Archaeology tour of Croatia

Private program
By: Secret Dalmatia
Day 1
Zagreb
Arrival day
Classic Secret Dalmatia walking tour of Zagreb
Welcome to Croatia! Meet up with your private chauffeur at Zagreb airport for a short 30-minute private transfer to Zagreb center and check in to your Hotel Esplanade 5*. Housed in an elegant and distinguished building originally built in 1925 and designed to accommodate passengers from the Orient Express, the Esplanade Hotel is known for its impeccable service and luxurious accommodations. It is one of the city’s most famous and gracious buildings, and it has hosted presidents, politicians, movie stars and musicians among its many distinguished guests. This hotel flawlessly combines luxury and convenience providing exquisite accommodation in Zagreb and ensuring a relaxing and rejuvenating stay for business and leisure travelers alike.

In the afternoon meet up with your private guide for a guided walking tour of the historic center. Founded in the Middle Ages, Zagreb began life as two separate entities, Kaptol and Gradec, which today comprise the historic Gornji Grad (Upper Town). Centered on the city’s landmark cathedral, Kaptol was a religious center, while Gradec was home to craftsmen and merchants. Outsiders collectively referred to the settlements as Zagreb (meaning 'behind the hill'), although they were not officially united as the City of Zagreb until 1850. Boom time followed with the late 19th century characterized by the arrival of the railways and the construction of Donji Grad (Lower Town).

Enjoy your first evening at leisure.

Hotel: Esplanade 5*

Day 2
Zagreb – Krapina
Private tour of Archaeological museum
Visit to Krapina Neanderthal museum
OPTIONAL EXTRA: Traditional dinner in local restaurant
After breakfast, meet up with your private guide for a walking tour of Archaeological museum in Zagreb. You will explore its interesting collections with professional guidance. The ancient and valuable items held by the museum are systematically organized into several collections. The Prehistoric, Classical (Greek and Roman), and Mediaeval Collections follow the usual chronological system of all European museum departments. The museum also contains an Egyptian Collection, the only one in this region, as well as a Numismatic Collection that is one of the largest in Europe and beyond. As a whole, most of the material is of local provenience, from regions historically belonging to Croatia, although the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, in contrast to similar museums in Croatia, also contains rich collections and individual monuments of foreign origin. Along with the already mentioned Egyptian Collection and a large segment of the Numismatic Collection, several important collections of Greek and Roman artifacts come from foreign lands. These include an important collection of...
Grecian painted vases from southern Italy and Greece, a valuable collection of stone monuments of Italic provenience - sculptures, reliefs, inscriptions, etc. - formerly in the possession of Count Laval Nugent, and in particular the famed wrapping of the Zagreb mummy, the Etruscan "linen book" of Zagreb (Liber linteus Zagrabiensis).

Afterwards, meet up with your chauffeur and head to Krapina, birth place of Homo sapiens Neanderthalensis or Krapina’s prehistoric man. Neanderthals represent a magical and mystical idea of the prehistoric people of Europe, as they are one of the many secrets of the beginning of our species. Visit to modern Krapina Neanderthal museum may answer some of these questions!

Return to Zagreb in the late afternoon hours for evening at your leisure.

Hotel: Esplanade 5*  Meals: breakfast

Day 3
Zagreb – Poreč

Classic Secret Dalmatia walking tour of Poreč with visit to Euphrasian Basilica

After breakfast, check out and meet up with your chauffeur for a private transfer to Istria. After cc 3.5 hour drive you will reach the ancient Roman town of Poreč (Parentium). Upon arrival, check in to your Hotel Mauro 4*. Hotel Mauro 4* is located in Poreč’s historic Old Town, right on the waterfront, 30 meters from the famous Euphrasian Basilica and 10 meters from the sea. The hotel overlooks the famous island of St. Nicholas. It is located in a palace once owned by Poreč merchants and designed to meet all the expectations of a guest with the refined taste. Beside supreme comfort each room will also offer you a unique experience of the city that is considered to be a gem of European tourism. First-rate comfort, discrete luxury, attentive staff, and all our services will make your stay in the Hotel Mauro an unforgettable experience.

