

Newsletter

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PHOTO: IVO PERVAN



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■ Introducing

Ravna Gora – active vacation and winter pleasures

In the very centre of Gorski kotar, around 40 kilometres off the coast, surrounded by mountains, there is the town Ravna Gora, attracting more and more visitors each year with its possibilities for active vacation, especially in the winter time.

At an average altitude of 800 metres, Ravna Gora is surrounded by areas of untouched nature, clean air and drinkable spring water. It is a paradise for mountaineering enthusiasts, cyclists and all nature lovers.

Ravna Gora is flanked by the mountain Bjelolasica and the hills Višnjevac and Suhi vrh on one side, and the hills Javorova kosa, Kosica and a number of smaller hills on the other. Beside the interesting landscape, all of these hills offer possibilities for active vacation, joined in the tour-program of Ravna Gora mountain paths, with 12 major locations.

Completely developed cycling trails and a completely new and beautiful bowling alley are new facilities attracting an increasing number of tourists who want to enjoy in sports tourism. Ravna Gora features winter sports facilities, offering, just like many other neighbouring towns, paths for Nordic disciplines – Nordic running and skiing, as well as ski slopes, sledge slopes and areas for children. In Šije, a town not far from Ravna Gora, there is a small ski lift where recreational skiers can ski day and night.

Mountaineers and hikers can enjoy in the Ravna Gora mountain path that goes through the wider area surrounding the town. The tour begins at the chasm Kosice, 970 metres above sea level and ends on the highest peak of Gorski kotar – Bjelolasica. It includes Kicljeve jame caves, one of the largest cave systems in Croatia, as well as surrounding hills and mountains – Javorova kosa, Vijenac, Turmin, Višnjevica and Bjelolasica. The tour also includes, of course, rest stops along the way on platforms, lookout-spots and excursion destinations, where visitors can enjoy in the numerous natural, cultural and religious monuments and sights.

It takes around 24 hours to take the entire tour on foot, which, of course, depends on the will and fitness of the visitors, and those interested can take the entire tour in the company of an expert guide.

Visitors will also be happy to know that they can taste home-made specialties and mountain fruits in Ravna Gora restaurants, with a pleasant accommodation and hospitable hosts, while mountain lodges offer the possibility of a unique accommodation and a stay in nature. When visiting Ravna Gora, be sure to go and see its cultural monuments, the excursion destination Javorova kosa with the mountain lodge next to which, according to legend, the healing well Božji studenac (“God’s well”) is located. Visitors should also take a tour of the Ravna Gora mountain path, bicycle trails or take advantage of other recreational possibilities. The hunting area “Višnjevica” offers the possibility of recreational hunting and photography.



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

Primorje-Gorski kotar Tourist Board

www.kvarner.hr

Ravna Gora Municipality Tourist Board

www.tz-ravnagora.hr

Lokve – frogs as pets

Lokve, a town in the western part of Gorski kotar, is named after its many puddles and marshes, which are a natural habitat of frogs. Its inhabitants were often tauntingly called ‘froggies’ (‘žabari’), but they turned this into a brand, making the frog their trademark, smiling at you from every promotional material. Even the trash cans are decorated with frogs, and the town boasts a frog museum, unique in Europe, harbouring more than 1,000 frogs on exhibit, from live ones to stuffed ones, from all over the world, and offering frog-related souvenirs.

Here you can get to know and learn all about frogs and their lives, the history of frogs and frog-hunting in Lokve. Beside vivariums with live specimen of domestic frog species and their tadpoles, the museum also features educational posters, documentary films, video recordings, as well as toys and souvenirs from all over the world, even literary and visual artwork on the subject of frogs. Finally, you can enjoy in sweet gummy candy in the form of green frogs or taste “frog’s blood”, a unique liqueur with an unusual name and great taste made from forest fruit, which, according to some, has aphrodisiac qualities.

Seeing as everything in Lokve is devoted to the frog, all events and happenings also celebrate this, for Lokve locals, domestic animal. In spring, the Frog Week takes place, then the Frog games and the Frog night, whose main event is a competition in frog jumping, a frog “Olympics” of sorts. The presence of these amphibians in the environment is indicative of its preserved state. Therefore, be happy when you hear the loud ribbit of these animals.

Lokve, one of the oldest towns in Gorski kotar, is located beneath Risnjak, and though it is not far from the littoral region, it is characterized by an extreme highland climate – summers are short, fresh and pleasant, while the winters are long and very cold, with lots of snow.

The area offers the Lokvarsko Lake as a potential tourist attraction. Though it is a storage lake, made in 1954 when a dam was built, it fit in perfectly with the natural environment surrounding it. The lake offers real enjoyment to all sports and recreation enthusiasts. It was the venue of the first world tournament of underwater orientation, numerous international rowing regattas, and since 1978 a traditional meeting of mountaineers, cyclists and other participants is held there every August, called “POJ” and “BOJ” (Croatian acronyms for “Around the lake by bike” and “Around the lake on foot”).

