



Newsletter

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PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO



PHOTO: IVO PERVAN

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■ News

Novi Vinodolski and Lošinj – Award for responsible tourism

“The eyes of Vinodol – the road of lookout spots” is a project that won the prestigious international “Premio Turismo - Responsabile Italiano 2009 – 2010” award in the competition of the tourism trade magazine “L’Agenzia di Viaggi”, the “Award for responsible tourism”. Mali Lošinj received the same award. “L’Agenzia di Viaggi” has for the past 44 years been the most important trade magazine on tourism in Italy and is sent to 9,800 tourist agencies.

The goal of the magazine’s competition is to discover tourism products closely connected to responsible and sustainable tourism and to offer them to tourist agencies. To enter the competition, candidates needed to devise a tourism package, tourism offering, route, characteristics, cultural and natural specifications, photographs and informative material.

“The eyes of Vinodol – road of lookout spots” is the title of the project by the Town of Novi Vinodolski Tourist Board and the Vinodol Municipality Tourist Board, which by building six lookout spots created a new recognizable tourism product, adding to the tourist offering of a destination increasingly turning towards sustainable development and active excursion tourism.

The “Eyes of Vinodol”, three of which are located on the area of the Vinodol Municipality (Mahavica, Pridva, Slipica), and three on the area of the Town of Novi Vinodolski (Gradina, Sviba, Kuk), have been presented after they were adapted at the beginning of June last year. With their position, the beauty of the landscape and the unforgettable view of the Velebit canal, islands, Kvarner, Senj and the hinterlands leave visitors who visit them breathless, and their number is increasingly growing, from visitors with cars, cyclists, mountaineers, hikers, photographers and various target groups.

The lookout spots, most of which are located 400 metres above sea-level, are connected with a paved road 65 kilometres long and form a common functional unit, connecting the boundaries of the Vinodol Municipality and the Town of Novi Vinodolski.

In devising the project and the construction of the lookout spots, their attractions were taken into account, i.e. their special landscape values, with the wide horizons offering an overall entirety of space, nearby roads (some of them paved), and easily accessible by bus or mini-bus. Also taken into account were the protection of the natural environment and the harmonisation with the existing surroundings so as not to disturb the authenticity of the environment. Each lookout spot has appropriate signals, parking space and a turnabout in its proximity. Lošinj was awarded on account of the dolphin in its archipelago and the Blue World in Veli Lošinj, The Days of the Dolphins and the possibility to adopt a dolphin. Its promenades, of which there are 220 kilometres, also received a high rating, as did the preserved environment, the care for sustainable development, the preserved archipelago, the hundred-year old pine tree forest, the high quality sea and air and the variety of flora and fauna. Also contributing to the award was the discovery of the Apoxiomen and the



PHOTO: PETAR TRINAJSTIC

importance given to it by the town, the care given to the cultural heritage as well as the scents and tastes of Lošinj. There are 28 ‘scent facilities’ in Lošinj and it continues to invest into its gastronomy and traditional cuisine. “L’Agenzia di viaggi” put special emphasis on the harmony of the activities of the development of Lošinj as a destination, the package tours offered by hotels and agencies and the auto-camps, all of which collaborate on the destination’s “theme”. In this sense, there are package tours focusing on the theme of the Lošinj sea captains, the scents and tastes of Lošinj, aromatherapy, anti-stress, healthy living...

The project “Scents and tastes of Lošinj” has also contributed to Lošinj receiving the award. 28 ‘scent facilities’ are involved in the project, from hotels, camps and agencies offering tourist package tours concentrating on scent, hospitality facilities with ‘scent menus’, to beauty salons offering wellness treatments with insular ethereal oils.

This year, Lošinj is celebrating 125 years of medical tourism. According to the bio-climatological analysis carried out over the last 30 years, Lošinj has more than 2,600 hours of sun per year, moderate daily oscillations, which contributes to reducing stress. The sea is of excellent quality and has 25 different positive effects on the psychological and physical state, and along with the aromatherapy properties of over 1,200 insular plants, it has a beneficial effect on the respiratory system. Also, measurements recorded a first-rate air quality. The award of the Italian magazine is proof that Lošinj has reached an enviable level in destination management and the harmonisation of the activities it offers, recognizable all over the world.

Kvarner Tourist Board

www.kvarner.hr

Vinodol Municipality Tourist Board

www.tz-vinodol.hr

Town of Mali Lošinj Tourist Board

www.tz-malilošinj.hr

Krapina – Museum of the Krapina Neanderthal opened its doors

After 11 years of construction, the Museum of the Krapina Neanderthal near Krapina, a town in the Croatian Zagorje, opened its doors.

It is a new, multimedia and technologically superbly equipped museum, which will put the spectacular Krapina finding site, the richest and most diverse in the world, on the European map of sensations.

The Krapina Neanderthals, the bones of more than 80 Neanderthals of different ages, were discovered in 1899 by Dragutin Gorjanović Kramberger, the famous Croatian palaeontologist, geologist and university professor, who came to the Hušnjakovo hill at the invitation of the local school teacher Josip Rehorić. During the six years of excavations, Kramberger discovered around 3,000 paleontological remains of Neanderthals and animals, which is the biggest collection of this kind in the entire world. However, it was not until the mid 1990s that scientists from the McMaster University in Hamilton, Canada, discovered, by using the Electron Spin Resonance (ESR) method and by analysing the dental enamel of a rhinoceros, that the Krapina Neanderthals lived during the last great interglacial period, 130,000 years ago.

