolution. Perhaps most remarkable is how **Istrians have preserved their traditional communal spirit.** The *samanj* (village festivals) still bring communities together around shared tables, while ancient traditions like communal olive harvesting continue. In town squares, elderly men gather for daily games of briškula (cards) beneath the same loggias where their ancestors conducted trade. **Even today’s tourism industry builds on historical foundations.** The grand hotels of the Austro-Hungarian era have been lovingly restored, ancient Roman villas find new life as heritage museums, while rural tourism flourishes in converted stone farmhouses.



Istria is indeed a feast for the eyes. Its streams flow to the sea through deep valleys and gullies which bring to mind the ancient local myths about giants. Rolling hills overlook the fields and valleys with little towns perched on the peaks, recalling some old paintings. The view is splendid: white-topped mountains, lush wheat fields, plateaux, valleys, vineyards and olive groves on hillsides, and finally the sea.



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Pula/Medulin/Vodnjan

Pula and its neighboring towns not only offer beautifully preserved history, but unspoiled nature, quirky art and world-class cuisine

Summer brings the buzz back to Pula, with festivals galore and perfect beach weather. But here’s an insider tip: spring and fall offer plenty of sun without the crowds. Even Pula’s iconic Arena is way more impressive when you’re not sharing it with the crowds. Pula is really easy to get around—the historic center is compact and walkable, and city buses connect major sights and beaches. During the summer, local boats also run between beaches. Or rent a bike from one of the many rental stations dot the city.

Pula: Where every street tells a different story

The moment you see the **Arena**, you’ll understand why Pula is special. This massive amphitheater is **the world’s 6th largest surviving Roman arena**. The only one with all three Roman architectural orders entirely preserved, no wonder it stops first-time visitors in their tracks. **Built between 27 BC and 68 AD under Emperor Vespasian** (the same emperor who built Rome’s Colosseum), this architectural marvel could seat 23,000 spectators. The limestone blocks used to construct it were quarried in nearby Vinkuran and hauled up the hill to create this magnificent structure. Looking up at the Arena’s soaring 32-meter high outer wall, you’re seeing the same view that wowed ancient Romans 2,000 years ago. Designed primarily to host gladiatorial contests, **the arena’s floor could also be flooded to create mock naval battles!** While the wooden seats are long gone, the underground passages, where



Built in 27-29BC, the opulent Arch of the Sergii marked the end of the road from Pula’s city gate and was also one of the city gates itself. Today it stands in the center of Portarata Square.



Southern Istria is famous for its kažuns, traditional dry stone shelters for peasants and shepherds.

gladiators and wild animals once waited, are still there for you to explore. These fascinating tunnels now house exhibitions about olive oil production in ancient Istria – the amphitheater’s modern-day tribute to one of the region’s oldest traditions. Unlike most Roman ruins, Pula’s Arena isn’t just a window into its past – it’s now the city’s most celebrated entertainment venue. Every summer, the Arena plays host



Zerostrasse, an underground WW1 tunnel World, stretches almost across all of Pula.

to some of the biggest acts on the planet, from Elton John and Luciano Pavarotti to Dua Lipa and Duran Duran.

Temples, arches and more historical treasures

Start at the **Gates of Hercules**, where you can still see the carved face of the Roman hero and ancient graffiti dating back to the 3rd century. The nearby Archaeological Museum houses treasures unearthed from

the region, including intricate Roman mosaics and artifacts from shipwrecks. Then climb up to the star-shaped Venetian Fortress (Kaštel), built in 1630 – today it’s a historical museum with the best views in town. Lording over Forum Square, Pula’s main square since Roman times, is **thr 1st century BC Temple of Augustus**. Check out the nearby Council House with its mix of Renaissance and Baroque faces watching over the square. Behind the Temple of Augustus, **hidden Roman floor mosaics** peek through between medieval buildings. And don’t miss **the magnificent Arch of Sergii, built in 27 BC** as a tribute to three brothers of the Sergii family who fought in the Battle of Actium. The triumphal arch, decorated with intricate winged victories and floral patterns, marks what was once the main entrance to Roman Pula. Locals call it the Golden Gate, and you’ll see why at sunset when its limestone glows warm and golden.

Underground wonders and secret tunnels, the Zerostrasse

Below the city streets, a whole other Pula waits to be discovered. **The Zerostrasse**, a network of World War I tunnels, snakes beneath the old town. Built during Austrian rule, **this underground maze could shelter 50,000 people**. The main tunnel runs from the heart of the city all the way to the Kaštel fortress. Today, these cool caverns host art exhibitions, wine tastings, and cultural events. When summer heat hits, the tunnels’ constant 14-18°C temperature makes them the perfect escape.

Beaches and island dreams

Ready to hit the water? The Verudela peninsula is beach heaven. Start at Havajska (Hawaiian) Beach with its shallow, kid-friendly waters and smooth pebbles. Around the corner, sporty types head to Ambrela Beach for kayaking and paddleboarding. Follow the coastal path past fragrant pines to reach secluded Gortanova Bay, where locals escape the crowds. **Stoja peninsula hides some of Pula’s best beaches**. Valovine Beach offers pristine waters and natural shade, while Seagull’s Rocks provides dramatic cliff-top views and crystal-clear swimming. During summer, water taxis zip between beaches, making beach-hopping a breeze. More fun? Hop on a **boat to the Brijuni Islands National Park**. Once President Tito’s summer escape, these **14 islands** now offer a unique mix of history and nature. The main island, Veliki Brijun, packs quite a punch: a 1st-century Roman villa, dinosaur footprints, and even a safari park with descendants of Tito’s exotic pets.

Nature and adventure

Want to stretch your legs? Head to **Forest Park Šijana**, where 150-year-old oak and laurel trees provide shade for hiking and biking trails. Birders love spotting rare species here, while mushroom hunters come in fall. **Cape Kamenjak**, at Istria’s southern tip, offers dramatic cliffs and hidden coves. The 30km of bike trails here range from easy coastal rides to challenging rocky paths. Rock climbing, cliff jumping, and snorkeling are popular, or join a kayaking tour to explore sea caves. Hiking more your style? **The Verudela peninsula trails offer easy walks** with stunning sea views. For a bigger challenge, tackle the Lungomare path connecting all of Pula’s beaches. Serious hikers head to **Učka Nature Park**, where trails lead to **Istria’s highest peak**.

Istrian flavors and local life

When it comes to cuisine, Istria dances to its own tasty tune. Morning means joining locals at **the Green Market**, where farmers bring their seasonal best. Watch fishmongers sell their morning catch at the 1903 fish market, then head to the upper floor to learn



Hawaiian cove beach located at Verudela peninsula, is one of the most popular. The high waves here, caused by the area’s southern summer Jugo winds, are like Hawaii’s.



Medulin and its gorgeous archipelago, stunning beaches, great hotels and nature!

about Pula’s maritime history. Try **maneštra**, the **hearty Istrian soup** that’s been warming locals for centuries. Spring brings wild asparagus picked fresh from the hillsides. Summer is all about fresh seafood – grilled fish, octopus under the bell, and shellfish buzara style. **Fall means truffles** shaved over hand-rolled fuži pasta, wild game stews, and new wine celebrations. **The ruby-red Teran** pairs perfectly

with Istria’s air-dried prosciutto, while the **golden Malvazija** complements seafood. During grape harvest in September, the whole region celebrates with traditional wine festivals.

Festival fever and night Life

Summer in Pula means non-stop

town comes alive with everything from jazz bars to underground clubs. Watch the sunset from the fort, then join locals for evening drinks in the Forum. During summer, beach bars keep the vibe going until dawn.

Medulin and its glorious riviera

Just 15 minutes from Pula, with its stunning, 1 km. long sandy Bijeca beach, resort-themed hotels, elegant villas, well-equipped campgrounds; sailing, biking and hiking, Medulin is a magnet for families. Enjoy day trips to islands like Ceja, Levan or Bodulaš; history buffs will love old windmills by the sea and the remains of Roman villas at Vizule.