The lake is also a true challenge for fishing enthusiasts. In 1973, the world’s largest brown trout was caught, weighing 25.4 kilograms. The lake is also a habitat of the chub, carp, crucian carp and other species.

The park forest Golubinjak is an amazing place for taking walks and relaxation, and an interesting fact about it is that it harbours the largest fir tree of Gorski kotar. This queen of the forest is 250 years old, 37 metres high and 140 centimetres wide.



PHOTO: MILAN BABIC



PHOTO: TZ PGZ-TZ LOKVE

Other attractions include two caves: Ledena and Golubinja, and Paklena vrata (“hell’s gate”), an opening in a rock. Besides walks in a beautiful natural surrounding, the Lokva area offers several bicycle trails, from ten to 35 km in length.

Primorje-Gorski kotar Tourist Board

www.kvarner.hr

Lokve Municipality Tourist Board

www.tz-lokve.hr

Zagreb – Discover the «female side of Zagreb» and learn Croatian

The Croatian capital has recently enriched its tourist offering with the project “Zagreb Inside”, featuring two new thematic tours of the Croatian metropolis entitled “the Female side of Zagreb” and “Do you speak Croatian?”. The project was initiated by Dora Fila and Iva Čaleta, two language teachers and tourist guides.

The first stop of the tour is Manduševac, where tourists can hear about the legend of the girl Manda. The following is in front of the cathedral, where visitors can learn about the dark age of inquisition and the last witch that was burned in Europe, burned right here in Zagreb. At the Dolac market, tourists will hear about the legendary old ladies selling produce at the market, as well as about the first Croatian female journalist, Marija Jurić Zagorka. Tourists also get to see Tkalčićeva Street, Krvavi most (“The bloody bridge”), Kamenita vrata and are familiarized with the success of female athlete Janica Kostelić and artists Milka Trnina and Mija Čorak Slavenska.

While Iva reveals the female side of Zagreb to visitors, i.e. gets them to know with more and less well-known female Zagreb locals, who have left their mark on the city’s history, each in her own way, Dora introduces the City of Zagreb and the Croatian language in an unusual way in her one-and-a-half-hour tour “Do you speak Croatian?”. She reveals to visitors that in Zagreb it is completely normal to drink coffee for an hour and a half, how to say “I love you”, “good day”, “how are you” and 20 other Croatian words, as well as how to write their own name in the Glagolitic script. While touring the most important sites of the city, visitors will also learn while Zagreb locals greet each other with the word “bok”.

For now, the tours are organized once a week, “The female side of Zagreb” Fridays and “Do you speak Croatian?” Saturdays.

City of Zagreb Tourist Board

www.zagreb-touristinfo.hr



PHOTO: MARIO ROMULIĆ & DRAŽEN STOJČIĆ

Trbounje – Rokovi dvori

Rokovi dvori, a recently finished complex in Trbounje near Drniš, is one of the most beautiful examples of rural stone architecture in Croatia. The construction of this representative complex began two years ago on the location where the original stone houses collapsed. The four deserted stone houses were joined in a unique complex, and faithfully restored on the outside to the last detail, from the existing original stone. On the inside, the spirit of tradition was respected, but the facilities and offering have been adjusted to the needs and desires of contemporary life.

The amazing stone buildings are surrounded by a 320-metre stone wall, and special focus was given to the horticulture. Pre-grown grass rolls, for instance, was brought in from Slavonia. The entire estate was constructed in close cooperation with conservationists and experts for the protection of cultural monuments, with the maximum respect for the original state of the houses. The top notch stone complex now offers all necessary comfort in the interior. It also features a vineyard, a pool and a tennis-court. With their size and luxury-level, Rokovi dvori are far superior to similar facilities in Istria and are meant for the foreign market. The luxury facility can accommodate a dozen people at the same time, who can have 480 square metres at their disposal. The house can only be rented in its entirety, and the idea is that besides accommodation, guests are offered a complete service, from someone picking them up at the airport to constantly meeting their desires, including a driver and a skipper for attractive outings.

Rokovi dvori is located at the very entrance to the Krka National park, and nearby are the Krka Monastery, the Franciscan monastery Visovac, the Skradin buk, while Šibenik, Vodice and the most beautiful Croatian water cascades – Manojlovac cascades, are all located within 20 kilometres. Within an hour's drive, one can easily get to the national parks Plitvice, Paklenica and Northern Velebit. Also within arm's length is the sea and the Kornati archipelago, where fishing-enthusiasts can enjoy in big game fishing, while in the hinterlands of Rokovi dvori the mountain Promina ascends.