Meet up with our expert local guide for the afternoon walking tour of Poreč’s historical and cultural heritage. Poreč’s richness is measured by its historical heritage, deeply rooted in this area for thousands of years. The priceless city centre, located on a small peninsula submerged in the sea. Its foundations were put in place during the time of the rule of the Roman Empire. From then until now the symmetrical geometrical layout of the streets has been preserved, the along the length of Decumanus and transverse Cardo Street. The most valuable cultural monument in Poreč is Euphrasian Basilica. It was built on the remains of an earlier tri-naval basilica, in the first half of the 6th century, during the period of Bishop Euphrasius, whose name it bears. The complex of the Euphrasian Basilica represents a significant global monument acknowledged by UNESCO organisation in the year 1997.

Evening in Poreč at your leisure.

Hotel: Mauro 4*  Meals: breakfast
Day 4
Poreč – Pula – NP Brijuni

*Classic Secret Dalmatia walking tour of Pula*
*Private tour of Brijuni NP*

After breakfast meet up with our expert guide and chauffeur and head to Pula. As the largest town on the Istrian peninsula, Pula offers a diversity of attractions to lovers of culture. The rich itinerary of its three thousand year old history, where every step you take through the old town is a landmark, begins and ends with the Roman amphitheatre. While strolling through Pula you will come across numerous monuments of Roman architecture: the Triumphal Arch of the Sergi from the 1st century B.C., Hercules’ Gate and Twin Gates, the Temple of Augustus, Arena and Small Roman Theatre in the town center. A unique experience will be moments of relaxation in the main town square, which has managed to retain its role as the meeting place since the Augustan Age.

Afterwards, proceed to the sea side village Fažana where you will have free time for lunch at local tavern. Board a ferry to Brijuni NP, where you will enjoy a guided tour of this beautiful island and its safari park. You will spend this afternoon exploring the amazing Brijuni Archipelago and learning about this interesting archaeological site! There is a Zoo (Safari Park), museum and wonderful botanical garden with rare plants.

Return transfer (cc 40’) to your hotel in the late afternoon hours, and enjoy evening in Poreč at your leisure.

Hotel: Mauro 4* Meals: breakfast, lunch
Day 5
Poreč – Zadar
Classic Secret Dalmatia walking tour of Zadar

After breakfast, meet up with your chauffeur for a private transfer to Zadar. After cc 4 hour drive, arrival and check in to your Hotel Bastion 4*. Hotel Bastion 4* is a unique city boutique-hotel, member of Relais & Chateaux selection of hotels which accentuates the cultural heritage of the city of Zadar. It is located in the historic core and built on the remains of the medieval fortress “Kaštela” from the 13th century.

In the afternoon hours meet your local expert guide for a private walking tour of Zadar. Beautiful historic city of Zadar was the capital of Dalmatia for many centuries. The walled Old Town is a treasure of the ancient city remains dating from Roman times, infused with ingenious adaptation of historic buildings. Fortified with medieval walls, distinguished for their impressive portals dating back to the sixteenth century, the ancient peninsula still preserves the old network of narrow and charming city streets, as well as a Roman forum dating back to the first century AD. The modern installations the “Sea organ” and the “Salute to the sun” only add to the charm of Zadar. It was Hitchcock who once said, “Zadar has the most beautiful sunset in the world,” so be sure to catch one for yourself.

Enjoy your first evening in Zadar at leisure.
Hotel: Bastion 4* Meals: breakfast
Day 6
Zadar

Private tour of Religious Art – The Gold and Silver of Zadar

Original Secret Dalmatia tour of Lost Roman Cities

In the morning hours, join our expert guide and explore Zadar’s permanent exhibition of religious art located in the monastery of St. Mary’s church. This priceless treasure has been preserved by the Benedictine nuns throughout the years, as well as during the Patriotic Defense War, and some valuable exhibit items (lace, church fabrics embroidered with golden threads) were produced by the nuns’ hands. The particular preciousness, charm, and importance of the exhibited items is in the fact that they are, to a great extent, works of the locally known and unknown masters or are closely connected with Zadar and the Zadar region. The Permanent Exhibition of Ecclesiastic Art places Zadar among the great cultural capitals as such a collection of valuable and exquisite religious works of art all in one place can only be seen in the greatest European centers.

Afterwards, head on our unique tour of lost Roman cities! Croatia is so rich in Roman heritage, boasting places like Salona, Diocletian’s Palace, Pula, Brijuni Islands, that it’s amazing that sites like the military complex at Burnum, historically significant Varvaria (Bribir) and megalithic walls of Asseria near Benkovac are still considered "lost Roman cities". These three important archaeological digs still, for the most part, hide entire cities - with all their streets, temples, baths, mosaics, monuments waiting to be revealed.