With its multimedia contents, the museum takes its visitors back to the age of the Neanderthals and they become part of evolution. Visitors go back 130,000 years in history and observe the virtual reality of their ancestors from Krapina. The exhibition area of the museum is located between two hills – Hušnjakovo and Josipovac – and is spread over 1,200 square metres, split into two levels. The Neanderthals lived in so-called semi-caves, holes created by water in vertical bare rocks, mostly without vegetation, which were protected from three sides. There was only one opening on the front side from where they could watch out for enemies. The museum building is similarly constructed, almost invisible from the outside, resembling a concrete semi-cave covered in sand. The entrance to the museum blends in with the surroundings so it seems as if the visitors are entering a cave, becoming its inhabitant.

The atrium of the museum is designed as a stylised Neanderthal dwelling, with a glass wall onto which a 16-minute film on the life of the Krapina Neanderthal is constantly projected.

The exhibition is not only devoted to the finding site and the artefacts, but to the history of their discovery, the wider scientific context and the even wider time span, diverse interpretations and theories.

In the one of the halls, a life-like reconstruction of the finding site on the Hušnjakovo hill is located. Here, the copies of the most significant findings, from skulls and jaws of the early man to the bones of the cave bear, rhinoceros, beaver and deer. In the next hall, the origin of the world is presented, from the Big Bang to the emergence of the early man and today's humans. The designers have utilised the transition to the first floor to transform the climb up the stairs into a wondrous virtual reality. By entering a spiral, a double entrance cochlea, the visitor becomes a witness of the Earth's cosmic, chemical and organic evolution.



The most impressive part of the museum is a huge diorama with 19 figures with a complete reconstruction and representation of the life of the Neanderthal. This part of the museum presents an introduction into the interpretation of the development of the Neanderthal, their spiritual life, morphology, culture and environment. The sculptor who created the figures is the French expert in hyperrealistic dermoplastic sculptures.

The museum also brings the story of the origin of the world, the history of Earth and its first organisms, and every visitor can see the development of life from the first hominids to the Krapina Neanderthal.

The walk through the museum ends in a hall showing the cultural evolution of the human species after the Neanderthal.

The authors of the museum's conception are Jakov Radovčić, an experienced palaeontologist and the head of the Krapina Neanderthal collection in the Croatian Natural Science Museum in Zagreb who has been researching the Krapina Neanderthal for the past 40 years, and the architect Željko Kovačić. Museum experts from eight countries, from the USA to Israel, worked on the museum's exhibition.

The Neanderthals are a magical and mystical concept of the European early man, one of the many secrets of our beginnings. Who were these people older than 30 or almost 300 thousand years? How were they discovered and interpreted by 19th century science and what do we know, at the beginning of the third millennium, about these Stone Age people who were hunting rhinoceroses here 125 millennia ago? Where are the Neanderthals located on the family tree of life? If you want to find out the answers to these questions, come to the Museum of the Krapina Neanderthal in Krapina, Croatia!

Krapina-Zagorje County Tourist Board

www.tz-zagorje.hr

Museums of the Croatian Zagorje

www.mhz.hr

Town of Krapina

www.krapina.hr

■ Events

Split – Croatia Boat Show

For all those to whom boats are their favourite means of transportation, and sailing an overt passion, the Croatia Boat Show is an unavoidable event. Year after year it attracts all domestic and foreign companies and boat constructors who show their products – floating vessels of all kinds and sizes and sailing equipment. Apart from giving you insight into all details concerning vessels and sailing, the show also gives you a chance to find out all about nautical tourism offerings and tours.

Apart from being a member of the International Federation of Boat Show Organisers (IFBSO), the 12th Annual Croatia Boat Show, to be held between April 10th and 18th, welcomes its exhibitors, sponsors and other partners with a special certificate of its organisational excellence – the Croatian Superbrand certificate.

The sight of hundreds of boats tied in front of the fascinating backdrop of the Diocletian's Palace has gone around the world and promoted Croatia in the best way possible as a unique nautical tourist destination. The natural beauties and cultural heritage of the coast and islands are all the more reason for a spring visit to Split, and it is precisely because of the Croatia Boat Show that the list of the foreign Split enthusiasts is getting increasingly longer.

During the show, between April 16th and 18th, the 8th season of the World Powerboat Championship, the 'Powerboat Pt', will begin with a race in the waters in front of Split. The championship is a unique combination of sports, glamour and entertainment, held for the very first time in Croatia. It has been confirmed that this most prestigious competition on water will be held in Croatia until 2012.

18 teams will train and compete in the Brač canal, and one of them will for the first time win the Grand Prix Croatia of the Sea trophy. The "pits" will be located next to the Split waterfront where visitors will be able to view the powerboats until the day of the race, and at the same time enjoy in an entertainment programme, including concerts, DJ performances, award games, driving in a race car simulator and various other promotional activities.

8,000 fans from all over the world will watch the spectacle live, and 40 million viewers around the world via a television broadcast.



Split-Dalmatia County Tourist Board

www.dalmatia.hr

City of Split Tourist Board

www.visitsplit.com

www.croatiaboatshow.com

Ludbreg – Centre of the World

On April 1st, Ludbreg, a small town in north-western Croatia in the region of upper Podravina, at the very gateway to the region of Zagorje, will be celebrating Centre of the World Day. This event has made this small town famous all around the world.

Centre of the World Day is celebrated every year on April 1st, a date taken from the records of the Pauline abbot Honorius on which, in 1141, Ludbrega was born in the town of Varaždinske Toplice. She was the daughter of the steward of the count's estate, and the events surrounding her life, according to the records, have discovered that Ludbreg is the centre of the world, and it is after her that the town was named. She has become the patron of the town because, as the legend says, she banished Satan with a wooden crucifix into the earth with such force that, on the opposite side of the Earth Antipodravina exploded and only a tiny volcanic island, the Antipodes.