Šibenik-Knin County Tourist Board

www.sibenikregion.com

Town of Drniš

www.drnis.hr



PHOTO: MILAN BABIĆ



PHOTO: IVO PERVAN

Lighthouses – guardians of the Adriatic

In the Adriatic archipelago, comprised by 1,244 islands, tiny islands and cliffs, 48 lighthouses were built at the beginning of the 19th century. Alongside them, on locations in the midst of the sea, houses were built for the keepers and their families to live in.

Nowadays some of the Adriatic lighthouses have been renovated, and 11 have been turned into accommodation for tourists fleeing from the overcrowded beaches and searching for a more intimate atmosphere behind the walls of lighthouse buildings. To be in solitude for a couple of days far away from the bustle is the dream of almost any business person, and a stay in the lighthouse suites offers an adventure on Robinsonian tourism next to the azure of the Adriatic.

Veli rat is considered one of the most beautiful lighthouses, located in a landscape of luscious Mediterranean vegetation, overlooking a white beach and the crystal clear sea on the island of Dugi otok. It is probably on account of its magnificent view from the 40 metre tall lighthouse tower that it earned its epithet as the Dalmatian guardian of the open sea. The Veli rat lighthouse, just like the lighthouses Savudrija, Rt Zub and Struga can be visited in the winter as well as they all have heating.

It was built in 1849 on the north-western cape of Dugi otok, 35 kilometres to the west of Zadar. It is 3 kilometres away from the villages Veli Rat, Berunić and Polje, and 20 kilometres from the ferry port in Bibinje. It features a four-bed and a three-bed suite, and can be reached by car. On account of its close proximity to the nearby towns, visitors can easily obtain food and other necessities. Should you, on top of the natural beauties of Veli Rat wish to visit the nearby national park Kornati or nature park Telašćica, you can easily do that from the town Sali on the other end of the island.

In the middle of the southern side of the island Lastovo, at the entrance to the town Skrivena luka ("Hidden harbour"), there is cape Struga where in 1839 the eponymous lighthouse was built, with the accommodation capacity for 15 people. Lastovo is a scarcely inhabited island, 55 nautical miles away from Split and Dubrovnik, and its archipelago counts more than 40 islands, tiny islands and cliffs. The lighthouse is located 70 metres above sea-level, on the very edge of a steep cliff, providing an exceptional view of the open sea. Amazing lookout-spots and easy access to the sea through a pine-tree forest to the north of the lighthouse make this tourist destination extremely attractive.

The island of Sušac, outside of waterway corridors, is located 23 nautical miles south of the island of Hvar and 13 nautical miles to the west of the island of Lastovo. The island is surrounded by the vast open sea, creating a unique atmosphere of seclusion from the outer world. This sense is even more intense than on the island of Palagruža from which sometimes the Italian coastline can be seen. Viewed from far away, the island creates an optical illusion and seems as if it consists of two separate islands.

The lighthouse Sušac was built in 1878 on the highest southern part of the island, which is extremely steep, with the cliffs hurling into the deep and clear sea, which



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

after storms has a visibility of up to 30 metres deep. The southeastern part of the island descends mildly into the sea and is rich in beautiful coves and walking paths. The lighthouse is located 100 metres above sea-level, providing a view of the endless open sea. The building itself is a stone one storey house with two four-bed suites.

The lighthouse Palagruža was built in 1875 on the eponymous island located in the middle of the Adriatic sea, between the Croatian and Italian coast, 68 nautical miles south of Split and 26 nautical miles south of the island Lastovo. It is the most far-away Croatian island, known for its exceptional beauty and rich history. The lighthouse is located in the middle of the island at 90 metres above sea-level, which is why this facility is not recommended to the elderly or persons of poor health. The spacious building features two four-bedroom apartments. The sea around Palagruža is the richest fishing area in the Adriatic, but individual scuba-diving around the island is forbidden.

The lighthouse Porer was built in 1833 on the eponymous island, southwest of the southern tip of Istria. The small island is only 80 metres wide, 2.5 kilometres away from the coast and the town Premantura.

The 35-metre tall tower is located in the very centre of the stone lighthouse building, from where its economic and residential areas spread to all four sides. Nearby are beautiful coves and tiny islands. The stone building is entirely on the ground floor, with a paved yard, featuring two four-bed suites.

The lighthouse Sveti Ivan, built in 1853, is located on the most faraway island of an archipelago before Rovinj. It is a cliff-island with no vegetation, a mild coast and shallow sea, making it an ideal destination for contemporary Robinsons with small children.

The lighthouse Sveti Petar was built in 1884 on the eponymous peninsula located at the entrance to Makarska, close to one of the most beautiful beaches on the Adriatic. The lighthouse is a 20-minute walk away from the centre of Makarska, and 85 kilometres from the Split airport. The stone lighthouse building is entirely on the ground floor and features one five-bedroom suite. The area of the lighthouse is often visited by Makarska locals in the summer, which is why it is not a destination that will provide complete

tranquillity and privacy during the season. The lighthouse, namely, is part of a promenade, so its surrounding area and the beach in front of it is frequently visited by walkers and swimmers.