Return transfer to Zadar in the later afternoon hours and enjoy your evening at leisure.

Hotel: Bastion 4* Meals: breakfast

Day 7
Zadar – Turanj – Vrana – Šibenik – Split

Visit to recently discovered archeological site near Turanj and Turkish Han in Vrana

Exclusive Secret Dalmatia lunch in Šibenik

Meet up with your guide and chauffeur and depart towards Split. After cc 40’ drive, your first stop is Turanj where you will see the work on the archeological site, proudly sponsored by Secret Dalmatia. One can clearly see the underwater structures on the aerial shots and, it is known from the records, that the region was part of the village of Tukljaca. The village was abandoned and slowly sunken underwater during the Ottoman–Venetian War (1570–1573). All that remains are some walls that can still be seen outside the cemetery on the mainland. Back in the 70s, some archaeological reconnaissance was made but no sondage and actual underwater excavating have been done, until now! Thousands of pieces of broken pottery, bone tools, wooden tools etc. have been found.
Proceed to Vrana, only half an hour drive away. A couple of centuries ago, the important Turkish general and politician called Jusuf Maskovic decided to build a han in his native town of Vrana. What is a han you ask? It is a large oriental mansion, a luxurious building which somewhat looks like a palace. The word comes from khan, a Turkish word for a house. Born as a poor boy in Croatian territories occupied by Turks, Jusuf managed to become an influential figure in Ottoman Empire. He wanted to show off a bit, and started the construction of the magnificent Han in Vrana. Unfortunately for him, he never managed to enjoy its interiors. Centuries after Jusuf’s tragic death, his building will finally start to connect people, and lead to new friendships between cultures and nations of the world.

Leaving these interesting archeological sites behind, drive another hour until you reach the historical city of Šibenik. Here you will visit the famous UNESCO protected cathedral of St. James, considered by many the most beautiful in Croatia. Afterwards, a gourmet once-in-a-lifetime experience is waiting for you; our exclusive Secret Dalmatia slow food lunch at the “Pelegrini” restaurant that just cannot be described by words. You will savor a memory of this seven-course meal paired with the best wines from the region, for a long time to come.

Proceed to Split and check in at your hotel Judita Palace 4*. A hotel for lovers of culture is an extensive four-storey building, on the elevations of which the fundamental historical and cultural periods of medieval and modern Europe can be observed: Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance. On the eastern elevation it is easy to see the features of the Romanesque and the Gothic, while the northern elevation facing onto Pjaca has Renaissance features. The access to this spacious patrician home is through the internal court, in which even today there is an old wellhead, while the staircase leads to the upper floor that is meant only for guests of the Judita Palace Hotel. From the hotel balcony, guests of the Judita Palace can enjoy the view of Pjaca, always interesting and never the same.

Evening in Split at leisure.

Hotel: Judita Palace 4* Meals: breakfast, wine pairing lunch
Day 8
Split – Salona – Trogir
Class Secret Dalmatia tour of Split, Salona and Trogir with visit to museum in Kaštela and underground tunnels of Diocletian’s Aqueduct
Croatia is a country brimming with Roman history, culture and archeological treasures and embarking on a private Roman heritage tour of Split and Salona is the best way to experience some of the remarkably preserved Roman treasures on the Adriatic coast! Meet up with our expert guide and start this tour from your hotel. Split is a complete and unique living Roman tourist destination because its city center, the Roman Emperor Diocletian’s Palace, has been continuously inhabited for more than 1700 years. Originally constructed at the turn of the 4th century as a spacious retirement palace for the Emperor Diocletian, several centuries later, after a period of abandonment, the palace served as a refuge for the inhabitants of Salona who fled their homes in front of protruding Slavic tribes, ultimately turning the palace into a city. Today, approximately 3000 people live here, adding a vital charm of everyday living to the beautiful Roman architecture. After a walking tour of Split, your journey through ancient history continues in Salona, the largest Croatian site of antiquity-era monuments that earned the title of "Croatia’s Pompeii". The archaeological site of Salona is one of the richest Roman sites in Croatia. In the ancient times, it was the capital city of the Roman province Dalmatia, and one of the largest cities of the Empire, situated on the crossroads of sea and land routes of the ancient Mediterranean.
On the way to fabulous Trogir, you will drive through picturesque Kaštela and visit archaeological collection of Kaštela’s museum. Tour will end with a unique adventure through the subterranean parts of Diocletian’s aqueduct stretching more than 9 kilometers from the spring of Jadro River to downtown Split. With the help of a local speleologist descend underground to witness the marvel of Roman engineering: miles of perfectly constructed aqueduct carved into the solid rock. Fully equipped with a hard hat, boots, and jumpsuit, you will explore a section of the aqueduct before returning to your hotel in Split.
Enjoy reminder of your day at leisure.
Hotel: Judita Palace 4*, Meals: breakfast
Day 9
Split – Brač