The Romans built a town on the site of today's Ludbreg, having observed its good geographical location. The town, Castrum Ioviu, had a complete infrastructure, sewage-system, forum and hot springs and has developed into a commercial and transport centre. Ludbreg was built on its foundations. It is from this era that the legend dates, saying that it is in this town where the earth's circles were imagined, on which the world's great cities lie.

This legend, believed by many in Ludbreg since antiquity, was confirmed by Dr. Erasmus Weddingen, a Swiss, a frequent visitor to the Restoration centre and a Ludbreg enthusiast, by pure chance. He was playing with a chart divider and a map, and taking Ludbreg as the centre, he made circles on it, noticing that on this imagined line there really were major cities located, not only in Croatia, but wider. The closest proof of this legend are the cities closest to us: Varaždin, Koprivnica, Čakovec and Varaždinske Toplice, located 20 km from Ludbreg.

By examining the latitudes and longitudes, Weddingen discovered that on the opposite side of Earth, the antipode to Ludbreg is the tiny South Pacific island Antipodes, near New Zealand.

Ludbreg is located between Varaždin and Koprivnica and is relatively well connected with the neighbouring regional centres. From these towns, Ludbreg can be reached in 25 minutes by car. From Čakovec one can reach Ludbreg in 30 minutes by riding the regional road, and from Zagreb it can be reached in 50 minutes. The borders with Slovenia and Hungary are only a 30 minute ride away. Located beneath the gentle slopes of the Kalničko mountains, decorated with vineyards and mountain lodges offering a picturesque backdrop for hikers and excursionists, Ludbreg offers in its surroundings numerous excursion destinations, and the town itself offers accommodation in the hotels Crnković, Putnik and Raj.



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

Varaždin County Tourist Board

www.turizam-vzz.hr

Town of Ludbreg Tourist Board

www.tz-ludbreg.hr

Hvar – Easter “Following the Cross” procession – non-material world cultural heritage

For five centuries, the inhabitants of Hvar have been celebrating Easter in a very special way, with the procession “Za Križem”, (“Following the Cross”). It is a unique ceremony of particular piety and an expression of religious and cultural identity of the inhabitants of the central part of the island of Hvar, which developed from a procession first held as a sign of repentance after, in the midst of social unrest in 1510 and right before the uprising of the Hvar commoners, a small crucifix in the town of Hvar miraculously started to bleed tears.

The processions start in the night o from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday from six parochial churches of Jelsa, Pitva, Vrisnik, Svirac, Vrbanj and Vrboska, simultaneously and clockwise so that during the eight hours of the procession the crucifixes never meet, which, according to belief, would be extremely bad luck. The path leading from church to church is lit with lamps and sponges drenched in liquid paraffin, and people put candles in their windows. The processions are led by chosen cross-bearers who carry crucifixes of up to 18 kilograms, sometimes barefoot, wearing white tunics, like other members of the fraternity. They are followed by a chosen entourage in fraternity tunics and numerous believers and pilgrims, who stop in churches and chapels of the other towns where they are met by priests, and return to their own parochial churches before the morning. The procession is exceptional for how long it lasts as 25 kilometres are crossed during the 8 hours, and for its emphatic passion contents. It is prepared and carried out by fraternities, groups of Hvar believers into whose history and lives the crucifix has made a deep mark. The central part of the procession is the ‘Gospin plač’ (‘the Weeping of the Lady’), a religious text in 8-syllable verse from the 15th century, performed as a musical dialogue by chosen singers, the ‘kantadurs’.

The “Following the Cross” procession is one of seven phenomena of Croatian cultural heritage recently put on the UNESCO World Non-Material Cultural Heritage List. The island of Hvar is the longest and sunniest Croatian island and has been ranked by some tourist magazines as one of the 10 most beautiful islands in the world. Since the age of Antiquity it is well known for its strategic and nautical position, the richness of history, cultural and natural monuments and literature.

Thanks to its mild climate, warm winters and pleasant summers, this mid Dalmatian island is host to many visitors, travellers attracted by the luscious Mediterranean nature, rich cultural and historical tradition, unique gastronomy, amazing beaches and crystal clear sea.

The night-life and architecture of the cosmopolitan town of Hvar, the boat excursions to the Pakleni islands, the sandy beaches near Jelsa, the combination of Antiquity and modernity in Stari Grad, the paradise beaches beneath the pine tree forest of Zavala, the exotic southern slopes of the island in the towns Ivan Dolac, Sveta Nedjelja and



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

Milna, the atmosphere of “little Venice” in Vrboska, the ride through the fields of lavender near Gdinj, Zastrazić and Bogomolje, the tranquil hidden coves around Sućuraj are only a fraction of what awaits you.

To get to the island of Hvar, you first need to arrive to Split or Drvenik south of Makarska in mid Dalmatia, from where you can take a ferry or catamaran to Stari Grad, Jelsa, Sućuraj and the town of Hvar.

During the season, international connections from Italy operate: Ancona - Hvar and Pescara - Hvar, as well as a connection along the coast from Rijeka to Dubrovnik, which stops in Hvar. The closest international airports are located in Split, Dubrovnik and Brač.

Split-Dalmatia County Tourist Board

www.dalmatia.hr

Town of Hvar Tourist Board

www.tzhvar.hr

Town of Hvar

www.hvar.hr

Mali Lošinj – Days of the Apoxiomen

There are only seven preserved statues of the Ancient Greek athlete statue Apoxiomen in the world, one of which was discovered in Croatia. The bronze statue was discovered in 1999 near the island of Lošinj, stuck between two cliffs, 45 metres under water. The athlete more than 2,000 years old was taken out of the depths of the sea and meticulously restored.