Vodnjan-Dignano: the real Istria

Also 15 minutes from Pula, the medieval town of Vodnjan-Dignano feels like stepping into Istria’s soul. A prehistoric hill fort, it grew into a prosperous Venetian town, still visible in its elegant palaces and expansive loggias. Vodnjan-Dignano’s walls have become famous for their massive murals, with works by world famous street artists transforming the medieval town into an open-air gallery. These giant artworks merge seamlessly with centuries-old stone walls, creating an unexpected contrast between old and new that stops visitors in their tracks. And those silvery-green trees surrounding the town? They’re some of the world’s oldest olive groves--more than 1,000 years old!



Enjoy Vodnjan’s marvelous murals created by some of Europe’s top urban artists.

action. **The Film Festival** transforms the Arena into the world’s most spectacular outdoor cinema. If you’re a Bryan Adams fan, the Grammy-nominated pop star will be here on July 29 th as part of his “Roll with the Punches” tour. History buffs shouldn’t miss the **Days of Antiquity** in June, when the whole city steps back in time with gladiator fights and Roman food festivals. The party continues after dark. The old

Wine, olives and bumblebees

In addition to fall/winter wine and olive oil festivals, don’t miss **Bumbarska, one of Istria’s longest running folk festivals**; held once a year, on the second Saturday in August. The word Bumbarska originates from Istro-Romanian, a Neo-Latin Eastern dialect. It refers to *bumbari* (literally ‘bumblebee’), a term still used by some locals to help keep the dialect alive.

Plan your perfect trip to the gem of the Adriatic!



With 3000 years of rich history, 30 kilometres of shoreline, wonderful beaches, numerous parks, forests, wellness centres and marvelous wine and gastronomy, Pula is a little piece of heaven!



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Rovinj

With its famous hilltop church, charming Old Town streets and alleys, gorgeous marina and waterfront, Rovinj is picture perfect

If fairytales had coastal chapters, they'd be set in Rovinj. Rising dramatically from the Adriatic, this former fishing village turned into artistic heaven captivates visitors with its romantic atmosphere and rich heritage. **Built on what was once an island** (connected to mainland in 1763), Rovinj's old town is a maze of cobbled streets and squares where history whispers from every stone. While modern luxury finds its way into hidden courtyards and artistic ateliers, the authentic spirit of old Rovinj lives on in its bustling fish market, traditional festivals, and the daily rhythm of fishing boats heading out at dawn. Rovinj charms visitors year-round with its blend of sophistication and authenticity. Whether exploring hidden art galleries, sampling fresh seafood at harborside cafes, or wandering through medieval lanes, every corner reveals another layer of this enchanting coastal gem.

Getting around

Rovinj's historic center is entirely walkable, though comfortable shoes are essential on the smooth stone streets. Bicycle rental stations dot the town, perfect for exploring the coastline and nearby trails. Regular boats connect the town with two nearby islands, while major beaches and attractions are within walking distance or are just a short taxi ride. **The Rovinj Green Market**, open daily, offers seasonal produce and local specialties - arrive early to soak up the authentic local atmosphere and to get the best, freshest selection.



The iconic view of Rovinj's old town peninsula, with St. Euphemia's bell tower rising above terracotta roofs and fishing boats bobbing in the crystal-clear harbor waters.



The 17thC bell tower of St. Euphemia Church, crowned with a statue of the town's patron saint.

Exploring the Old Town's Treasures

Dominating the peninsula's highest point, **the Church of St. Euphemia** serves as both guardian and compass. Built between 1725 and 1736, its **60-meter bell tower** is modeled after Venice's St. Mark's. The tower's gilded stone statue of St. Euphemia, the town's patron saint, is a weather vane that still rotates, continuing a centuries-old tradition. Inside, the saint's



Rovinj's flat-bottomed wooden batana fishing boats, are now UNESCO-protected.

marble sarcophagus dates to the **9th century**, while the church treasury holds priceless works of Venetian art. Three of old town's seven **medieval gates** still stand guard, though today they welcome rather than defend. **Balbi's Arch**, remodelled in 1680, remains the grandest, featuring the carved head of a Turk on one side and a Venetian on the other - a testament to Rovinj's strategic position during

the Ottoman- Venetian wars and diplomacy.

Art and culture around every corner

Rovinj's artistic soul shines in its numerous galleries and studios tucked into medieval buildings. **The Rovinj-Rovigno City Museum**, housed in a Baroque palace, showcases newly excavated archeological heritage on the ground floor and a very important collection of Yugoslav paintings by contemporary former Yugoslavian artists, who founded this museum in 1954. **The Town Clock** from 1872 still keeps perfect time, while the **Civic Square (Trg Maršala Tita)** offers one of Istria's finest examples of Venetian-era architecture. The cultural scene extends far beyond summer festivals. **September's Weekend Media Festival** transforms an old tobacco factory into a creative hub. The Franciscan church and Saint Euphemia's church host classical concerts year-round.

Secret swimming spots and island dreams

While summer crowds flock to the main beaches, locals head to the hidden coves along **the 5-kilometer long Golden Cape Forest Park**. This protected area offers secluded swimming and miles of hiking, biking, even free climbing among centuries-old holm oak and maritime pine trees. Beyond Golden Cape lies **Cuvi Beach**, where pine forests meet crystal waters. Local families favor the hidden **Cisterna Beach**, reached by

a winding path through aromatic herbs and wild roses. **Monte Beach**, tucked beneath the old town walls, offers a unique swimming spot - dive into history where medieval merchants once moored their ships. **The Monte Mulini** coastline reveals a series of intimate coves, each with its own character. Follow the coastal path to discover natural rock pools perfect for snorkeling, with underwater visibility reaching 30 meters on calm days. Adventure seekers can try cliff jumping at carefully selected spots, or join local diving groups exploring nearby shipwrecks. **Take a boat to St. Catherine's Island**, just a 5 minute ride away, for perfect views of the old town's spires reflected in crystal-clear waters **or St. Andrew's Island**, known locally as Red Island, hides Benedictine, later Franciscan, monastery ruins among its Mediterranean gardens. **These islands host 22 species of orchids** and rare seabirds, making them popular with nature photographers. **Located 20 minutes away by ferry** from Rovinj, Red Island and the adjoining (via a causeway) **Maskin** are picturesque spots **ideally suited for nature lovers, walkers and swimmers**. The wild beach is rocky with pebbles and is popular with divers for its crystal clear water.

Maritime heritage and nautical adventures

Rovinj's seafaring spirit lives on in its busy harbor, where the town's iconic flat-bottomed wooden batana boats (protected by UNESCO) bob alongside modern yachts. **The fish market**, located in a former 1859 printing house, is the place to buy fresh Adriatic fish. In the nearby building is an excellent butchery. Join a sailing or kayaking trip to explore the **Lim Channel**, a 12-kilometer fjord-like inlet where Romans once farmed oysters and fish. Today, the channel's steep walls provide nesting sites for rare birds, while its waters produce

some of the Adriatic's finest oysters. Local boats offer trips ranging from sunset cruises to full-day excursions with swimming stops in hidden bays.

Local traditions come alive

While Rovinj embraces modern tourism, ancient traditions still



Rovinj's majestic Golden Cape Forest Park stretches for 8 miles, offering hidden coves and beaches, making it perfect for biking, running and even free climbing among its ancient holm oak trees.



Lim Channel, a fjord enjoyed by kayakers and nature lovers, is filled with wildlife and birds.

shape daily life. Watch **batana** launches at dusk, accompanied by traditional **bitinade** singing - haunting harmonies that once helped fishermen navigate through fog. During summer evenings, some of the **spacio** (traditional taverns) fill with the sounds of old maritime songs. In the **Batana Eco- Museum**, you can experience the city's fishing traditions through an interactive multimedia exhibition.

