

SAFE HARBOURS THE DALMATIAN COAST

FRIDAY 8 – SATURDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2017 (9 DAYS)

LECTURER: JAMES HILL

£2950

- Spectacular scenery along the Dalmatian coastline
- Captivating Medieval, Renaissance & Baroque architecture
- Explore Emperor Diocletian's Palace in Split
- Visits to Hvar Island & the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro
- Centrally located hotels in Split, Dubrovnik & Hvar



View of Dubrovnik Old Town

OVERVIEW

Hanging 'necklace-like' along the Adriatic coast, Dalmatia has deep historical roots embedded in many competing cultural identities. To begin, Illyrian tribesmen held out until the Greeks took charge, followed by the Romans, who divided the long coastline and its hinterland into the provinces of Dalmatia and Illyricum. When the eastern Roman Empire metamorphosed into 'Byzantium' power oscillated between the constantly warring forces which dominated the complex Slavic migrations of the medieval period. Venice took full advantage of Byzantium's weakness, placing its naval bases in strategic bays, such as at Ragusa (now Dubrovnik), allowing it to consolidate its grip on trade from the east. Venetian domination ended as the approaching Ottoman Turks swept through the Balkans. Indeed, Ottoman and later Habsburg expansion would carry the region towards the artificial 'Land of the Southern Slavs', a dubious entity which eventually became Yugoslavia.

During the region's evolution, the islands of Dalmatia played host to frequent naval confrontations between the trading nations that used this busy Adriatic channel. In search of such encounters, we shall travel by boat to Hvar and onto Korčula. Venice's dominant role is perfectly expressed in many of the beautiful towns where classical loggias, handsome piazzas, splendid churches and secular buildings carved from brilliant white Istrian limestone proudly dominate many of the almond-shaped Medieval centres we shall visit.

Given the physical length of Dalmatia we shall stay in two locally rated 4* and one locally rated 5* hotels. The 4* **Hotel Cornaro** is ideally located at the edge of the old town of Split whilst the 4* **Hotel Adriana** on the island of Hvar looks directly onto the town's charming little port. The 5* **Grand Villa Argentina** is just that, with a terraced formal garden overlooking the sea and a spectacular view of Dubrovnik's walled old town.

ITINERARY OUTLINE

Day 1: Friday 8 September – We fly from Gatwick to Split, and on arrival we drive the very short distance to the seductive island of **Trogir** whose architectural veneer is Venetian in inspiration, wonderfully handled by the skills of the local Slav master masons as seen in the **Cathedral** which we shall visit. We continue to Split where we spend 3 nights at the 4* **Hotel Cornaro**. There will be a group dinner in the hotel - wine, water and coffee are included with all group lunches and dinners.

Day 2: Saturday 9 September – Our day in and around **Split** will be dominated by Gaius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, better known as the Roman Emperor, Diocletian. First, we drive the short distance to **Salona**, a small Roman settlement where the emperor, slave-born, began his rise to military success. We return to Split and visit the town's **Archaeological Museum**, rich in finds from both Salona and Split. We then have some free time for lunch in the old town (not included) after which we explore the temples, porticos and peristyle of **Diocletian's**

Palace. It was built by the Emperor as a 'retirement' home as in an unprecedented decision he resigned all his Imperial dignities in 305. The evening will be free.

Day 3: Sunday 10 September – Today we drive north to the ancient Byzantine coastal city at **Zadar**. Venice long strove to impose its will, reflected in the terrible toll in human life lost here when the Venetians took it at the outset of the Fourth Crusade in 1202. Our morning will include visits to a number of churches around what was the old Forum: **The Cathedral**, the **Rotunda of St. Donatus** and **Santa Maria's Museum of Church Art**. After a group lunch we drive south to visit the fortress town of **Šibenik**. Here we shall find the fine, Renaissance **St. James' Cathedral**. We then return to Split and the evening will be free.