The small island of Prišnjak is located merely 300 metres from the western coast of the island Murter. In 1886, a lighthouse was constructed on it so captains could more easily orient themselves when arriving from the west or south to the Murter archipelago. The surrounding sea is extremely rich in fish, and the building of the lighthouse is only 15 metres away from the beach. With many ancient stone walls and a few small pine-tree forests, Prišnjak is the most beautiful of the Murter islands. The lighthouse features a spacious suite and large stone terrace. Surrounded by a pine-tree forest, this lighthouse is ideal for a sports and recreational vacation. A stay on Prišnjak is equally interesting during the spring, an ideal time for sports fishing. In the summer, one can enjoy in the warm sea and the starry nights, while in the autumn the most amazing sunsets can be seen in the Kornati hinterlands. Nearby is a series of small islands, and the Kornati national park is only six nautical miles away.

The lighthouse Savudrija was built in 1818 and is the oldest lighthouse in the Adriatic, as well as the northern-most Croatian lighthouse, right next to the border with Slovenia and only 56 kilometres south of the city of Trieste in Italy. The closest tourist destination and a well-known city in the world of tennis is Umag. The lighthouse is only 9 kilometres away from Savudrija and very well connected with its surrounding by traffic. It is 36 metres tall and features one four-bed suite. The sea is only 30 metres away, and numerous restaurants are in close proximity.

The lighthouse Rt Zub was built in 1872 and is located on the peninsula Lanterna. It is 13 kilometres away from Poreč on one side and 13 kilometres from Novigrad on the other. The peninsula Lanterna lies between two bays, Tarska and Lunga, both known for their beautiful pebble beaches, suitable for children. The stone lighthouse building is only ten metres away from the sea and covered in luscious greenery, and it features one six-bed suite. The close proximity of Poreč, a well-known cultural centre (the Euphrasian basilica was put on the UNESCO World heritage list) and Novigrad with its numerous sports and recreational facilities and marina will offer visitors enough various activities and a great choice of restaurants, traditional taverns and night-spots.

This lighthouse is, therefore, unique because, though it is easily accessible with all means of transport, it offers its guests a peaceful and safe vacation, making it suitable for families with small children.

Plovput

www.plovput.hr

www.lighthouses-croatia.com



PHOTO: BRASLAV KARLIĆ

Cres – The largest island in the Adriatic

The island of Cres is the largest island in the Adriatic, located in the northern part of the Kvarner bay. In the south, in Osor, it is connected with the island Lošinj via a drawbridge. The coast of the island is 66 kilometres long and very well developed, rich in numerous coves and pebble beaches in its western and southern part, while the northern and eastern part are characterized by steep and harsh rocks. A specialty of the island is its freshwater lake Vransko jezero, whose surface is above sea-level and bottom beneath at the depth of 74 metres. The lake water is of high quality and drinkable. Moreover, it belongs to the cleanest lakes in Europe, which is why access to the lake is strictly forbidden.

The northern part of Cres is rich in red oak, hornbeam, elm and chestnut tree forests, while the mid and southern parts are covered in pastures and thick macchia. Research has identified 1,100 plant species, 939 of which are indigenous. The island is particularly pleasant in the spring when the nature flourishes and the scent of aromatic plants starts to fill the air.

The best proof that the sea of the Cres aquatorium is extremely clean is the population of dolphins that inhabits it. It is supposed that the population counts between 100 and 150 dolphins.

The steep and inaccessible parts of the eastern coast, which are an ornithological nature park, are one of the last habitats of an extremely rare bird – the griffon vulture.

The Ancient name for Cres and Lošinj was Apsyrtydes Nesoi or the Osor islands seeing as until the canal at Osor was constructed this was one island.

The town of Cres is a fortified town developed on the western part of the island under the island's ridge, where the prehistoric settlement and Ancient fortification (Crexa, Crepsa) used to be. Cres was inhabited in prehistoric times, which can still be seen by objects from that time, and began to develop in the middle ages. One of the more notable cultural and historical monuments of the town is the palace of the family Petris (Petrić) from the 15th century. It is actually the oldest patrician palace of old Gothic architecture, which the Cres locals term Arsan. Today it harbours a museum.

One of the most interesting and special places on the island is certainly the town of Lubenice, located on a cliff 382 metres above sea-level. This stony town or fortification is a gemstone of Croatian rural architecture. It is a picturesque town with medieval monuments and old stone houses located in three sinuous rows along a calcareous ridge.

Alongside remains of medieval fortification systems and a few sacral buildings, the specialty of this town is its unique view of the sea and the St John (Sveti Ivan) bay, with an amazing pebble beach.