Flavors that tell stories

Rovinj's cuisine blends Venetian influence with Istrian tradition. Spring brings wild asparagus and tender artichokes. Summer means fresh fish prepared brodetto-style or grilled with local olive oil. Fall celebrates white truffles shaved over handmade pasta. The

Beyond the guidebook

For a different perspective, explore **the Monkodonja Hill Fort**, just 5 kilometers from town. This Bronze Age settlement (1800-1200 BC) offers stunning views and a glimpse into pre-Roman Istria. Nearby, the **Palud Marsh** bird sanctuary attracts over **200 bird species**. Follow the educational trail to spot purple herons, European pond turtles, and rare orchids. Art lovers won't want to miss Rovinj's City Museum. Meanwhile, the **Rovinj Photodays** festival turns the whole town into an exhibition space, with images displayed in unexpected places - from medieval walls to fishing boats. Early risers shouldn't miss the sunrise from **Monte Beach** - watch fishing boats head out as the morning light gilds St. Euphemia's tower. For sunset, follow locals to the rocks below the church, where impromptu gatherings often feature acoustic guitars and local wine.

Local life and customs

Early evenings bring the traditional **passeggiata** - join locals for this ritual evening stroll along the waterfront promenade. If you're lucky, on Sunday mornings you may see elders playing cards in **Valdibora Square**. If you are here during **St. Lawrence Night** in August, join locals on the beaches to watch meteor showers, like their seafaring ancestors who used stars for navigation.

When to visit

While summer brings warm seas and festivals, spring and fall are perfect for exploring. In September, enjoy the **St. Euphemia Festival**, with music and traditional costumes, and the **Istrian Supa Fesitval**—celebrating an alcoholic drink mixing Teran red wine, a few drops of extra virgin olive oil and a pinch of pepper! And in winter you can have your own piece of this Adriatic jewel practically to yourself!

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Bale

Tucked away on its own hilltop aerie, Bale is like a fairy tale come true, with a special beauty and charm all its own—is it any wonder that the town’s coat of arms features a butterfly?!

In the heart of Croatia’s Istrian peninsula, the medieval town of Bale beckons visitors with its timeless charm and authenticity. While most tourists flock to better-known coastal destinations, this stone-built village offers a glimpse into Istria’s rich past without the crowds. Winding through Bale’s narrow cobblestone streets, visitors find themselves transported back into centuries past. **The town’s distinctive architecture features beautifully preserved stone houses**, their weathered facades telling stories of generations past. Rustic wooden shutters in muted greens and blues add splashes of color to the honey-colored stone walls that have stood sentinel for hundreds of years. At the **heart of Bale stands the imposing Soardo-Bembo Palace**. Above the town gate and flanked by its two defensive towers, this stunning 16thC Gothic-Renaissance masterpiece, only open on special occasions, epitomizes the region’s rich cultural heritage. Dominating the town’s skyline is the **striking bell towers of the Parish Church of the Visitation of Blessed Virgin Mary to St. Elizabeth**. Behind and under this impressive church is a fascinating crypt that is well worth visiting because it houses Byzantine remains from former churches that stood on this same ground centuries ago! Another church well worth the visit, slightly outside the town’s walls is a small, typical Istrian 15th C church dedicated to the Holy Spirit and adorned with the late medieval frescoes. In front of it is a statue of **St. Julian, the town’s patron saint**, who talents as a family peacemaker



Bale is one of those dreamy medieval hilltop villages and towns that make touring inland Istria so memorable--not just its spectacular setting, but its food, its people and its culture.



Bale’s ever-changing cobble-stoned streets and serpentine alleys are endlessly charming.

still inspire locals to refer to him as the “good spirit”. Located on Musa Square, the town’s largest covering about 600 square meters, is the **Ulrika Gallery**, the home of the Bale’s tourist office as well as an **exhibition of ornithological, fossil and dinosaur remains** that are included in the World List of Paleontological Sites as **the only site in the world that preserves the remains of dinosaurs under the sea!**



Around every corner, whether it’s a tiny konoba or a 16thC tower, another surprise awaits.

A feast for foodies
Bale and its surroundings are well known for its fresh produce and olive oil which can be sampled and bought at the town’s mills. There’s also an excellent small dairy where you can enjoy some excellent cheese and other quality products. Accommodation options range **from boutique hotels housed in restored historic buildings to charming bed-and-breakfasts** where

hosts welcome guests like family. Many properties feature original architectural elements thoughtfully integrated with modern comforts.
Boulevard World Genius
Stretching down from Bale to the sea along a five-kilometer long route is an outdoor gallery displaying **monumental sculptures dedicated to the 13 of the world’s greatest minds-** from Aristotle to Tim Berners Lee, the inventor of Internet, created by students of the Applied Arts in Venice, Bologna, Milan, Turin, Rijeka and Zagreb. Visitors who time their trips thoughtfully might catch one of Bale’s cultural festivals, where the entire town comes alive with celebrations like the four-day program of the **Last Minute Open Jazz Festival** in August featuring top European jazz musicians from the Netherlands, Slovenia, Austria, Serbia and Italy. With **more than two dozen events from June-September**, Bale’s stone walls echo with music, while local artisans display traditional crafts in the medieval squares. These events showcase the town’s commitment to preserving its cultural heritage while embracing its future as a distinctive tourist destination. Whether staying for a few nights or using it as a base for broader Istrian exploration, Bale offers an experience that feels both authentic and timeless – a reminder that sometimes the best discoveries lie off the beaten path. And if **you love butterflies, you’ll find more than 390 species here**, many are endangered and legally protected and they can be encountered only in a few places in the world.

Where history meets paradise
Just a short boat ride from bustling Pula, the Brijuni Islands emerge like emeralds scattered across the Adriatic. This archipelago of **14 islands**, now a national park, weaves together three millennia of history with stunning natural beauty. Once the summer residence of President Tito, these islands have hosted everyone from European royalty to Hollywood stars, each leaving their mark on this remarkable paradise.
Ancient footprints and Roman villas
History runs deep on Veliki Brijun, the largest island. Along the coastline, **dinosaur footprints** from the Cretaceous period tell tales from 100 million years ago. **A Roman villa rustica from the 1st century BC** sprawls across the bay of Verige, its remains showcasing the luxury of ancient Roman life. Nearby, **a 1,600-year-old olive tree still produces fruit**, while remnants of Byzantine castles dot the landscape.

Presidential legacy
The legacy of Yugoslavian president Tito lives on in the **White Villa, Tito’s former summer residence** where he entertained world leaders and celebrities. The **Safari Park**, created from his private exotic animal collection, now houses descendants of zebras, elephants, and llamas - gifts from visiting dignitaries. His classic Cadillac still sits in the island’s small museum, alongside photographs of famous visitors from Sophia Loren to Queen Elizabeth II.
Natural wonders
The islands’ **Mediterranean climate** nurtures over **680 plant species**. The



Just a 15 minute ferry ride and you’re in a wonderland of nature, an idyllic 14 island Archipelago that offers something special for every visitor.



Brijuni has more than 200 dinosaur footprints that date back 100 to 125 million years ago!

main island’s safari park covers 9 hectares, where deer and peacocks roam freely among visitors. Ancient oak and pine forests provide shade along cycling paths, while rare orchids bloom in hidden meadows. **saltwater lakes** on Mali Brijun attract diverse birdlife, including rare European bee-eaters.
Activities and adventures
Explore the islands by bicycle or electric cart on 13 kilometers of



The sea is almost 80% of Brijuni’s protected area and its biodiversity is spectacular.

marked trails. Snorkel in crystal-clear waters to discover underwater archaeological sites, or join a kayaking expedition around the archipelago. The **18-hole golf course**, dating from 1922, offers stunning sea views from every hole. Tennis courts built in 1900 for the Viennese elite still welcome players today.
Cultural heritage comes alive
The tiny **Gothic Church of St. German** houses a remarkable

collection of 15th-century frescoes and Glagolitic inscriptions. Copy medieval manuscripts at the replica scriptorium, or examine artifacts in the Archaeological Museum spanning from Neolithic times through the Roman period.
Mediterranean magic
Swim at secluded pebble beaches or explore hidden coves accessible only by boat. The **underwater educational trail** reveals Roman port remains and rich marine life. Each island hides its own treasures - **Jerolim Island** boasts rare orchid meadows, while **St. Mark’s** features untouched Mediterranean macchia. Visit the **200-year-old Stone Olive Mill**, still producing golden oil from ancient groves. The **Natural History Collection** showcases the archipelago’s geological wonders, from prehistoric fossils to unique minerals.
When to visit
The islands welcome visitors **from April through October**. To get to the park, you can **take the ferry from the port of Fažana**, easily reachable from Pula or Rovinj. The ferry ride to the main island of Veli Brijun takes approximately 15 minutes and is included in the ticket. Spring brings wildflowers and migrating birds, while summer offers perfect swimming conditions. Visit in autumn to see the safari park animals at their most active and enjoy peaceful walks through pine-scented forests. **Guided tours provide fascinating insights** into both natural and cultural heritage, while self-guided exploration allows you to discover your own piece of paradise in this unique corner of the Adriatic.