Private tour of archaeological sites on nearby Island of Brač
OPTIONAL EXTRA: Private motor boat transfer
OPTIONAL EXTRA: Hiking tour of Dragon Cave

After breakfast, meet up with our expert guide and board public fast ferry to Brač Island. Croatia’s largest island is a world of its own with historic towns, mysterious monasteries and caves in the interior of the island. Brač was inhabited as early as the Neolithic, featuring also the archaeological sites from the Bronze and Iron Ages. The Roman period has left many traces and there are many churches in pre-Romanesque style and sanctuaries from the early Christian times. Discover the secrets of Brač’s interior, explore its many ancient churches with cemeteries and unique catacombs, finally making your way to the hidden hermitage in the mountainside now known as the Blaca monastery. If you are willing to do more hiking, we suggest a tour of Dragon Cave, filled with amazing reliefs. Lunch in a local tavern is included.

Return to Split in the late afternoon hours and enjoy your last evening in Split on your own.

Hotel: Judita Palace 4*, Meals: breakfast, traditional lunch
Day 10
Split – Ston – Narona – Dubrovnik
Visit to Ancient city Narona
Tour of Ston Walls with lunch

After breakfast and check out, meet up with your chauffeur for a private transfer to Dubrovnik. After cc 2 hour drive you will reach valley of Neretva and the remains of the ancient city of Narona, former part of Roman province of Dalmatia. In the course of history, the valley of the Neretva was always a natural route from the Adriatic Sea to the interior. Along this route, in antiquity, the interior of the province of Dalmatia was connected with the coast and the rest of the Mediterranean. Archaeological research conducted at nearby excavation site in 1995 and 1996 led to a sensational discovery of the remains of a Roman temple – the Augusteum – and 17 marble statues, both outsized and in natural height. These finds inspired the idea of presenting this unique archaeological site in an integral fashion, including both architectural remains and other specimens of the ample archaeological materials. Tour includes a visit to the museum which was built on the remains of the Antique town of Narona, today’s village of Vid, four kilometres north-west of the centre of Metković.

Proceed to town of Ston on Pelješac Peninsula, another 1 hour drive. Ston is famous for the fortification complex dating from the 14th century and quite unique in its length of 3, 5 miles. It is home to what once was the most important fortress along the republic’s northern border, with famous city walls – second longest stone wall in Europe. It was also a major salt-producing town, as evidenced by salt pans in the inlet. We’ll stop in the sleepy sister town of Mali Ston, home to Croatia’s most delicious oysters carefully grown in beds throughout the bay for lunch. After delicious seafood lunch you will enjoy a tour of the wall and soak in the magnificent views from above!

After cc 1.5 hour drive, arrival to Dubrovnik and check in to your Hotel Pucić Palace 5*. The Pucić Palace luxury hotel in central Dubrovnik is situated on Gundulić square, the heart of the Old Town. Gundulić Square is one of the most beautiful spaces in Dubrovnik and serves as a quaint market in the morning and the setting for glamorous alfresco dining in the evening. It is 17th century Baroque building surrounded by cultural monuments, lively cafés, museums, art galleries and concert halls. Enjoy reminder of day at leisure, explore Dubrovnik on your own.

Hotel: Pucić Palace 5*  Meals: breakfast, sea food lunch
Day 11

Dubrovnik

Classic Secret Dalmatia walking tour of Dubrovnik with visit to the City Walls

Meet up with our expert guide after breakfast and head on a private walking tour of beautiful Old Town. Famous George Bernard Shaw was enchanted by this beautiful city, about which he said “those who seek paradise on Earth should come to Dubrovnik and see Dubrovnik”, as well as, famously, describing it as “the pearl of the Adriatic”. Dubrovnik truly is a stunning city with its amazing Old Town, which became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979. A magnificent curtain of walls surrounds marble streets and baroque buildings that exude a pearly light in the Adriatic sun. The main pedestrian thoroughfare, Placa, is a melange of cafes and shops with outstanding monuments at either end. Churches, monasteries and museums ornamented with finely carved stone recall an eventful history and a vibrant artistic tradition.