Beli is one of the oldest Cres towns and used to be one of its most important ones. This acropolic town is settled on a high hill above the eastern coast of the northern part of the island. In the town there is an eco centre, "Caput Insulae", engaged in preserving biodiversity, original values and the cultural and historical heritage of the island. It is also active in implementing the integral protection of the griffon vulture.



PHOTO: BRASLAV KARLIĆ



PHOTO: BRASLAV KARLIĆ

The town Martinšćica is a relatively recent town, located on the tamest part of the island's coast, next to a spacious bay facing the southwest. The lovely town is decorated with an abundance of Mediterranean greenery and is oriented exclusively towards family and camping tourism. Along with the beautiful beaches to the north of the town, set in untouched nature, there is a number of possibilities for a quality active vacation.

On the southern part of the Valun bay, between two amazing pebble beaches, there is the town Valun, a picturesque littoral town with a small harbour at its centre, also oriented towards family and camping tourism.

Alongside numerous privately owned apartments, visitors are also offered accommodation in two hotels: Kimen in Cres and Zlatni lav in Martinšćica, as well as four auto-camps in Cres, Martinšćica, Belo and Valun.

Primorje-Gorski kotar County Tourist Board

www.kvarner.hr

Town of Cres Tourist Board

www.tzg-cres.hr

Hum – the smallest town in the world

Hum, with its 17 inhabitants, is the smallest town in the world, according to the Guinness Book of Records. It is located in the heart of Istria in the Municipality of Buzet. It is 14 kilometres away from the town of Buzet and can be reached by car, excursion buses, and many come on foot so they can better view the interesting sights and natural beauties. The most interesting way to get to it is certainly through the Glagolitic Alley (“Aleja Glagoljaša”), a road between Roč and Hum, along which great stone monuments are located in the surrounding fields, each representing a letter of the Glagolitic alphabet. It begins with the column of the Chakavian Council, erected in 1977, and ends with the Hum town gates. Hum, namely, was one of the most well-known centres of Glagolism since the 11th century. The Glagolitic alphabet was used here as late as the early 20th century, and even today it is present in the wider surroundings of the town on old Glagolitic monuments and contemporary memorials.

Hum has formed into what it looks today in the middle ages, in the 11th century, when on the remains of an older fortification the Hum castle was built, and next to it the first series of houses of the future town. Then, Istria was part of the great Frankish Empire. Earl Ulrich I rebuilt and constructed new castles in the border areas of his empire at the time, including this one in Hum. In 1102, Ulrich II conferred Hum and some other castles to the Aquileian Patriarch. The charter mentions the “castrum Cholm” (according to the old Croatian form Hlm) which is the first time Hulm was mentioned in writing in its long history. With this act begins the history of Hulm as a fort. Up to the 17th century, Hulm is mentioned as a “castrum” in historical notes, which means fort, and today it represents a town-monument and one of the rare well-preserved examples of urban development exclusively within the walls of medieval city walls. Since its conception until today, almost nothing was built outside the Hum walls, the town has remained within the bounds determined in the early medieval times. Hum harbours preserved fresco murals painted in the second half of the 12th century when the town belonged to the Aquileian Patriarchy, which most probably commissioned them to be made. Their author is unknown, but his work is testimony that he was a superior fresco painter and an artist of great talent. The Hum fresco murals are a unique work of art that can not be compared to anything in Istria and wider. They are painted in the spirit of the western Romanesque, but under the influence of Byzantine painting. In the Romanesque chapel of St Jerolimus at the Hum cemetery, ancient wall paintings of high quality are partly preserved.



PHOTO: MILAN BABIC



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

Istrian County Tourist Board
www.istra.hr

Town of Buzet Tourist Board
www.tz-buzet.hr

Krapje – a village of architectural heritage

Lonjsko field, one of the largest natural swamp areas in this part of Europe as well as richest in fauna and flora, harbours a pearl of architectural heritage – the village Krapje in the Sava River basin. Located on the left bank of the River Sava, not far from Jasenovac, it offers inexhaustible possibilities for enjoyment in traditional architecture typical for the mid Posavina region to enthusiasts of historical heritage. This is why in September of 1995, it was proclaimed a village of architectural heritage. That year, the village was also awarded with the Category A European cultural heritage medal.

Krapje, located in an extremely rich hunting and fishing area, which is how it got its name (krap is a name for the fish carp), is framed by the river Sava and rows of houses, of which some are almost 200 years old. It will enchant visitors with its picturesqueness and environmental preservation, seeing as there is no industry and no major roads in its loose vicinity. Traditional Posavina houses, built by horizontally layering oak-tree planks, put together by wooden pegs, represent the climax of Croatian rural folk architecture in wood. Because of the danger of floods, the houses were originally raised onto wooden or stone columns, which were later replaced by brick foundations. The original covers made out of sedge, straw and wooden plates were replaced by roof tiles at the beginning of the 20th century.