At the end of this year, Apoxiomen will be put on permanent display in Mali Lošinj in the Kvarner palace.

On the occasion of this significant archaeological discovery, the inhabitants of Lošinj are organising the Days of the Apoxiomen, held between April 24th and 27th. During this period, visitors will be able to attend various events surrounding Apoxiomen, from photography exhibitions, exhibitions of ceramics and Ancient jewellery, to presentations of Greco-Roman wrestling and Ancient hairstyles to a Mister Apoxiomen and Roman Miss pageant. The events will also include archaeological scuba diving and a presentation of Ancient gastronomy, and Lošinj hotels will feature a special offering of Roman baths and massages.

Kvarner Tourist Board

www.kvarner.hr

Town of Mali Lošinj Tourist Board

www.tz-malilošinj.hr



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO



PHOTO: IVO PERVAN

■ Projects

Lighthouses – Soon an even richer offering

The Croatian tourist offering should soon be enriched by 15 lighthouses. This is the plan of the company Plovput, which manages all 48 lighthouses this side of the Adriatic, 11 of which are being rented to visitors. The goal of the company is to make as many as possible lighthouses available for tourism purposes by leasing the lighthouse buildings.

There is great interest for the 11 lighthouses with 21 suites, both by domestic and international tourists. This is best demonstrated by the fact that for the Christmas and New Year's holidays all lighthouses in Istria were fully booked. The lighthouses Sveti Ivan na pučini, Porer and Savudrija caused most interest. Staying in lighthouses, which offer a unique experience of solitude and escape from hectic everyday life belongs to elite tourism. They are rented by a special booking department of Plovput, and in the summer, when demand is greatest, tourist agencies pitch in, offering a unique vacation atmosphere in the lighthouses.

Since all of the lighthouses, which are cultural monuments and mostly date from the 19th century, are in a very bad condition as no one invested in them or maintained them for years, Plovput intends to lease them to interested investors who would revamp them and rent them to visitors, subsequently giving them back to Plovput for management. Dilapidated lighthouses exposed to extreme weather conditions and vandalism would be leased for a period of ten years, and those requiring lesser interventions for five.

Plovput

www.plovput.hr



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO



PHOTO: BRASLAV KARLIĆ

■ Introducing

Karlovac – Town on four rivers

Only a few towns in the world can boast that they lie on four rivers, and one of them is Karlovac, a town located 55 kilometres southeast of Zagreb, surrounded by the rivers Korana, Dobra, Mrežnica and Kupa.

The Korana River is a continuation of the Plitvice lakes, its canyon harbouring numerous waterfalls, the most beautiful of which are located on its upper stream. Entering Karlovac, it flows almost through the very centre of the town, where it is extremely mild and gentle. When Europe was facing the great Ottoman Empire in the 15th century, Vienna built defence walls on the bank of Korana. It was believed that the deep green waters of the river filling the ditches around the walls save the town and the entire Europe from the Turkish invasion.

Dobra has both a surface and an underground flow and flows in between hills covered by green forests. After going underground in Ogulin, it again surfaces near the hydroelectric power plant Gojak where, joined by the water from the power plant it becomes wild.

Mrežnica, of an extremely green colour, harbours its secrets in a canyon and is rich in waterfalls and cascades. In Karlovac the green of Mrežnica merges and flows into the bigger Korana.

Karlovac was erected in the 16th century in the form of a six-point star divided into 24 equal blocks, as a protection against the Turks. Only two other towns in Europe have this shape – Palmanova in Italy and Novy Zamky in Slovakia. The construction of the fortress headed by the then renowned constructor Martin Gambon started in 1579 on the estate of the aristocratic family Zrinski beneath the castle Stari grad Dubovac ('Old town Dubovac'), and it was named Karlovac (Carlstadt) after its founder, the Austrian archduke Karl of Habsburg. Walls and bulwarks were built, and within the fortress squares, palaces, military and sacral buildings. During the 16th and 17th century the fortress and army were ruling the town, which was changing through time. It faced the danger of floods and fires. In the great fire of 1594, the entire town was burnt down. It was devastated by the plague, the most severe epidemics occurring in 1773, when almost half of the population died from it. Altogether, the Turks invaded Karlovac seven times, but never managed to conquer it. The last Ottoman invasion took place in 1672. Dissatisfied with the strict military rule, which prevented economic development of the town, the citizens demanded from queen and Empress Maria Theresa of Austria to pronounce Karlovac a free royal town and introduce civilian administration. This happened in 1776, and in 1781 emperor Joseph II passed the Free Royal Town Charter with the town emblem. In the 18th and 19th centuries Karlovac bloomed economically, becoming the most significant town of commerce between the Adriatic Sea and the Danube valley. The Karlovac Town Museum testifies of the town's rich history. It is located in a palace from the first half of the 17th century, built by General Vuk Krsto Frankopan and today one of the oldest preserved examples of small palace



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

architecture typical for the region. It harbours the natural science, archaeological, historical, ethnographic and cultural collection of the town and its surroundings.

The castle Stari Grad Dubovac offers the most beautiful view of Karlovac. It is located on an artificial hill overlooking Karlovac, and its name suggests that in ancient times it was covered in an oak tree (Dub) forest. It was first mentioned in 1339 in historical church records.

Along with numerous historical sights, Karlovac offers its visitors natural beauties in the green valleys of its four rivers, a rich culinary offering, strolls along hundred-year-old alleys, rides in old carriages to the sounds of concerts held on promenades, and to nature enthusiasts it offers fishing, bicycle trails, rafting and canoeing on Mrežnica and Dobra. In the summer visitors can swim in Korana on the Foginovo bathing resort in the very centre of the town or explore the natural beauties and culture of the town's surroundings.