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Poreč

More than just its stunning Euphrasian Basilica, a UNESCO World Heritage site, Poreč’s beaches, outdoor sports and entertainment scene make it even more special

Nestled on the western coast of Istria, Poreč stands as a testament to Croatia’s rich historical tapestry while embracing its role as a modern Mediterranean resort town. This charming coastal destination, where ancient Roman streets meet crystalline Adriatic waters, offers visitors an enchanting blend of cultural heritage and seaside pleasures. With its 2,000 years of history, vibrant cultural scene, and stunning natural beauty, Poreč has emerged as one of Croatia’s most compelling destinations, drawing travelers seeking both relaxation and cultural enrichment.

The city’s UNESCO heart
The heart of Poreč beats within its **UNESCO World Heritage-listed Euphrasian Basilica complex**, which was granted in 1997 with the following description: *“The group of religious monuments in Poreč, where Christianity was established as early as the 4th century, constitutes the most complete surviving complex of its type. The basilica, atrium, baptistery and episcopal palace are outstanding examples of religious architecture, while the basilica itself combines classical and Byzantine elements in an exceptional manner. The Episcopal Complex of the Euphrasian Basilica in the Historic Centre of Poreč is an outstanding example of an early Christian episcopal ensemble that is exceptional by virtue of its completeness and its unique basilican cathedral and that is a representative of a stylistically important episcopal palace.”* This 6thC ensemble represents one of Europe’s finest



The 6thC Euphrasian Basilica and its early-Christian atrium, baptistery, bishop’s palace, mosaics and sacral remains (3rd/4thC) are the world’s only complete landmark preserved from that period.



Enjoy the rich variety of Istrian cuisine from hearty soups to fabulous truffles.

intact examples of early Byzantine architecture in the Mediterranean region. The basilica’s **gleaming golden mosaics and intricate marble work** serve as a luminous reminder of the town’s historical significance during the Roman and Byzantine periods. The **town’s streetscape still follows the ancient Roman grid pattern**, with Decumanus and Cardo Maximus remaining the main thoroughfares just as they were



The oldest preserved house in Poreč, 13thC, a museum is being planned for its upstairs.

two millennia ago. Walking these ancient streets is a discovery of hidden courtyards, Romanesque houses and Gothic Venetian palaces that tell the story of the town’s rich past. The **historic old town complex includes** not only the Euphrasian basilica, but **Marafor Square**, which contains **part of the Roman forum** alongside the square where you can see fragmentary remains of a Temple of Neptune and another

large 1st C temple; The **Romanesque house, oldest in Poreč** (along M. Gupea Park) from the 13thC; the **Istrian Assembly Hall**, originally a Gothic Franciscan church also from the 13thC; the **15thC Fortress** with its **iconic pentagonal tower** at the beginning of Decumanus and much more! The **city museum is inside the Sinčić Palace** at 9 Decumanus, a Baroque building from 1719. For **amazing panoramic views** of the old town and coastline, **climb the Basilica’s belltower!** The **6thC Bishop’s Palace** within the UNESCO complex is named after an Archbishop sent by Justinian 1. It houses an **extraordinary permanent exhibition** of religious artefacts, floor mosaics and stone artifacts dating from the 3rd C onward. The new Basilica, outside the complex, was built in the 1990’s and is visible from one of the windows of the 6thC Bishop’s Palace.

Beach life and natural beauty
With **37 kilometers of coastline and more than 3,850 hours of sunshine**, Poreč is a beach-lovers paradise. Fringed by pines, there are **21 beaches to choose from**, all of them with EU Blue Flag designations for their cleanliness and water quality. The Zelena and Plava Laguna (Green and Blue Lagoons) areas offer some of the region’s most popular beaches, where visitors can find everything from secluded pebble coves to well-equipped beach resorts. Each beach area has its own distinct character. **Brulo Beach** combines natural beauty with excellent facilities, including water sports equipment rental and beach bars. The **City Beach**, despite

its central location, maintains a surprisingly peaceful atmosphere, while the beaches on the small island of **St. Nikola Island**, accessible by regular boat service, offer a different experience. Water sports enthusiasts will find plenty to keep them occupied, **from windsurfing and sailing to scuba diving** among ancient Roman artifacts and vibrant marine life. **The clear waters make snorkeling a rewarding activity** even for beginners. The coastline’s numerous small coves and inlets provide perfect conditions for kayaking, with rental facilities and guided tours available throughout the season.

Fabulous wine and culinary delights
With long hot summers and **short mild winters, the wine here is outstanding**. Dotted with olive groves and vineyards, Poreč’s surrounding countryside produces some of Croatia’s finest wines, from **stunning whites** like Malvasia, Chardonnay and, Pinot, **to robust reds** like Refosco, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Many local wineries welcome visitors for tastings and tours, offering insights into the region’s long-standing wine-making traditions. The area’s olive oils consistently win international awards, and visitors can tour family-run olive mills to learn about production methods and taste different varieties. Be sure to sample the traditional Istrian dishes like fuži (hand-rolled pasta) served with various sauces, including prized local truffles. If you love soup, you will adore **maneštra**. It’s a thick soup that’s been a staple here for centuries, using various vegetables and selected dry-aged meat. Along with pasta, enjoy traditional **gnocchi, njoki, pasutice** and **žgvacet**, a hearty chicken stew. Seafood lovers can indulge in fresh fish, scampi, and mussels prepared in traditional Istrian style, often grilled with local olive oil and herbs.

Family-friendly activities
Poreč particularly shines as a family destination, with lots of activities suitable for all ages. The Aquacolors water park, **one of Croatia’s largest water parks**, features numerous slides, pools, and play areas spread across its expansive grounds. Indoor activities aren’t neglected either. **The**

trips can take you to the medieval hill towns of Motovun and Groznanj, the Roman amphitheater in Pula, or the picturesque fishing port of Rovinj. The surrounding countryside, with its rolling hills and ancient villages, offers endless opportunities for cycling, wine tasting, and truffle hunting.



Enjoy a glorious walk! From Plava Laguna to the Parentium Hotel you can also roller-skate. In summer, shops and cafes are open en-route and at night, a large section of the path is lit!



Baredine Cave is five levels deep and has exactly the kind of spooky wonder you’re looking for!

Poreč Aquarium, though small, offers an educational glimpse into the world of fish and reptiles. And check out the hotel programs for **well-organized kids’ clubs**. Many have with professional animators who arrange activities ranging from treasure hunts in the old town to creative workshops and mini-sports tournaments.

Exploring beyond
Poreč serves as an **excellent base for exploring the Istrian peninsula**. Day



From sea kayaking to off road quad adventures Poreč’s outdoor scene is a family adventure.

The Baredine Cave
A 10 minute drive from Poreč (or check the Poreč-Višnjan bus--get off at Nova Vas and it’s just a 1 km walk until you reach the cave) offers visitors the chance to explore an impressive **underground world of stalactites and stalagmites** and even an underground lake. lake. The cave extends five levels down (tourists can descend to 60m) and houses unique cave-dwelling animals, including

the human fish (Proteus anguinus). Guided tours provide fascinating insights into the region’s geology and underground ecosystem.