The picturesqueness of the houses is accentuated by the covered outside staircases, the archaic porches, the protective small roofs and the richly decorated detail on the fences and columns, the window seals decorated by carvings, the wooden bars and fences of wooden one-storey and two-storey wooden houses. The wooden houses are most often turned with their narrow fronts to the road, and in the back yards the farm buildings of various purposes were located – the barn, the henhouse, the pigsty, the hayloft, the corn baskets etc. The local population has recognized the town's potential for tourism, offering visitors relaxation and fun in the rare and indigenous as a tourist attraction. Among them is the family Palaić on whose farm the local museum is located, the Ethno house from 1912, with its preserved original from and original traditional objects.

At the entrance to the village there is an information and education centre in which the staff of the nature park familiarise visitors not only with the cultural heritage but with the long history of this region.

Enjoying in the ancient wooden houses offering a pleasant and healthy stay and getting to know the folklore and traditional architecture of the Posavina region is not all that Krapje has on offer. Not far from the village there is an old armet of the River Sava, Krapje-đol, which was proclaimed the first Croatian ornithological reserve in 1963. It is known as a habitat of protected bird species such as the spoonbill and grey heron.



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

Sisak-Moslavina County Tourist Board

www.turizam-smz.hr

Lonjsko field Nature Park

www.pp-lonjsko-polje.hr

■ Events

Samobor – town of masks

Samobor, a town in the northwestern part of the country, located right next to the border with Slovenia and in close proximity to the Croatian metropolis – Zagreb, has enjoyed the tradition of a carnival for almost two centuries. The Samobor carnival is among the oldest and biggest in Croatia and has grown into a modern festival and become a trademark of the town, a sort of cultural good. It is a tourist and entertainment event, visited for the last couple of years by around 200,000 people.

The biggest and oldest in the continental part of the country, the Samobor carnival is a place of fun, joy, satire and social critique. Also, it is a place of purification and of the hope that by burning the carnival doll, everything that was bad will be cleansed and that the new year will be better and more just.

In Samobor, during this time, it is not only the people that put on masks, but the town itself as well, with its streets, squares and stores completely changing their appearance. During these days, the town, which is usually a favourite weekend excursion spot for Zagreb locals, is the most joyous because jugglers, mimes and street performers take over the Samobor streets. Along various workshops, concerts and circus acrobats, the youngest are also not forgotten: every Saturday and Sunday, as part of the children's carnival, the streets are turned into the Sraka promenade.

This year, from January 26th to February 16th, the 184th annual carnival will be held. As always, it will begin with the proclamation of the Independent Carnival State and the ceremonial surrender of the town keys to the carnival prince, who will take power over the town for 20 days.

It all began in the 1920s. The rare written documents from the time show that, in the streets of the then tiny Samobor, a carnival event was held, and that in the town hall a dance under masks was held. The Samobor museum, for instance, harbours the minutes of a municipal council from 1828, at which one local innkeeper asked whether he could rent the town hall premises for the carnival ball, noting he had done the same the year before. This is the first written document of the Samobor carnival, from which it is obvious that it had already been held once in 1827. At the beginning of the 20th century the carnival ceremony underwent some changes. In 1906 the function of the real-life prince Carnival is introduced, who is, in the presence of the carnival judge, sentenced to being burnt at the stake on Shrove Tuesday. Of course, the traditional carnival prince doll that is burnt in the end has been part of the carnival from its very beginning until today.

In the Samobor region, a festive dinner is prepared on Shrove Tuesday, with turkey and traditional pasta, lots of wine and dough-nuts for dessert.

Since 1904, the carnival has its official paper, the "Sraka". Every February, the Sraka is a real barometer of social events and an indicator of the political circumstances of its time. Since the times of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, the various Yugoslavian states, up to the contemporary Croatia,



PHOTO: IVO PERVAN

the carnival paper has recorded the time and the customs, making fun of authorities with its humour and irony.

The tradition of holding the carnival was stopped by World War II, but was again revived in 1965.

The carnival tradition finds its roots in Christianity. In the 9th century, during the time of Grgur of Nin, a church measure was prescribed that on the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday a fast was mandatory. The Sunday preceding Ash Wednesday was named in Latin *dominica carnis privii* or meatless Sunday, and the people have simplified it to carnival or "meatlessness". Since the 15th century, the fast was replaced by many with opposite customs – strong food, fun, drinking and wearing masks under which everything was allowed. This is how the carnival events came to be.

Apart from the carnival, Samobor offers numerous other tourist attractions, and is well known for craft guilds. Near to the town the Samobor and Žumberak hills are located, offering many natural beauties, cultural and sacral monuments, archaeological findings, mountaineering and cycling trails and mountain lodges and hospitality facilities, where you can enjoy in the rich culinary offering based on traditional recipes, particularly the Žumberak lamb, venison and trout.