Karlovac offers accommodation in three hotels – Korana Srakovčić, Carlstadt and Europa, and auto-camps Radonja and Slapić are located in close proximity to the town.

Karlovac County Tourist Board

www.tzkz.hr

Town of Karlovac Tourist Board

www.karlovac-touristinfo.hr

Town of Karlovac

www.karlovac.hr

Mljet National Park – along the paths of St Paul, Odysseus and Cousteau

On of the larger south Dalmatian islands Mljet is a seemingly not well-indented island, located near Pelješac, Dubrovnik and Korčula. It is characterized by a Mediterranean climate, dry summers and mild, humid winters with approx. 2,500 hours of sun per year.

The Mljet National Park covers its north-western area, spreading over 5,375 hectares of protected land and surrounding sea. It was proclaimed a national park in November of 1960, and the sea area was included in 1997, representing the very first institutionalised attempt of protecting an original eco-system in the entire Adriatic. The area has received a national park status on account of its exceptional cultural and historical heritage, dating back to the times of the Illyrian tribes, Roman Empire and the Dubrovnik republic, but mostly on account of its “sea-freshwater” lakes, rich vegetation and unique panoramic appearance of indented coasts, cliffs and numerous tiny islands as well as the rich vegetation of the surrounding hills rising steeply above the sea, hiding numerous karst fields and ancient towns in stone.

The outer coast turned towards the south sea is steep and filled with caved in caves, while the side turned to the continent and winter storms is lower and much more accessible. On this side, numerous endemic Dalmatian plant species can be found, the most beautiful and prominent being the protected Croatian Centaury.

In the mild Mediterranean karst landscape, crossed with a thick net of picturesque walking paths, two extremely interesting natural specificities are hidden. One phenomenon are typical karst underground formations – semi-caves, caves and pits, and the other four periodically brackish lakes, specific for Mljet, with bottoms at sea-level, in which the freshwater is in contact with sea-water.

Also fascinating is the system of sea-water lakes, a unique geological and oceanographic karst phenomenon, significant not only in domestic, but in international terms. The Veliko jezero (‘Great lake’) is 145 hectares large and 46 metres deep and the Malo jezero (‘Small lake’) is 24 hectares large and 29 metres deep. With their beauty and numerous still to be discovered secrets, these lakes have been attracting natural scientists and other interested visitors, mostly those seeking untouched nature, for decades.

From the open-sea side of the island, the sea eats into the island through a barely visible narrow, forming the Veliko and then the Malo lake. Though they are formed by sea-water, they seem as if they are fresh-water lakes, which is why the local population has termed them as such.

In the middle of the great lake there is another natural, cultural, historical and tourist specialty – the picturesque island Sveta Marija (St Mary) with a former church and Benedictine monastery dating from the 12th century. The tiny island has on account of its exceptional beauty and strong spiritual and cultural dimension become a symbol of sorts of the island of Mljet and the Mljet National Park. It is better known among the local population under the name Melita, after the eponymous hotel and restaurant which was until recently located in the ancient monastery building.

There are interesting attractions outside the national park as well – in the central southern part of the island’s coast there is

the geomorphological phenomenon Jama, a karst hole whose ceiling has detached itself, making it look like wide well. There is sea-water at its bottom since it is connected to the open sea by a natural tunnel. Next to the sides of the tunnel, several fishing boats are parked, owned by inhabitants of the nearby town Babino polje, the biggest town on Mljet. Because of the low vault, the boats can be taken to sea only when the weather permits it, and the same goes for tourist sightseeing. Interestingly, it is precisely here that Odysseus, after being shipwrecked, spent seven years with sadness and nostalgia after home and his Penelope, while the beautiful nymph Calypso, daughter of the god of the sea Poseidon, was lovingly staring at him with even more sadness. The island of Mljet is also characterized by beautiful, rich, indigenous forests, which until recently covered large areas of the Mediterranean, but are very rare today. The rich vegetation of the island, especially those parts that have been proclaimed a national park, are the reasons why Mljet is known as the green island, ever since the Roman times. The fact that Mljet today boasts five different types of forests can mostly be attributed to the Benedictine monks who, as the feudal lords of the island over several centuries, have taken great care of it. Until the end of the 18th century they prohibited the western parts of the island to be inhabited, and this is precisely the part of the island which today has become a national park.

The remnants of the Mediterranean jungle, authentic Holm oak forests exist only in fragments today, and are best preserved as a stump forest in the Velika dolina region. In other areas, this forest has been replaced by macchia, wild olives, carob, pine trees, rocks and expansive fast-growing Aleppo pine forests, which have become dominant on the island. Apart from the forests, biologically significant are other habitats as well: littoral sand dunes, steep and high coastal cliffs and cliffs in the interior of the island as well as the vegetation of the coastal reefs.

The waters of Mljet, known until today in oceanography, used to be a favourite habitat of the Mediterranean monk seal. Around 40 years ago, the famous French oceanographer Jacques Cousteau stated, after scuba-diving in the sea surrounding the island, that these waters are among the cleanest in the world.

The Mljet National Park can be reached by boat from Dubrovnik and via numerous boat connections from Korčula, Hvar and Split. Most of the boats dock in the port Pomena. The towns Polače and Pomena are connected with the lakes via hiking trails. Visitors can enjoy their pleasant stay by swimming, sunbathing or hiking around the lakes and to the top of Montokuc which offers, if the weather permits it, a beautiful view of the entire national park, Pelješac and the open sea all the way to Korčula.