Day 4: Monday 11 September – After a leisurely free morning we depart Split at midday and take the two hour ferry crossing to Stari Grad on **Hvar Island**. On arrival we continue via local transfer to **Hvar Town** and check in to the **Hotel Adriana** for 2 nights. Our afternoon's walk around the old town will include the **Cathedral of St. Stephen** and the richly endowed **Franciscan Monastery**. The day ends with a group dinner in our hotel.

Day 5: Tuesday 12 September – We travel from Hvar by catamaran to the **Island of Korčula**. **Korčula Town** is a tightly-packed Medieval walled city and one of Venice's first and most important Adriatic strongholds, reflected in its urban plan and the architectural styles present. We visit **All Saints Church**, the **Cathedral of St Mark** and its adjacent **Bishop's Treasury** filled with many Venetian paintings. After a group lunch there will be time to explore this stunning little place before we return by catamaran to Hvar Island. The evening will be free.

Day 6: Wednesday 13 September – We depart Hvar Town and drive along the island to its eastern tip at **Sucuraj** and take the quick ferry crossing back to the mainland at **Drvenik**. We continue south and enjoy a group lunch at **Ston** after which visit the Renaissance **Gardens of Trsteno**. Created by a sixteenth century nobleman of Dubrovnik, the beautifully situated terracing is arranged in the formal manner of its time. We arrive late afternoon in **Dubrovnik** where we shall spend three nights at the 5* Grand Hotel Argentina. The evening will be free.

Day 7: Thursday 14 September – We spend today exploring Dubrovnik's rich past. The city was originally called Ragusa, an independent maritime republic and the bitter enemy of Venice. Destroyed in a sixteenth century earthquake, what we see now is a 'new' city built in the fine local marble. We begin with a visit to the **Dominican Monastery**, with its cloister and its small, yet excellent picture gallery, including a painting by Titian. We continue to two remarkable baroque churches, **St Blaise's** and the city's **Cathedral**. We end our morning at the **Rector's Palace**, once the seat of the Republic's government. After some free time for lunch we visit the **Maritime Museum** which offers an essential overview of the city's history. The remainder of the afternoon and the evening will be free - you might like to walk on Dubrovnik's historic walls?

Day 8: Friday 15 September – On our penultimate day we travel south into **Montenegro** and drive around the spectacular Bay of Kotor to explore **Kotor**. Wedged between Mount Lovcen and a narrow bay, Kotor was *Acrvium* in Roman Dalmatia and was known as *Cattaro* during four hundred years of Venetian rule. We shall spend the morning ambling amongst its Venetian-style palaces and squares with visits to the splendid Romanesque **St Tryphon's Cathedral** containing fine architectural detailing. **St Luke's** was later gifted to the Orthodox Church and its seventeenth century iconostasis is one of Montenegro's most handsome. After some free time for lunch (not included) we return to Croatia via the coastal village of **Perast**. There we board a private boat for the very short journey to the richly decorated island church of **Our Lady of the Rocks**. We return to Dubrovnik where later in the evening we shall enjoy our final group dinner in the Old Town.

Day 9: Saturday 16 September – We depart at midday for the airport and the return flight to London Gatwick.

PRACTICALITIES

Price £2950 **Without Flights** £2730 **Deposit** £400 **Single Supplement** £595 (Double for Sole Use)

Hotel 8 Nights with Breakfast: 3 at 4* Hotel Cornaro, Split; 2 at 4 * Hotel Adriana, Hvar; 3 at the 5* Grand Villa Argentina, Dubrovnik

Flights Easyjet

Outward: **EZY8395** Depart London Gatwick (South Terminal), **0955** arrive Split **1320**

Return: **EZY8518** Depart Dubrovnik **1045**, arrive London Gatwick (South Terminal) **1235**

Price includes 4 Dinners & 2 Lunches with wine, water & coffee, all local transfers, entry fees & gratuities, services of James Hill & local tour guides

Not included Travel to/from Gatwick, 4 Dinners & 6 Lunches



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