Sustainable tourism
Like many coastal destinations, Poreč is working to balance tourism development with environmental preservation. **The town has implemented various eco-friendly initiatives**, including expanded cycling infrastructure, sustainable waste management programs, and efforts to protect its marine environment. Local authorities have also introduced measures to preserve the historical center while accommodating modern tourism needs, including pedestrianization of key areas and promotion of sustainable tourism practices.

Cultural calendar and events
Throughout the year, Poreč hosts various cultural events and festivals: **Summer in Poreč** - concerts, performances, exhibitions all summer. **Concerts in Euphrasiana** - one of Croatia’s oldest classical music festivals, held in The Euphrasian Basilica. **World of Ice cream Wonders** - the city’s ice cream festival, in Park Olge Ban offers a delicious program for everyone. Jazz in Lapidarium - every Wednesday in July and August, jazz lovers can enjoy concerts at the lapidarium of the Poreč Heritage Museum. Check what’s going on when you are here at www.myporec.com

Practical Information
The **best time to visit Poreč is during the shoulder seasons** of May-June or September-October when the weather is pleasant and the crowds are thinner. The peak summer months of July and August bring warmer temperatures and livelier atmospheres but also larger crowds. Getting around the historic center is easily done on foot, while efficient water taxis and local buses connect the town to nearby beaches and resorts. And if you’d like to explore the marvelous Istrian interior from Poreč, rent a car and enjoy the spectacular countryside.

Enjoy the magic of Poreč!



From the stunning Byzantine mosaics in the Euphrasian Basilica complex, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to our pine-fringed 37 kilometer coastline with 21 beaches, Poreč is a unique celebration of the fascinating history, culture, nature and cuisine of Istria. Enjoy your holiday here—you complete us!



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Vrsar

Where ancient stone built Venice’s dreams and tales of Casanova and gorgeous sunsets created one of Istria’s most romantic fishing villages

Perched on Croatia’s Istrian coast, Vrsar reveals its centuries-old story through stone. The town’s famous **Montraker quarry**, northwest of the old center, provided the **distinctive limestone that built many of Venice’s iconic structures**. This upper Jurassic stone, with its characteristic light grey hue, was prized for its remarkable hardness and was a major source of town’s revenue. Today, you can walk among these ancient stone cuts, touching the very material that helped build one of the world’s most beautiful cities.

Vrsar loves weddings
Inhabited since ancient times, tiny Vrsr grew into a glorious fortified town, with tales of Italy’s most famous lover, **Giacomo Casanova** woven into its history. His adventures inspired the town’s interactive Casanovatours and led to the creation of **Vrsar as a breathtaking wedding destination**, complete with stunning sunsets enjoyed from the town’s many viewpoints and special places dedicated to couples. Rising like a natural amphitheater from its indented coastline, considered the most intricate stretch of Istria’s shore, **Vrsar’s old town commands sweeping views** of its archipelago of 18 islands and islets. The largest, Sveti Juraj (St. George island), offers visitors a unique perspective of Vrsar’s historic center and marina. The island’s evergreen oak trees provide cooling shade while its ancient stone church stands as a silent guardian of centuries past. If you



Marina Vrsar, on the southern side of the Montraker peninsula, has berths for more than 200 boats and has received international awards for its outstanding facilities



With so many spectacular sites, Vrsar is a perfect wedding destination

love the outdoors, Vrsar offers everything from biking, hiking and trekking to diving and snorkeling. Modern Vrsar embraces visitors with the warmth typical of Istrian hospitality during its **fishing festivals from April to September**. The town’s waterfront promenade transforms into a bustling gathering spot where visitors can savor fresh Adriatic seafood while learning about traditional fishing techniques



There’s great kayaking all around Vrsar from Lim Bay to the offshore islands

from welcoming locals. These festive events, accompanied by glasses of indigenous Malvasia wine, often continue under starlit Mediterranean skies. **Perfect sunsets**
Be sure to check out these viewpoints for Vrsar’s timeless beauty. Below the **Church of St. Anthony of Padua**; the more romantic **ones behind St. Martin’s Parish Church** and

the **one charmingly marked by sculptures of Bepo and Tonina**; the breathtaking **Mukaba viewpoint** over Lim bay and **the Casanova viewpoint**. The town’s artistic soul shines through the **Dušan Džamonja sculpture park in Valkanela** and the **Church of St. Fosca’s remarkable collection of sacred artifacts**, including the evocative 17th-century “Martyrdom of St. Fosca” painting. Nature lovers will enjoy the nearby **Kontija forest**, a 65-hectare reserve showcasing 140-year-old Oriental hornbeam vegetation, a perfect retreat for quiet contemplation. **Edo Murtić, one of the greatest Croatian painters was inspired by Vrsar landscapes**, especially by the “Montraker” quarry. He used to spend most of the year in Vrsar in his summerhouse-studio, situated in the most beautiful part of the old town. From prehistoric settlements to Roman villas, Vrsar’s history runs as deep as the Adriatic itself. **Archaeological discoveries on Monte Ricco reveal Bronze Age remains** and the remnants of a Roman villa rustica, once adorned with polychromatic mosaics and frescoes.” This historical tapestry, combined with the town’s natural beauty, winding streets, centuries old stone houses and cultural heritage, makes this romantic town Vrsar an essential stop for travelers seeking to understand Istria’s rich past while embracing its present-day charm.

Nestled on a small peninsula along Croatia’s western Istrian coast, Novigrad artfully blends its rich historical heritage with modern cultural attractions and outstanding gastronomy. This former fishing village has evolved into a compelling destination while preserving its authentic charm. At the heart of Novigrad’s identity lies its deep-rooted fishing tradition, best experienced around its **historic Mandrač harbor**. Once the economic center of this fishing village, Mandrač remains one of the town’s most beautiful spots, where **pastel-colored houses** now host excellent restaurants and cafés. Visitors can sip wine or coffee while watching boats gently rock in the harbor. A **romantic waterfront promenade** extends from Mandrač, circling the town and leading to coastal beaches.

Experience maritime history
Along this scenic walk, interactive **digital totems tell the story of the city’s maritime heritage** in four languages. At five strategic locations, these modern storytelling devices bring the past to life through black-and-white photographs and personal anecdotes from local fishermen, offering minute-long video clips that highlight key historical facts. The town’s fishing heritage is further celebrated at the **Visitor Center at Mlinska Street**, where the centerpiece is an **authentic Novigrad batana boat**. This traditional vessel, measuring 4.8 meters long and crafted from oak, larch, and ash, represents one of the oldest types of batanas found in Istria. The town’s most distinctive landmark is **the bell**



The bell tower of St. Pelagio and St. Maxim’s Parish Church. The 6thC church, originally a cathedral, holds a unique treasure – an early Romanesque crypt, the only one in Istria



Novigrad’s beautiful waterfront and wonderful nearby beaches

tower of St. Pelagio and St. Maxim’s Parish Church, dating back to 1883. The church, built in the 6thC as a cathedral, holds a unique treasure – an early **Romanesque crypt, the only one in Istria**. History buffs will appreciate the **well-preserved town walls** with towers from the 13th to 15thC and historic main gates, a testament to Novigrad’s strategic importance through centuries of Byzantine, Frankish, Venetian, and



The cycling route from Novigrad along the coast to Mareda is one of many gorgeous rides

Austro-Hungarian rule.

Celebrating the arts
Modern cultural life centers around the **Rigo Gallery**, housed in an 18th-century patrician palace. The gallery has earned international recognition for its **contemporary art exhibitions** and hosts the annual International Festival of Visual Arts “ARTerIA.” The crown jewel of Novigrad’s cultural offerings is the Lapidarium Museum, Istria’s first purpose-

built museum. This contemporary architectural masterpiece houses **an exceptional collection of pre-Romanesque stone works** from Novigrad’s former cathedral. The museum’s centerpiece is the Mauritius ciborium, one of Europe’s few fully preserved early medieval ciboriums, featuring delicate carvings of intertwining patterns, Christian symbols, and mythical beasts. Near the Lapidarium Museum, **the LINK museum shop offers thoughtfully curated souvenirs** that reflect the region’s creative spirit. Visitors can browse original works by renowned Croatian artists and designers, alongside traditional crafts and eco-friendly products. The shop serves as a showcase of local cultural industries, bridging traditional craftsmanship with contemporary design excellence.