Dubrovnik-Neretva County Tourist Board

www.visitdubrovnik.hr

Mljet Municipality

www.mljet.hr

Mljet National Park

www.np-mljet.hr

Ancient fortresses on the Krka River

The Krka River had a significant role in history: from Antiquity when it was the border between the Illyrian tribes, the Liburnians and the Delmati, medieval times when the nucleus of the first Croatian state was established in this region to the early Modern Age when the Republic of Venice, the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire fought for it.

In the wider area of the Krka River, there are many remains of medieval fortresses, erected from the 12th century by Croatian aristocratic families Nubić and Nelipić from the Svačić clan. The Krka River was their boundary. A testimony to how powerful they were is the fact that Venice signed contracts with them directly. The Šubić family owned Bribir, Ostrovica, Čučevo (Trošenj), Rog, Uzdah-tower and Skradin, which thanks to the help of Banus Pavao Šubić, changed its status from fort (castrum) to town in 1304.

The Šubićs experienced the pinnacle of their power during the reign of Banus Pavao, when they governed the entire continental Croatia, Dalmatia and Bosnia.

Bribir

It is located 14 kilometres northwest of Skradin. The discovered archaeological findings on this area can be continually traced back from the late Bronze Age, through Antiquity, the medieval times to the Modern Age. During the reign of the Šubićs the St John Church and a Franciscan monastery with the church of St Mary were built, where Banus Šubić and his family were buried. Bribir was of strategic importance in the middle ages as it controlled, together with the Ostrovica fortress, the important road from Knin to Zadar. This locality enjoys a top category protection status on account of the several archaeological and historical layers.

Ostrovica

It was first mentioned in the 12th century and was ruled by the Šubićs for two centuries, after which it came under the rule of the Croatian-Hungarian King in 1347. In the 16th century, it was conquered by the Ottomans.

Uzdah - Tower

This is a fortress the Šubićs erected so as to overlook the road connecting Skradin and its hinterlands. It guarded their estate until 1512, when it was conquered by the Turks who used it as a dungeon.

Rog

Also known as Rogovo, it is another fortress-town, located in the area of the village Rupe, opposite the old Croatian town Kamičko and beneath the Roški waterfall. Its remains are almost invisible, but it is drawn in the map of Mateo Pagan from the 16th century as one of two opposite fortresses upstream of the tiny island of Visovac.

Čučevo (Trošenj)

It has not been explored archaeologically. There are no certain records on when it was built. Today, there are well-preserved remains of a round tower, high defence walls and



PHOTO: MILAN BABIĆ



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

some residential buildings. It was erected at the very bank of the Krka River. On the opposite side the fortress Nečven of the Nelipić family is located, with which it used to be connected via a hanging bridge, torn down in 1649. This locality also features findings from earlier eras (prehistoric, Bronze Age and Roman).

Skradin (Scardona)

The Ancient town which was originally erected in the 7th century was restored by the Croats as a new town called Skradin. Just like Bribir, Skradin was under the Bribir dukes (the Šubićs). It was the favourite seat of Banus Pavao and his family. After the defeat in 1322, it lost its political and economic power.

In the 13th century another powerful family, the Nelipićs (from the Svačić clan) appeared on the left bank of the Krka River, building their fortresses in the area of the Miljevac plate (across of the Šubićs) and on the right bank of the Čikola River. The Nelipić family owned forts on the Krka (Nečven, Bogočin, Kamičak), and the forts Ključica and Gradina (Drniš) on the right bank of Čikola.

Gradina (Drniš)

It was erected on the margin of an arable karst field during the Middle Ages, and beneath the fortress a medieval town developed, which tells us that Drniš existed as a town even before the Turkish Invasion in 1522.

Archaeological findings in this area date back to prehistory, the early Iron Age, Antiquity and the early middle ages.

Ključica

Also known as Ključ, was erected on the steep and uneven cliff of the Čikola River. It was a very well-fortified town, and erecting a fortress in this location was of strategic and political importance since the entire region could be controlled from here. It has not been sufficiently explored archaeologically, but it is known that the Nelipić family erected it in the 14th century. At the beginning of the 16th century, it was conquered by the Turks, who were chased off in 1648, and since then the fortress has not been in use. It is the most beautiful and best-preserved out of all these fortresses.

Kamičak (Ramica)

It is located on the Krka River bank in the area of Miljevi (Brištane). It can be accessed only from the south side and there is very little preserved material. It is known for being the birthplace of the last Croatian king Petar Svačić.

Bogočin (Vilin grad)

A fortress erected on a remote cliff overlooking an abyss (Bogatići-prominski). It was strategically important as it controlled the 'Constantinople creek' and a passage known by the local population as the Vilin-bridge. Only one way leads to it from the north-eastern side and it could be entered via a hanging bridge. There is very few historical data on the fortress. It is drawn in Pagan's map from the 16th century. There is an ancient graveyard nearby. At the beginning of the path leading to the fortress there is a heap with a large crucifix. This locality has not been explored archaeologically.

Nečven

Located 5 kilometres from the village Oklaj, this town's history is very complex. It was built by the Nelipić family, and after changing several rulers it was conquered by the Turks in 1522, who ruled over it until 1688. After the Turks left, Nečven was abandoned and torn down. In 1647, the Uskok leader Stjepan Sorić tore down the bridge over the Krka River connecting Nečven with the fortress Trešanj on the opposite side, belonging to the Šubić family.



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

Šibenik-Knin County Tourist Board

www.sibenikregion.hr

Town of Skradin

www.skradin.hr

Town of Drniš

www.drnis.hr

Croatia – the country of hunting

“Croatia – the country of hunting” is the motto under which this year’s biggest European fair of fishing and hunting, “Jagd & Hund 2010”, was recently held in Dortmund, gathering 680 exhibitors from 36 countries. It is a specialised fair promoting hunting, fishing, dogs and nature.

