

## Croatia: The Dalmatian Islands

### Bike Vacation Only

Cycle along scenic coasts, port towns, and marinas during this exhilarating bike tour in Croatia. The narrow belt of the Dalmatian Islands are best experienced by bike. You will pedal past fragrant fields of poppies, rosemary and lavender, while discovering rustic island hamlets and picturesque harbor villages. Feast on a scrumptious homemade Brač Island dinner with a charming local family in their home. In Pučišća, visit a stonecutter's school, where artisans craft the stone used to create world-famous buildings like the White House and Diocletian's Palace. Soak in breathtaking views from Vidova Gora, known as the summit of the Adriatic and take a dip in the Adriatic at Zlatni Rat, Croatia's most famous beach. This is truly an island feast for all the senses.

### Cultural Highlights

- Cycle along the harbor of Postira, a beautiful village nestled between the ocean and hillsides graced by centuries-old olive and pine groves.
- Visit a world-renown stonecutting school.
- Connect with daily life in this stunningly beautiful region during two home-hosted meals.
- Behold breathtaking views from Vidova Gora, the "summit of the Adriatic."
- Take a dip in the Adriatic at Zlatni Rat, Croatia's most famous beach.

### What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of rolling terrain and moderate-to-challenging hills and is ideal for everyone from energetic beginners to experienced cyclists. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like a break from riding.

**Tour Duration:** 7 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 6 - 35 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 00:45 - 03:30

**Group size:** 22 max

### Climate Information

### **Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

Apr 63°/48°, May 71°/56°, Jun 79°/63°, Jul 85°/67°, Aug 84°/67°, Sep 78°/61°, Oct 69°/54°

### **Average Rainfall (in.)**

Apr 2.6, May 2.4, Jun 1.9, Jul 1.1, Aug 1.7, Sep 2.6, Oct 3.4

## **DAY 1: Travel from Split to the island of Brač / Warm-up ride / Welcome reception**

Your VBT trip leaders and the rest of the group will meet at the hotel in Split.

Meet your trip leaders at the hotel at 8:30 a.m. Your baggage will be transported to the ferry in the VBT support vehicle at that time to ensure a place in line for our vehicle. You will leave the hotel at 9:30 a.m. and walk to the Split pier for your ferry, which sails at 11:00 a.m. to the port of Supetar on the island of Brač. On arrival at the port of Supetar, minivans will transport your group to the village of Postira and the Hotel Pastura, your home for the next three nights. This welcoming, 4-star hotel's location is convenient and quiet and features comfortable, air-conditioned rooms with balconies.

A charming and quiet village, Postira dates back to the 14th century. Located five miles from Supetar, Postira is nestled between the ocean and hillsides, and is graced by centuries-old olive and pine groves. One of this town's most famous sites is the remains of a basilica in Lovrecina, on a bay with a beautiful sandy beach.

After lunch on your own, your bike tour of Croatia officially begins. Join your trip leaders for a safety and bike-fitting session, followed by a short warm-up ride along Postira's harbor and inland to the Village of Dol. In the early evening, travel to the Village of Dol for a welcome cocktail reception of homemade grappa on the restaurant's terrace, followed by a traditional Brač Island dinner. Later, return to the hotel and fall asleep to the lapping sound of waves outside your room.

### Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon Warm-up Postira — 9.9 km (6 miles)

### What to Expect:

Embark on a short warm-up ride along Postira's harbor and inland to the village of Dol. It is a short, easy ride that will help you get comfortable on your VBT bike. This will also be a wonderful opportunity to get familiar with your route notes and to test your RWGPS. Your trip leaders will assist you if you have any

questions about the use of this program.

Cumulative Distance Range: 9.9 km (6 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

## **DAY 2: Cycle from Postira to Škrip and Pučišća / Visit stonecutters' school / Home-hosted dinner**

This morning's ride will bring you to Škrip, the oldest settlement on the island and the source of the stone used at the stonecutter school we will see this afternoon. From there, the ride to Pučišća follows quieter roads along the scenic north coast and passes through humble villages bordered by fig and olive trees. You'll enjoy views of the mainland across the water throughout the ride. Stop in the port town of Pučišća and visit the stonecutters' school. Brač's world-renowned stone has been used for the construction of some of the world's most famous buildings, including Diocletian's Palace in Split and the White House in Washington, D.C. This is a unique opportunity to see students' work and learn about a near-forgotten craft at one of the world's few remaining stonecutting schools.

After lunch on your own, you may choose to shuttle back to the hotel or cycle back to Postira where you will have free time to relax or walk to the beach.

Just prior to dinner, your trip leaders give you a primer on the Croatian language.