A recommendation for all who visit Samobor – make sure to taste the custard pastries (*kremšnite*), probably the only ones in the world eaten when they are warm. This favourite dessert has become a tradition and one of the trademarks of this charming town, 20 kilometres away from the centre of Zagreb.

Zagreb County Tourist Board

www.tzzz.hr

Town of Samobor Tourist Board

www.tz-samobor.hr

Samoborski fašnik

www.samoborski-fasnik.com

Gornja and Donja Stubica – anniversary of the Peasant Revolt

On the occasion of the beginning of the great Peasant revolt from 1573, the well-known uprising of the peasants against the feudal lords, the Museum of the Peasant revolt organizes a series of activities each year, in cooperation with many associations and the local population, under the name “The 1573 Gubec Revolt”. The great peasant revolt, which has left a deep trace in the history of the Stubice area, has been marked for the past 30 years, and the museum itself was opened on the 400th anniversary of the revolt.

This year’s cultural and entertainment program contains various workshops and playgroups for children and adults, and re-enactments of the peasant revolt with Matija Gubec as the leader as well as the battle at Stubice will be held thanks to the associations that have been founded at the initiation of the museum. The reasons behind the revolt were numerous and still remain a subject of historical research. Certainly, the extremely high excise that the peasants had to pay to the aristocrats was one of them.

The program covers two days and begins on February 6th 2010 at 10 am in the Museum of the Peasant revolt in Gornja Stubica. Its program is mostly devoted to the comparison of the life of a peasant and of life at court and the preparation of the revolt. Apart from a costumed visit of the permanent exhibition of the museum, interactive workshops will demonstrate to visitors a part of the life at a 16th century court – the clothing. Also held will be a dance-workshop “Get dressed and dance!”, and interested visitors will be able to learn about the fashion of the time (the renaissance), craft decorations for dresses or tunics, and those who are skilled can try the school of renaissance dancing under the leadership of Vlasta Rittig. Shooting the bow and arrow is organized on the terrace of the court castle. The court idyll is interrupted when a messenger comes to announce that the peasants are revolting – an organized excursion to the Gubec lime-tree follows, where visitors will be able to see the other side of feudal life, that of the peasants.

The revolted peasants are organizing themselves, they are arming themselves and preparing for battle. The preparation of the uprising ends with a peasant feast in the tavern Birtija pod lipom (“Tavern under the lime-tree”), near the Gubec lime-tree in Gornja Stubica.

On February 14th 2010, the program starts at 12 pm in the centre of Donja Stubica in front of the Holy Trinity Church. The gathered peasants revolting start to walk in a procession towards the farm Majsecov mlin in Obrtnička Street. The feudal army is also gathering and the peasants are forced to engage in a final battle. They are determined as they very well know what defeat will ring them. Around 1 pm the spectacular battle begins, re-enacted by the members of various associations: Družba vitezova Zlatnog kaleža, Tahijevi puškari, Vitezovi Sv. Jurja, Vitezovi Zelingradski, Beli Volk, along with the participation of around 100 extras.



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

After the battle on the Majsec farm, each association will present itself with its program, and visitors will be able to enjoy in interactive workshops and the culinary offering of the farm households. Visitors can also go and see the permanent exhibition of the Museum of the Peasant revolt, before and after the events.

Krapina-Zagorje County Tourist Board

www.tz-zagorje.hr

The Museums of the Croatian Zagorje – the Museum of the Peasant Revolt

www.mhz.hr

Družba vitezova Zlatnog kaleža

www.druzba-vitezova.hr

■ Croatia in the World

Dubrovnik among the most popular European tourist centres and most popular world tourist destinations in 2010

Dubrovnik has recently been ranked 5th in the online evaluation of the 50 most popular European tourist destinations on the coast. The ranking is a result of tourists' evaluations, who, after visiting Dubrovnik, assessed its 50 hotels with an average mark of 77.88 out of a 100. Out of the Dubrovnik hotels, the "Hilton Imperial Dubrovnik" was the best rated with 89 points. According to the survey, the best reputation is enjoyed by the Turkish summer destination Belek, Visitors have assessed its hotels with an average mark of 80.31, and the best review and 90 points were awarded to the hotel centre "Kaya Belek". Belek is followed by the most popular German vacation destination Binz, the Italian Sorrento and Funchal in Portugal. On the other hand, the Spanish El Arenal, a well-known night life spot, enjoys the worst on-line reputation. Also unpopular are Lloret de Mar on Costa Brava, San Antonio on Ibiza and Benidorm on Costa Blanca. The online survey was conducted by the popular British web portal trivago.co.uk, which offers the possibility of making reservations and comparing prices in more than 300,000 hotels around the world.

Dubrovnik has also recently found itself on another ranking, that of British Airways, which has published its projection for the 10 most popular destinations in 2010. BA founds its projections in global trends, and it has ranked Dubrovnik 6th. Dubrovnik is one of only three European destinations in the ranking, along with Istanbul and Stockholm. It is described as a peaceful haven of the world jet set. Reporting on BA's projections, the world media claim that visitors of Dubrovnik can expect many interesting activities and that every corner brings a unique experience. They also point out that the nearby islands offer privacy, which is why Dubrovnik is so popular with Hollywood celebrities.