There are over 1,060 hunting grounds in Croatia, spreading over 5,500 square kilometres, some of them with a superb offering. They have been taken care of for the past 85 years by the Croatian hunting Association (HLS), numbering 55,00 members and 10,000 other hunters today.

10,000 foreign hunters visit Croatian hunting grounds every year. In order to increase these numbers even more, the HLS is renovating high quality hunting facilities.

Croatia is extremely rich in preserved and various nature. It is a signatory of all international conventions on nature preservation. 18 percent of the national territory as well as many animal and plant species are under protection. On 2.7 million hectares of forests, 4,500 plant species and subspecies can be found, 260 indigenous tree species and more than 100 plant habitats. Around 48 percent of the continental territory of Croatia is covered by forests, belonging to some of the most well-preserved and healthiest forests in Europe. What natural beauties, the warm sea and Mediterranean climate mean for Adriatic tourism, hunting, fishing and rural tourism mean to continental tourism in Croatia.

One can get the best glimpse into the Croatian hunting culture and part of its natural heritage concerning the animal world of Croatian regions in the hunting Museum in Zagreb. Its role today is to educate visitors about an urgent sense for the need to preserve and protect nature, to further the natural richness and to raise awareness about the need to preserve the flora and fauna and nature as a whole. Since game trophies cannot be taken across borders, the Hunting Museum harbours all those bought off by Croatia. These trophies make a special impression on visitors, which stays with them for a very long time. On two storeys, on over a thousand square metres, the permanent exhibition is displayed, according to thematic collections. Visitors can see more than 400 game trophies, an osteological collection with over 200 fossils, a collection with over a thousand birds’ eggs, around 350 stuffed mammals and birds, 52 hunting weapons, almost 200 pieces of hunting equipment and ammunition and a collection of over 400 hunting badges and medals.

The ambient display of habitats of the animal and plant world of Croatian regions and the simulation of a natural environment is achieved with the presentation of a part of the exhibits in lit sets in ten great dioramas, with the sound of birds and nature playing. The impression of the hunting atmosphere is further enhanced by superbly crafted sets of shooting stads, feeders and other hunting equipment. These exhibits are also an irreplaceable teaching aid in the education of those attending hunting vocational schools and colleges.

Of particular interest in the museum are several fossils of moos and deer, a rich collection of atypical, abnormal and other game trophies as well as the osteological collection of bones.



PHOTO: DRAŽEN BOTA



PHOTO: RENCO KOSINOŽIĆ

The museum also shows the historical development of hunting weapons from the times that gunpowder came into use, the development of hunting archery, hunting equipment, damaged and exploded hunting weapons, etc. The entire museum plays the sound of birds and nature, so visitors truly feel as if they are in nature.

The museum’s collections are a testimony to the hundreds of years of the Croatian hunting tradition.

It would truly be a shame to come to Zagreb and not to visit the Hunting Museum and not to get away from the hectic everyday life of the city, not to feel the call of the green expanses with the rich fauna of enviably well-preserved hunting grounds.

Croatian Hunting Association

www.hls.com.hr

Senj – the town of Uskoks

Senj is a town older than 3,000 years and is very significant for the history and culture of the Croatian people. It is in Senj that one of the first presses in South-eastern Europe was located. In its long history, Senj has many conquerors, monarchies, empires and their rulers. Each one of them has left their trace in the history of the town. Senj is a town of famous warriors and literary authors and, throughout its tumultuous past, it has fought every force with force, but has also cherished artistic creation. Numerous cultural and historical monuments and archaeological remains are testimony to the turbulent history of this town. One of them is the fortress Nehaj, a unique monument of Croatian medieval fortification and defence architecture, the symbol of the town and its centennial fight for honour and freedom, on land and or sea – against the Republic of Venice and the Ottoman Empire.

The fortress still dominates the town and seeing as it is perfectly preserved it is one of its major tourist attractions. It was built in 1558 under the guidance of captain and general of the Croatian region Vojna krajina Ivan Lenković. It was erected on the site of an old church of the town's patron saint, the knight St George, the remains of which are still visible today in the fort's foundations and at the site of an older fort mentioned along with this church in some records from the 18th century under the name of Castelluz. The fortress represents a unique and exceptional example of fortification architecture from the transition from the middle ages to the Renaissance. Partly built from the material of torn-down Senj churches, monasteries and other buildings that were located outside of the Senj town walls, the fortress represents, as an important strategic building for the defence against the Turks, a part of not only Croatian, but of European heritage, and it marks the time and spirit that saved Europe and its identity from the invasion of the Turks – the Ottoman Empire.

Fortress Nehaj is square in shape and oriented according to the sides of the world. It is 18 metres high and 23.5 metres wide. It has been estimated that over 3,400 metres of material and almost 7,500 tons of stone, sand and lime were built into it. It consists of a ground and two floors and a lookout point. On the first floor, the premises for the officers and commander were located. On the second floor 11 cannons were kept, only two of which are there today. The top of the fortress was used as a lookout point from where guards were watching whether someone is approaching from sea or land and receiving smoke and light signals from their associates on land and sea. The top of the fortress offers an excellent view of the littoral region, the islands Rab, Goli, Prvić, Cres, Krk, and the mountains Gorski kotar, Učka and Velebit.

The fortress was restored by experts on several occasions, but has not lost any of its authenticity. It is meticulously maintained and is visited by numerous tourists who cannot resist its dominating appearance. With its architecture and monumentality, but also thanks to the care of the local community, it has withstood the test of time and fate of history.