Use your newfound skills tonight as you share an authentic Croatian dinner in a local home. Connecting with your hosts during will give you a chance to learn more about daily life on this breathtakingly beautiful island.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Postira to Škrip and Pučišća — 34.2 km (21 miles)

Afternoon Pučišća to Postira — 16 km (10 miles)

What to Expect:

This morning's ride is a slightly uphill pedal to the town of Škrip. After your visit, you will enjoy riding downhill and continuing on to Pučišća following a quiet road along the scenic north coast. This afternoon's ride takes you along the same scenic coastal road back to the hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 34.2 – 50.2 km (21 – 31 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

### **DAY 3: Vidova Gora / Rural villages / Milna**

Today's journey affords you some of the most spectacular views of your bike tour in Croatia. After breakfast, shuttle to the highest point on the island, Vidova Gora. This lookout, known as the summit of the Adriatic, affords breathtaking panoramas. From here, enjoy more great scenery as you coast through the villages of Nerežišća and Ložišća.

From Ložišća, it's a nine-mile ride down to the port of Milna, the most beautiful marina on the island. Stop here and relax for an included lunch at a local restaurant. Afterward, continue along the coast back to your hotel in Postira via Supetar.

Tonight, you may explore the typical Croatian restaurants in town. Your trip leaders will gladly provide recommendations.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Vidova Gora to Milna – 29.6 km (18 miles)

Afternoon Milna to Supetar – Milna to Postira – 28.7 km (17 miles)

What to Expect:

After a short shuttle, enjoy beautiful scenery as you ride through quaint Croatian villages. You will experience a few hills, but the support vehicle will be available if you'd like a break from the saddle. From Ložišća, ride nine miles down to the port of Milna. The afternoon ride includes scenic stretches along the coast.

Cumulative Distance Range: 29.6 – 58.3 km (18 – 36 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

### **DAY 4: Bol & Zlatni Rat Beach / Boat ride / Hvar town / Cooking lesson and home-hosted dinner**

Bid farewell to your hotel in Brač and travel by coach across the top of the island to the base of Vidova

Gora. From here, ride through easy terrain past the medieval settlements of Pražnica and Gornji Humac. These rustic hamlets illustrate how the island's towns and villages developed from individual homes, usually shepherds' houses. Enjoy breathtaking views during your downhill ride to Zlatni Rat (meaning "Golden Horn"), the most famous beach in Croatia. This spit of land reaches out into the water with a gentle slope. You can swim in the Adriatic's crystal-clear water before lunch on your own in the adjacent town of Bol. After lunch, take a private boat to Jelsa on the island of Hvar. Then, shuttle to your hotel in Hvar town. In the event of inclement weather, this transportation operates as noted below.

Nearly 42 miles (67.5 km) long, seven miles (11 km) wide, and only three miles (5 km) at its narrowest point, Hvar is the most famous and seductive Adriatic Island. Along with Bali, Zanzibar, Mykonos and Capri, Hvar has been called "one of the most beautiful islands in the world" by *Condé Nast Traveler* magazine. Its permanent population of 12,000 people clusters on the western part of the island, adjacent to the most fertile and protected land.

Your hotel's central location affords the perfect vantage point from which to explore Hvar town, a medieval Croatian settlement with a strong Venetian influence dating back to the 16th century. Visit the Arsenal, built in 1612 as Europe's oldest and perhaps smallest municipal theater. Its purpose was to bring the aristocratic and bourgeois classes together, and it stands as a symbol of reconciliation between social classes and the abolition of privilege—although it should be noted that women were not admitted until the second half of the 19th century. Take in the expanse of Saint Stephen's Square, the largest Adriatic square after Saint Mark's in Venice.

Tonight, walk to a nearby home for a delicious dinner. This festive repast starts with a welcome toast and a tour of the home's garden. Your hosts will teach you how to prepare some of the best local dishes during a group cooking demonstration.

Inclement Weather Itinerary: If rough weather makes it impossible for our small chartered ferry to operate, guests will travel between Brač and Hvar on the large car ferries that operate via Split, creating a longer travel day. The two ferry rides are separated by a two-hour visit to Split, where you can enjoy a walk and lunch on your own.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning Pražnica to Zlatni Rat Beach in Bol — 16.9 km (10 miles)

What to Expect:

This morning's wonderful ride takes you along easy terrain and through medieval settlements. Enjoy breathtaking views during your downhill route down to the famous beach of Zlatni Rat. In the afternoon you will cruise to the island of Hvar.