Authentic cuisine and outdoor fun
Gastronomy takes center stage in Novigrad, with over 40 restaurants showcasing supreme Istrian and Mediterranean cuisine. Be sure to try **local award-winning extra virgin olive oils** from makers including Al Torcio, Vergal, and Červar. For outdoor enthusiasts, Novigrad is an ideal base for exploring northwestern Istria’s **cycling trails and wine routes**. Nature lovers can visit the Antenal-Mirna protected area for **birdwatching**, while families will enjoy the Istralandia water park. Whether you’re exploring ancient churches, sampling local wines, cycling through olive groves, or admiring contemporary art Novigrad delivers an authentic Istrian experience.

Istria’s most romantic fishing village

Experience fascinating history, culture, nature and more, surrounded by the sea, the sun and the romance of beautiful Vrsar!

Vrsar Tourist Board

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Discover an ancient island city!

From our famous 13th century city walls to our beautiful beaches, stunning waterfront, nature trails and wine roads, Novigrad welcomes you!

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Motovun/Grožnjan

The medieval hilltop towns of Motovun and Grožnjan offer visitors an intoxicating blend of culture, cuisine, and artistic panache

Perched like twin jewels in Croatia’s emerald-green Istrian peninsula, the medieval towns of Motovun and Grožnjan offer visitors an intoxicating blend of culture, cuisine, and artistic flair. These stunning hilltop settlements, both remnants of Venetian rule, have evolved into distinct yet complementary destinations.

Majestic Motovun

Rising dramatically from its hilltop perch, immediately captures the imagination with its imposing **medieval walls dating back to the 11th century**. The town’s Venetian heritage is evident in its colonial architecture and the iconic winged lion symbols that adorn its buildings. As you wander through the narrow alleys, the **Romanesque Municipal Palace** and the **17th-century Parish Church of Saint Stephen** stand as testaments to the town’s architectural splendor. But Motovun’s allure extends far beyond its stones and mortar. The surrounding landscape is home to one of the Mediterranean’s last preserved lowland forests, a protected reserve where the prized **Istrian white truffle flourishes**. From September to December, these aromatic delicacies take center stage in local cuisine, particularly in the beloved fuži pasta. Wine enthusiasts will find paradise in the vineyards that blanket the hillsides, but don’t miss **unique local hooch like biska**, an herbal mistletoe-infused spirit, and teranino, a sweet liqueur crafted from local Teran wine.



The spectacular Parenzana, 53km of stunning scenery by bike or foot between Motovun and Grozjan offers glorious outdoor adventure as well as tunnels!



Motovun’s dreamy hilltop setting and ancient history—indelible memories

Grožnjan the City of Artists

Just a half hour drive, Grožnjan presents an entirely different face of Istrian culture. **Almost abandoned after WW2, its deserted houses were gradually turned into galleries, ateliers, studios and dwellings by artists** from Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1965, the city was officially declared as a ‘City of Artists’. From May to September, its medieval streets



Grožnjan’s wonderful streets are the perfect artistic showcases

pulse with artistic energy as galleries showcase everything from ceramics to jewelry, and music fills the air from impromptu performances and the renowned Jazz is Back! Festival, one of Europe’s best small jazz festivals.

Cycling heaven, a hikers paradise

The connection between these two cultural powerhouses is itself an adventure. **The Parenzana** was a 123km long narrow-gauge railway,

operating between 1902 and 1935. On its 123 km long route. The small train linked 33 towns from Trieste to Poreč, running through what is now three countries. Today, one of the most beautiful parts of Parenzana runs from Motovun to Grožnjan—a **53-kilometer, 3 to 4 hour cycling thrill that features 6 tunnels, 4 viaducts, and some amazing viewpoints**. Motovun’s legacy is enriched by its **notable residents from Renaissance composer** Andrea Antico, who pioneered modern musical notation and Josef Ressel, the **inventor of the ship’s propeller to racing legend Mario Andretti**, Formula 1 world champion and Indianapolis 500 winner. The town’s cultural prominence was further cemented by its **celebrated film festival**, which over the years evolved from an backpacker’s gathering **attracting 25,000** each year to the second most significant, next to Sarajevo’s film festival. Now called **Cinehill, the outdoor festival, showcasing around 70 films** annually from across the globe, is held in Petehovac. Meanwhile, From a nearly abandoned post-war town to a thriving arts center, **Grožnjan represents one of Istria’s most remarkable cultural revivals** and continues to enchant visitors with its artistic soul and rich history Today, its stone buildings house working artists’ studios and galleries, while the **Jazz is Back! Festival brings world-class jazz, blues, and ethno musicians** to perform in this picturesque setting, creating an unforgettable fusion of visual and performing arts in the heart of Istria.

In northern Istria, near Croatia’s border with Slovenia, **two remarkable hilltop towns** stand as testaments to the region’s rich heritage: **Buzet**, officially known as **the “City of Truffles,”** and a perfectly preserved miniature village called **Hum** that proudly claims the title of **the world’s smallest town**. Buzet’s medieval hilltop core overlooks the meandering Mirna River valley, offering spectacular views of the surrounding landscape. While **autumn brings celebrated truffle festivals**, spring and summer visitors can explore the renowned wine roads, particularly around the town of **Vrh, where vintners produce some of Istria’s finest Malvasia and Teran wines** but also a local sparkling wine made in a traditional way. The town’s cultural heritage lives on through its brass band, the oldest in Istria, which has been performing since 1905 as part of the still-active “Sokol” Musical Society.

Finding paradise in nature

Adventure seekers can explore **Raspadalica, an ideal site for hang gliding and paragliding**, or venture into the mysterious **Radota Peć cave system** on Čičarija. A lot of Buzet families in Buzet are passionate truffle hunters, so it’s easy to **find a truffle hunting experience**. **Buzet Canyon** has 99 year-round, **free climbing routes**, from 4a. **Hikers can follow the 15-kilometer “Seven waterfalls” trail** from Buzet to Kotli, near Hum. According to local legend, visiting the enchanting village of Kotli with its historic water mill. The path winds through the magnificent



Buzet is known as the City of Truffles because hidden below in its forests are the rarest and most prized truffles waiting to be found—the white truffles that Istria is world famous for.



You can hang/paraglide almost year round at Raspadalica, about 5 km north of Buzet.

Mirna River landscape, where hidden natural wonders like the Blizanci (Twins) canyon and the refreshing Garijak pond await. Along the path you can enjoy the river’s **seven amazing waterfalls!**

A tiny town Built by giants

Just a short journey away lies Hum. According to local legend, giants building towns in the Mirna River valley had just a few stones left over and decided to create



Hum’s festival of Istrian homemade brandies is the last Sunday in October.

this miniature masterpiece. With just two streets and three rows of houses within its medieval walls, **Hum has preserved its character since the 11th century**, maintaining a population of **fewer than 30 residents**. **Hum’s copper town gates** tell stories through their unique decorations - twelve medallions depicting traditional monthly activities of rural life, with handles crafted in the shape of ox

horns. Every second weekend in June, on **the Town of Hum Day**, the community gathers for a fascinating centuries old ritual: all local men meet in the Municipal Loggia to **elect the town prefect** by carving their votes into a wooden stick. The town’s calendar culminates in October with a spirited brandy festival, to showcase biska, a traditional mistletoe brandy crafted from a recipe over two millennia old. Perhaps the most culturally significant connection between the towns is the **Glagolitic Alley**, a remarkable **monument to Croatian literary heritage**. This open-air installation features eleven sculptures representing the history of Croatian Glagolitic script, making the journey between **Roč, where in 1482 the preparation for the first printed book in Croatia was done**, and Hum an educational adventure. A replica of Gutenberg’s printing press can be seen in Roč and the famous glagolitic alphabet carved in the church of St. Anthony as well as some frescoes in all three churches. There’s even a studio where the guests can participate in making their own fresco to take home as a souvenir. Whether you’re exploring Buzet’s historic streets, marveling at Hum’s perfectly preserved medieval character, or hiking the historic paths between them, these twin towns offer an authentic slice of Istrian life. Here, time moves at a different pace, and every stone seems to tell a story. Visit in September to avoid the crowds and experience these medieval marvels at their most atmospheric.