Today, the fortress is exclusively used for cultural and tourism purposes. Apart from harbouring a permanent exhibition, it is often host to various events.



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO



PHOTO: SERGIO GOBBO

Closely connected to Nehaj is the history of the Uskoks ('Uskoci' – Croatian guerrilla warriors against the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century), to whom in recent years the event "Days of the Uskoks" is devoted, with which the events from the 16th century and life in 16th century Senj is recreated, the battles, knightly combats and attacks on fortress Nehaj. During the event, a procession of Uskok and knight groups, an archery competition and a fencing tournament are organized. Performances by jugglers, artists and renaissance music ensembles additionally enrich this cultural and tourist event.

Lika-Senj County Tourist Board

www.lickosenjska.com

Town of Senj Tourist Board

www.tz-senj.hr

Town of Senj

www.senj.hr

Split – Diokletian's palace

Split, the metropolis of the Croatian south under UNESCO protection and part of the UNESCO World Heritage, has been welcoming its guests wholeheartedly for the past 1,700 years with the Diokletian's palace at its heart. The city is located in the warmest area of the Mediterranean's northern coast, in the centre of the Adriatic coast and in close proximity to the rivers Jadro and Žrnovica, which sustain it with water. Its mild climate with 2,700 hours of sun per year makes it, even in the middle of winter, into an oasis in which the sun can be enjoyed in the lee. This industrial, university and economic centre of the region reveals its green soul on the hill Marjan, located on the western part of the peninsula, where the park forest near the city offers pleasant tranquil walking paths under pine trees overlooking the sea, far away from the noises of the city.

The first inhabitant of Split was the Roman Emperor Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, who in 293 decided to build his 30 thousand square metre luxurious imperial villa in this mild cove. This is where he retired after leaving the throne of the Roman emperor. The tumultuous centuries that followed have created a city from this villa, first inhabited by the inhabitants of the nearby Salona, from where they fled to escape the Avars and Slaves. The city grew outside the walls of the palace and has seen many shifts in government over the centuries, from Croatian kings in the 10th centuries, Hungarian and Venetian administrations, to French rulers and the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Just as, by chance of history, it represented the beginning of a new town and the life of a city, Diocletian's palace and its very well-preserved remains still constitute the nucleus of the Split, and are the centre of all important events and the everyday life of its inhabitants.

Excellently preserved until today, the remains of this Ancient building, together with the subsequent medieval additions, are a valuable archaeological, historical and artistic complex, which is why the palace was put on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1979.

The palace is decorated with various imported details: granite columns and sphinxes from Egypt, marble from Italy and carved decorations from the island of Proconnesius in the Sea of Marmara. Though its use was primarily residential, the palace is very similar to Roman military camps. It had four entrances, three from the continent and one from the sea.

The complex of the palace as a whole is not like anything in the Ancient architecture of the time, which is a result of its specific function and adjustment to its location. It is an excellent example of late Roman architecture, when the tendency towards exuberance and splendour dominated over the harmony and clarity of previous eras.

With the death of Emperor Diocletian in 316, the life in the palace continued as it was a refuge for his exiled family. The key event was when the Slavic tribes conquered Salona, after which its population found refuge within the walls of the palace. This marked the beginning of the new urban life of the city of Split. In medieval times, between the 12th and 14th centuries, a new architectural development took place, when the remains of the Roman buildings and larger part of the streets and porches were replaced by medieval stone houses. The emperor's mausoleum was turned into a Christian cathedral, and the construction on the Romanesque bell tower of St Doimus (Sveti Duje) began. Proud Split locals will always say that their city is the most



PHOTO: DAMIR FABJANIC

beautiful in the world, but it is also one of the sunniest cities in Europe, offering an unforgettable host of images, while the remains of the Ancient Palace harmoniously blend in with the buildings from the later eras, and the Mediterranean and subtropical vegetation of palm-trees and aloe.

The eternally young Split, a city with a live Mediterranean temperament, lives at an even faster pace during the summer, in a mix of nations and languages of the numerous travellers who travel through it or stay in it, the biggest sea and airport of the eastern coast of the Adriatic. To those who decide to stay for a while, Split offers a long promenade along the sea, beginning in the west in the park-forest Marjan, continues through the green peninsula Sustipan, the waterfront surrounded by Ancient walls and numerous cafes, all the way to Bačvice – a natural sandy beach at the heart of the city. During the day, this beach is a playground for 'picigin', a national pastime, and at night it becomes a night-life hotspot where young people gather.

For culture enthusiasts, the venues inside the palace are ideal, the remains of its walls and doorways, the Sveti Duje bell tower, Peristil or the museum hidden in its underground. Apart from the palace, cathedral, the Split streets and squares, museums and galleries, visitors should also take a tour of the nearby Ancient town Salona, the medieval fortress Klis, which protected the city from conquerors coming from the north, or take a ferry-boat to one of the mid Dalmatian islands.

The city offers accommodation in 22 hotels, the Atrium and the Le Meridien Lav being five-star hotels, one camp and numerous rooms, suites and houses offered in private accommodation. Sailors can find a place for their boats in one of six marinas and harbours.

The city beneath Marjan is only a three and a half to 4 hour ride away from Zagreb by motorway. Split can also be reached by boat connections from Rijeka and Dubrovnik, from all islands, and from neighbouring Italy, whose cities have excellent ferry-boat and catamaran connections with Split. The Split airport has several weekly connections with Zagreb and other European capitals. One can go north and to Europe by train as well, onto which cars can be boarded as well.

Split-Dalmatian County Tourist Board

www.dalmacija.hr

City of Split Tourist Board

www.visitsplit.hr

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