Cumulative Distance Range: 16.9 km (10 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## **DAY 5: Hvar / Stari Grad**

After breakfast, you'll ride past fields of poppies, rosemary, and lavender. The ride starts with a steady climb of about four miles (6.5 km) to the village of Brusje and rewards you with views of a dramatic, sparsely inhabited landscape crisscrossed by a multitude of stone walls. You can admire views across the sea to neighboring islands and the mainland. If you prefer, you can start the ride in Brusje and pedal to Stari Grad, finishing with a four-mile (6.5 km) downhill coast into this charming Dalmatian town situated at the end of a narrow bay. Originally founded in the fourth century BC, Stari Grad (literally "old town") features a main square which offers a number of options for lunch on your own.

After lunch, enjoy additional time in Stari Grad, shuttle back to the hotel, or continue biking on a pleasant loop through Jelsa beside the vineyards and olive groves of central Hvar. On the way back to Stari Grad, you can challenge yourself by biking a hilly route or opt for a flat road. Upon returning to Stari Grad, the support vehicle will shuttle you back to the hotel and your trip leaders will give you recommendations on how to spend the rest of the day on Hvar.

Back at the hotel, spend the afternoon exploring more of Hvar town or swimming at a neighboring beach. Dinner is on your own.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Hvar to Stari Grad – 22.6 km (14 miles)

Afternoon Stari Grad to Jelsa and back – 21.7 km (14 miles) OR Mina Beach to Stari Grad Plus – 13.2 km (8 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's ride starts with a steady climb of about four miles (6.5 km) to the village of Brusje. If you prefer,

you may shuttle to Brusje and enjoy an easier ride to Stari Grad, finishing with a four-mile (6.5-km) downhill coast. In the afternoon you can bike through Jelsa to Stari Grad through vineyards and olive groves.

Cumulative Distance Range: 22.6 – 57.5 km (14 – 36 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **DAY 6: Vrboska / Jelsa / Pitva / Brusje**

Today's ride—certain to be a highlight of your bike tour of Croatia—is relatively flat. It carries you through verdant fields and quiet stone villages and along the narrow harbor between Vrboska and Jelsa.

Your first destination is Vrboska, an adorable harbor town famous for its fortified church. Unique in Croatia, the structure resulted from an urgent need for both the church and the secular citizenry to join together to fortify their village from invaders. From here, you'll skirt a fjord on a flat and scenic road, perhaps stopping at a small cove for a cooling dip (don't forget your swimsuit!). End the morning with a picnic in the old fishing port of Jelsa, where you'll see the well-maintained homes of local ship captains and perhaps enjoy another refreshing dip.

Then, ride through the mountain village of Pitve. With its traditional stone houses, *konobas* (taverns) and terraced gardens, Pitve exemplifies the island towns of Croatia. Shuttle back to the hotel from Stari Grad in the late afternoon, or opt for a longer ride that brings you back through Brusje to Hvar.

Tonight, enjoy a farewell dinner on the terrace of your hotel, overlooking Hvar.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning Stari Grad to Vrboska and Jelsa – 17.4 km (11 miles)

Afternoon Jelsa to Stari Grad and Hvar – 35.1 km (21 miles)

What to Expect:

Today's morning ride is relatively flat and carries you through verdant fields and quiet stone villages, along the narrow harbor between Vrboska and Jelsa. In the afternoon, you can choose between a moderate ride with hills or an easier option, finishing up in either Stari Grad or Hvar.

Cumulative Distance Range: 17.4 – 52.5 km (10 – 33 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## **DAY 7: Travel to Dubrovnik / VBT Bicycle Vacation ends**

After breakfast, travel to the port of Dubrovnik, arriving at approximately 12:15 p.m. (total travel time is approximately three hours). Upon arrival to Dubrovnik's port you will shuttle with your VBT representative to the Dubrovnik Hotel Bellevue, where your tour ends.

Important: Flight departures from the Dubrovnik airport prior to 4:00 p.m. are not recommended. If you depart earlier, you must make transportation arrangements from the last hotel at your own expense.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## **Accommodations**

May vary depending on departure date.

### **Hotel Pastura (Days: 1,2,3)**

This 4-star hotel has 3 buildings with 50 rooms and is located right on Postira's beach. Hotel facilities include a freshwater swimming pool, full-service restaurant, bar and café bar. Other amenities include a business center, fitness center, sauna, Jacuzzi and massage spa. Rooms feature a balcony, air conditioning, satellite television, safe, and minibar.

### **Hotel Park Hvar (Days: 4,5,6)**

Once the palace of the great Ivanic family in the 16th century, the Hotel Park Hvar is situated in the heart of Hvar town. You'll be treated royally in this 14-room boutique hotel. Thoroughly renovated in 2006, it is located between the former Rector's Palace and St. Mark's church and is close to the beach. Rooms feature partial views of the harbor and town, as well as air conditioning, heated floors, minibar, safe, LCD satellite TV, free WiFi, and private bath with shower. While here, you can also take advantage of the restaurant, the bar/lounge and the hotel's uniquely tranquil and intimate ambiance.