Ranked number 1 in the BA projection is Cape Town in the South African Republic, where the World Football Cup will be held in June and July. Out of the destinations on the Americas, the following were ranked among the top 10: New York, Las Vegas, Vancouver and Punta Cana in the Dominican Republic. The last two are the Maldives and New Delhi.



PHOTO: MARIO ROMULIĆ & DRAŽEN STOJČIĆ

Dubrovnik-Neretva County Tourist Board

www.visitdubrovnik.hr

Dubrovnik Tourist Board

www.tzdubrovnik.hr

Trivago

www.trivago.co.uk

The British Times has ranked Croatia among the most popular destinations for the next decade

The British Times has recently ranked Croatia as one of the 10 world destinations to get away from your everyday life in style in the upcoming decade. Croatia is joined by London, Paris, Berlin, Sicily, Greece, Switzerland, New York, Canada, Cuba, Turkey, Morocco, Syria, the Dominican Republic, Zanzibar, Sri Lanka, India, Puerto Rico, Lebanon, Peru, Abu Dhabi, Cambodia and Fiji. Describing Croatia, author Susan d'Arcy says the Adriatic islands have become unbelievably trendy and popular and the northern peninsula Istria is described as the new Tuscany.

The article particularly praises Istria, its cypress slopes and "cute" towns on top of hills. The author points out the Pula boutique hotel Valsabbion, the Villa Annette in Rabac and the Rovinj hotel Monte Mullini as the pioneers of the new style. The author also points out that Ryanair provides flights to Pula.

Hotel Valsabbion is located in a sandy cove near Pula, 12 kilometres from the Pula airport. It features 10 rooms in four categories (premier, family, superior i classic), medical spa offering aesthetic medicine, a pool and a fitness area. However, the hotel is mostly known for its incredibly famous restaurant, which has been awarded by eminent international culinary guides as one of the best Croatian restaurants for the last couple of years.

Vila Annette in Rabac is located in a protected part of the slopes overlooking the Rabac cove, providing an incredible panoramic view of that part of Kvarner and the islands Cres, Lošinj and Unije. The Villa features three suites –classic, comfort and family, a top-notch restaurant, outdoor pool and Mediterranean garden.

The Rovinj hotel Monte Mullini, with its 99 rooms and 14 suites, offers the comfort of home in an atmosphere of exclusivity and luxury. All rooms and suites provide a beautiful panoramic view of the sea and a picturesque bay surrounded by the greenery of the protected park forest Zlatni rt. The hotel comprises a wellness centre on three storeys, a combination of Mediterranean atmosphere, art and design, and two restaurants, Wine Vault and Mediterraneo. The first offers its guests a wine and culinary experience, combining traditional French cuisine and a rich wine card with over 550 different wines from Croatia and the entire world. The latter brings to Rovinj specialties inspired by the cuisine of Greece, Spain, Lebanon, and northern Africa.

Istrian County Tourist Board

www.istra.hr

Valsabbion

www.valsabbion.hr



PHOTO: HOTEL MONTE MULLINI



PHOTO: HOTEL VALSABBION



PHOTO: HOTEL VILLA ANNETTE

Vila Annette

www.villaannette.hr

Hotel Monte Mullini

www.montemulinihotel.hr

Volosko – the International «5 Star Diamond Award» to Plavi podrum

The restaurant Plavi podrum in Volosko, near Opatija, has recently been awarded with the prestigious international «Five Star Diamond Award» of the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences.

It is a network of exclusive professionals within an exclusive sector headed by billionaire Donald Trump. The award was established by legendary Frank Sinatra. The international commissioner of the Academy Vladimir Kraljević emphasizes that the judges have come to the restaurant in Volosko twice incognito. After Donald Trump sanctioned the award, the Volosko restaurant has become the only Croatian one to be in the same group with restaurants lead by the greatest culinary figures like Ferran Adria, David Burke or Jean Georges.

With this recognition, we have become part of the world network of luxury, known for its true quality, says owner of Plavi podrum Danijela Kramarić, pointing out the restaurant has a tradition of more than 110 years.

The American Academy of Hospitality Sciences awards of excellence in the fields of travel, gastronomy, luxury products and services have been handed out since 1949. Its headquarters is in New York, and it is organized into international committees. The «Five Star Diamond Awards» are given out to hotels, spa resorts, airline companies, cruisers, cars, restaurants and chefs.



PHOTO: GORAN KOVAČIĆ

Primorje-Gorski kotar County Tourist Board

www.kvarner.hr

Opatija Tourist Board

www.opatija-tourism.hr

American Academy of Hospitality Sciences

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