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Buzet, more than the city of truffles!



A rich history dating back to the 2ndC, fabulous gastronomy and marvelous year round outdoor experiences--discover them all in Buzet!

Buzet Tourist Office
Šetaliste Vladimira
Cortana 9
+385 052 662 343
info@tz-buzet.hr

A magical hilltop town where artists’ studios and Renaissance palaces combine to share ancient streets, creating a living gallery just minutes from the Adriatic Sea

Perched 320 meters above the Adriatic, just three kilometers from the sea, medieval Labin stands as one of Istria’s most captivating cultural treasures. The town unfolds in two distinct chapters: its picturesque old town crowning the hilltop, one of the **best preserved acropolises in Istria**, and the newer quarter below, shaped by centuries of mining heritage. Through the 16th-century St. Flora Gate, marked by its Venetian lion and Labin’s coat of arms, visitors enter **a world where art galleries and studios enliven historic palaces**, and family-run restaurants showcase the many flavors of eastern Istria.

Artistic tradition
Today’s Labin thrives as a year-round artist community, where traditional crafts and contemporary galleries transform historic spaces into living workshops. The Labin Town Gallery, housed in the former Luciani Palace, showcases contemporary art from both established and emerging artists, hosting dozens of solo and group exhibitions annually that keep Labin’s creative spirit alive. In Dubrova, near the main local road to Pula, there is a **Sculpture Park where an International Sculptors Symposium has been taking place for the past 45 years**. In the summer the old town is taken over by the Art Republic, a combination of music, performance and fine arts. The main square’s perfectly preserved 16th-century loggia, once the heart of public life where peasants danced on Sundays and fair days, still serves as a gathering place. Nearby, **the baroque Battiala-Lazzarini palace**



The medieval town of Labin, first mentioned in 285 AD, when it was known as Albona, has a magical hilltop location that looks out over a lush landscape and the nearby sea



Labin’s mining history comes to life at the nearby Rasa Museum, completer with 150 meter tunnel!

houses the interactive National Museum, its grand rooms preserving the legacy of the counts who once called it home.
Religious heritage
The town’s remarkable religious heritage centers around the three-nave Church of the Nativity, built in 1336 on 11th-century foundations. Its baroque façade features a Venetian lion and the celebrated bust of Senator Antonio Bollani,



Enjoy Labin’s winding cobbled streets, colorful old buildings and charming town squares

one of Istria’s finest 17th-century sculptures. Inside, six marble altars include precious artworks, notably a painting by the celebrated Palma the Younger on the altar of Our Lady of Carmel. Rising 35 meters above the town, **the Bell Tower of St. Just has watched over Labin since 1623**. Its narrow bifores and stone-spiked corners create a distinctive silhouette that has served as both timekeeper

and warning bell throughout the centuries. For religious history lovers, you can visit the birthplace of **one of Europe’s most influential Protestant theologians**, Mathias Vlacius Illyricus. **The morning market captures Labin’s essence**, where local farmers display colorful produce from fertile Istrian soil alongside fresh Adriatic fish. Here, tradition meets daily life as vendors share stories and recipes, offering you a taste of local life through olive oils, cheeses, homemade sausages, honey, and wines crafted by generations of Istrian families.

Mining legacy
For those interested in deeper historical connections, **Labin’s mining heritage** tells a fascinating story. Once home to Europe’s most modern mines, employing over 10,000 workers at its peak in the 1940s, this industrial legacy is now preserved in the architecture of the lower town. The nearby **Mining Museum in Labin even has a 150 meter long tunnel and mineshaft** to explore! In the early 1940’s more than 1 million tons of coal were produced here.

Sentona, goddess of travelers
Labin’s most popular symbol is Sentona, the ancient Liburnian goddess of travelers. Her legacy, preserved in Roman monuments at the National Museum, symbolizes the protection and natural bounty this remarkable town—not just art and history, but wonderful wine roads, hiking trails and close by. great swimming, diving and excellent sailing and boating, too!

Surrounded by settlements dating back to the 5th-7thc BC, Pazin is a mirror of Istria’s turbulent history. **Rising above a spectacular karst abyss** and one of Europe’s **most dramatic cave systems**, Pazin also stands as both Istria’s administrative heart and a testament to nature’s raw power. **The city’s remarkable position**, impossibly perched on the edge of a steep cliff, **has helped it survive centuries of invasion**—from pre-historic tribes to Romans, Venetians, Turks, the French and Austrians. Today, this seemingly tranquil town surprises visitors with its blend of cultural heritage, untamed nature, and living traditions, particularly enchanting in winter months **when mysterious fogs** shroud its ancient streets.

Mighty Pazin Castle
At Pazin’s heart stands Istria’s **largest and best-preserved medieval fortress**, first documented in 983 as *Castrum Pisinum*. Before it was heavily fortified with towers and staircases, the castle could only be reached by a series of movable bridges over a moat that led to five doors. This mighty castle, which never fell to Venetian forces, now **houses both the City Museum and the Ethnographic Museum of Istria**. Within its walls, you will discover everything from prehistoric artifacts to traditional crafts, while a unique collection of church bells features rare Gothic examples bearing Glagolitic inscriptions.

Spelunking heaven
The natural wonder of **Pazin Cave**, a deep abyss beneath the castle,



Impossibly perched 200 meters high on the cliff above the Pazinčica river, Pazin is perfect for lovers of history, magnificent outdoor experiences and delicious local gastronomy



Experience nature’s raw beauty hiking the many trails around Pazin

has fired imaginations for centuries. **Jules Verne set his novel “Mathias Sandorf” in its depths**, while local legends suggest it inspired Dante’s vision of Hell’s entrance in the Divine Comedy. Today, you can experience this remarkable formation in several ways: an **exciting three-hour spelunking adventure** with local guides, an **educational hiking trail** through the lush canyon, or for adrenaline seekers, **a thrilling zipline**



Looking to excitement? Pazin’s zip line over the abyss is waiting for you!

ride across the void. Those preferring a gentler experience can admire the dramatic views from either the Vršić bridge or Hotel Lovac’s scenic terrace. The town’s religious heritage centers on the Parish Church of St. Nicholas, home to a fascinating cycle of wall paintings and a **unique star-shaped Gothic vault from 1456**. This architectural marvel features a celestial fresco depicting St. Michael, the world’s creation, and the eternal

struggle between good and fallen angels. Nearby stands the Franciscan Monastery, housing Istria’s oldest preserved library, while its **15th-century Church of the Visitation** showcases an exquisite late Gothic presbytery. The State Archive, one of Croatia’s richest, occupies the old town quarter, preserving centuries of regional history. The Memorial Home serves as the hub of contemporary cultural life, while the historic promenade of Pazinska gimnazija offers a magnificent canopy of century-old trees, most spectacular in autumn. On the first Tuesday of each month, this promenade transforms into the setting for **Istria’s largest traditional fair, a cherished tradition since 1539**.

Wonderful hiking
If you really like hiking, the surrounding landscape offers **truly outstanding hiking opportunities**, including the 16-kilometer Grdoselo-Zelengrad trail, revealing panoramic views of the Pazin valley, Mount Učka, and Ćićarija. The path leads past the picturesque ruins of Zelengrad castle and the **scenic waterfalls** of the Butoniga stream. Another popular route takes walkers to **Pazinski krov waterfall**, where ancient mill ruins and naturally carved pools tell stories of the area’s industrial heritage. Through its blend of dramatic natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and living traditions, Pazin offers you an authentic glimpse into Istria’s heart, where every fog-shrouded morning might reveal new mysteries of this ancient landscape.

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Step into Umag, Croatia’s “Tennis City” and westernmost Istria’s gateway to Europe, where every cobblestone tells a story of Roman nobility and Venetian grandeur

As Croatia’s westernmost gem, less than 50 miles from Venice, this former island-turned-peninsula welcomes you with a blend of historic charm and modern vibrancy that makes it impossible to resist. Let your feet trace paths where ancient Romans once strolled, as centuries of Mediterranean breezes carry whispers of past glory. While many know Umag as Croatia’s tennis capital, **home to the prestigious ATP Croatia Open**, you’ll discover there’s so much more to explore. Wander through the old town’s narrow streets, where partially preserved **10th-century walls and a historic draw-bridge gate** transport you to medieval times. Enjoy Venetian houses as well as Renaissance and Baroque-era buildings that showcase the architectural splendor that made this a coveted summer residence for Roman aristocrats.

Maritime heritage

From May through October, the crystal-clear Adriatic beckons you to its shores. Follow the picturesque seaside promenade connecting the historic center to the modern resorts of Stella Maris, Katoro, and Polynesia. Along the way, you’ll discover **a unique piece of maritime heritage – the wooden “grue,”** traditional boat cranes found nowhere else but along this stretch of coastline from Savudrija to Karigador. These elegant wooden sentinels stand as testament to generations of local fishing tradition. For history enthusiasts, the Town Museum, housed in a former defense tower, offers fascinating glimpses into the past. Don’t miss



On its own peninsula, with remains of its 10th-century town walls including a gate and a drawbridge, Umag is Croatia’s gateway to Europe—Italy is just an hour away!



Umag is the tennis capital of Croatia, famous for its annual ATP Open, one of the tour’s premier events

the **Church of St. Roch (St. Rok), built in 1507** with its remarkable 18th-century **oil-painted wooden ceiling**, or the parish church of The Assumption with its impressive 33-meter bell tower from 1651. Take a break at the innovative **Humagum Park**, where **solar-powered benches and an amphitheater** hosting summer performances create a perfect blend of relaxation and entertainment. Children will love the



Umag has some lovely green spaces, so be sure to spend time enjoying beauties like Humagum Park

inclusive playground, while fitness enthusiasts can enjoy the street workout facilities with spectacular sea views.

Year round yumminess

The culinary scene in Umag follows nature’s rhythm – **spring brings wild asparagus** dishes, summer offers the freshest seafood, autumn introduces prized truffles, and winter warms you with hearty minestrone and local sausages in cozy taverns.

From **February through March, the Shellfish Days festival** lets you savor the bounty of one of the world’s cleanest seas, paired perfectly with golden Malvasia or ruby-red Teran wines from nearby hillside vineyards. For active travelers, Umag offers **19 marked cycling trails** winding through vineyards, olive groves, and medieval hilltop towns. The historic Parenzana trail, following an old railway route, provides a unique perspective on the region’s diverse landscape. Beyond tennis, Umag pulses with year-round energy. **The Sea Star Festival** in May transforms the Stella Maris lagoon into a vibrant celebration of music and culture, while various seasonal events showcase local traditions and contemporary entertainment. Whether you’re seeking medieval mysteries, seaside serenity, sporting adventures, or culinary discoveries, **Umag offers an authentic slice of Istrian life** where traditional charm meets modern comfort. As you watch the sunset paint the Adriatic gold from a centuries-old square or sip local Malvasia at a waterfront café, you’ll understand why Roman nobles chose this corner of Istria for their summer paradise.

Best time to visit?

While summer brings the buzz of international tennis stars and festival crowds, spring and autumn offer perfect weather for exploring, with fewer visitors and the same magnificent views that have captivated travelers for centuries. The mild climate and crystal waters make every season an invitation to discover your own piece of paradise on the Istrian coast.

With hundreds of kilometers of mountaineering and hiking trails, more than 1,300 plant species, and a world of castles and coastal beach towns close by, Učka-Čićarija is a treasure

Rising dramatically from the Istrian peninsula, the majestic ranges of Učka and Čićarija form a stunning natural amphitheater where continental and Mediterranean worlds collide. This protected wonderland, crowned by the 1,401-meter Vojak peak, offers **everything from gentle nature walks to heart-pounding adventure**, all within sight of the sparkling Adriatic.

An outdoor lover’s paradise

More than just mountains, Učka Nature Park encompasses 160 square kilometers of diverse terrain, where well-marked trails for **hiking, biking, mountaineering as well as horseback riding, free climbing, running and hang gliding** lead you through beech forests, across flowering meadows, and along limestone ridges. Throughout the park, there are numerous educational trails. The 2km “Vela draga” trail for example, rakes you through a magnificent canyon, protected as a geomorphological monument, where towering rock formations tell a 140-million-year-old story of nature’s artistry. For serious hikers, the **challenging ascent to Vojak rewards with a breathtaking 360-degree panorama** from its historic 1911 tower – sweeping from the Alps to the islands of Kvarner Bay. The mythological trail “Trebišća-Perun” offers a fascinating 15-kilometer journey through ancient Slavic history, while the gentler Stražica-Sapačica trail provides perfect family exploration.

Adventure in the air

Učka has long been a **mecca for free-flight enthusiasts**, with registered



The dramatic landscapes of Učka-Cićarija are a never-ending tapestry of nature at its grandest—from extraordinary hiking and outdoor adventure to an all-season botanical wonderland.



Land Art Trail, artist Boris Pecigoš’s creation, expresses man and nature are entwined

take-off points at Vojak and Brgud making it a premier destination for hang gliding and paragliding. As you soar above the landscape, you’ll share thermal currents with golden eagles and griffon vultures – just two species among the park’s rich birdlife that includes over 120 nesting species.

Rock climbing legacy

The limestone towers of Vela draga have challenged climbers since 1931,



The stone tower at the Vojak summit (1,396 m) offers a fantastic view of Istria and Kvarner.

when legendary alpinist Emilio Comici pioneered the first route up the Great Tower. Today, **67 established routes** ranging from beginner-friendly 4a to challenging 7c+ grades make this one of Croatia’s most diverse climbing destinations.

Natural wonders

The park’s unique position, where mountain meets sea, creates an extraordinary biological diversity with **over 1,300 plant species – including**

the **endemic Učka bellflower found nowhere else on Earth**. Seasonal waterfalls, mysterious caves, and crystal-clear springs dot the landscape, while traditional villages like Brgudac offer glimpses into mountain life past and present.

Cultural crossroads

The historic Poklon pass (922m) tells a tale of faith and perseverance, where pilgrims once bowed toward the Trsat sanctuary. Today, it serves as the park’s welcoming gateway, with a modern visitor center and a charming mountain hut offering traditional refreshments. **In nearby Šušnjevića, the fascinating Ecomuseum “Vlaški puti”** preserves the unique culture and endangered language of the Istro-Romanian Vlachs, who have called these mountains home for centuries.

Beyond the mountains

Don’t miss the **mystical Korita spring**, where ancient wooden troughs still capture crystal mountain water beneath Brajkova cliff. Mountain bikers can explore 19 marked trails, while history buffs should seek out **the medieval Kožljak castle, dramatically perched above the former Čepić Lake**. The picturesque coastal town of Mošćenička Draga lies just below, offering pristine beaches and seafood restaurants, while the elegant resort of Opatija and medieval Lovran provide perfect bases for exploration. Whether you’re seeking adrenaline-pumping adventure or peaceful communion with nature, Učka-Čićarija offers an escape where wilderness and accessibility perfectly combine.

PICTURESQUE, HISTORIC, ROMANTIC

From our charming alleyways, cobbled streets and well-preserved medieval architecture, including churches, palaces and museums--to a rich culinary tradition of sublime Italian and Mediterranean cuisine, our waterfront promenade, beaches and Umag Park, a green oasis in the heart of the city--Umag welcomes you!





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