In the afternoon, enjoy your last day in Croatia at leisure or join us for a memorable tour of Elaphite Islands.

Hotel: Pucić Palace 5*

Meals: breakfast

OPTIONAL EXTRA: Elaphite Archipelago Cruise – private motor boat tour

Meet your skipper and embark on a relaxing day on the boat. The most mesmerizing sights that one can enjoy in the Dubrovnik area are not on the land necessarily, but instead, wait to be discovered aboard your own private luxury yacht, cruising along the crystal blue waters of the Adriatic to the Elaphite islands. This picturesque archipelago in the vicinity of Dubrovnik comprises 13 islands, islets and rocks, all closely bound to Dubrovnik and its past. In Greek, “Elaphite” means Deer, which may either mean that there was deer on the islands once, or it is because the archipelago, on the map, somewhat resembles a deer in jumping motion. The Elaphites appear as constant guardians of the sea and the coast; they have always been the home of the captains and sailors of the Dubrovnik Republic, as well as the present day Dubrovnik. For traffic free walk down the seaside and some truly remarkable samples of pre-Romanesque sacral architecture, Koločep, or as locals call it, Kalamota, will be the one to visit. Lopud is a seaside promenade with cafes, shops and restaurants, cozy, sandy beaches, beautiful monasteries and charming chapels, vineyards and olive groves, cliffside walks and an altogether well preserved island lifestyle. The rugged coast of each island is a web of rocks, caves, hidden beaches and coves, so you never have to step foot on land if you prefer not to! Soak up the gentle sun and the scents of the Mediterranean while enjoying the view of fascinating, intact nature. Don’t hesitate to jump in and explore the refreshing Adriatic, quaint bays, underwater caves and grottos. Your skipper can suggest a nice tavern or restaurant for your dinner so be sure to try some of the delicious fresh seafood and Mediterranean specialties readily available.
Day 12
Dubrovnik
Departure day
Meet your chauffeur after check out for private transfer to Dubrovnik Airport. „Doviđenja“ - Farewell until we meet again!
Meals: breakfast

** End of Program**
Program includes:
2 nights in Zagreb, Hotel Esplanade 5*
2 nights in Poreč, Hotel Mauro 4*
2 night in Zadar, Hotel Bastion 4*
3 nights in Split, Hotel Judita Palace 4*
2 nights in Dubrovnik, Hotel Pucić Palace 5*
Breakfasts daily, all taxes and VAT

Professional English speaking local chauffeurs and local guides for your tours
Basic Insurance
24-Hour-Emergency-Assistance

Private transfer from Zagreb airport to Hotel Esplanade
Classic Secret Dalmatia private guided walking tour of Zagreb’s historic center
Private tour of Archaeological museum (entrance tickets and local guide included)
Private tour of Krapina museum (round transfer, entrance tickets and local guide included)
Private transfer from Zagreb to Poreč
Classic Secret Dalmatia private guided walking tour of Poreč’s historic center
Private tour of Pula and Brijuni NP (entrance tickets and local guide included) with lunch in Fažana
Private transfer from Poreč to Zadar
Classic Secret Dalmatia private guided walking tour of Zadar’s historical center
Private tour of Gold and Silver of Zadar exhibition (entrance tickets and local guide included)
Original Secret Dalmatia tour of Lost Roman Cities (round transfer included)
Private transfer from Zadar to Split with stop at Turanj and Vrana excavation sites
Exclusive Secret Dalmatia wine pairing lunch at Pelegrini restaurant in Šibenik
Classic Secret Dalmatia tour of Split, Salona and Trogir (entrance tickets and local guide included) with visit to Kaštela museum and underground tunnels of Diocletian’s aqueduct
Private tour of Brač Island’s archaeological sites with lunch (ferry tickets included)
Private transfer from Split to Dubrovnik with stop at Narona and Ston (entrance tickets and lunch included)
Classic Secret Dalmatia private guided walking tour of Dubrovnik Old Town (entrance tickets to 2 museums and the City Walls included)
Private transfer from Hotel Pucić Palace to Dubrovnik airport

Not included:
Meals and beverages other than those listed
Entrance tickets to museums, some churches, national parks etc. unless noted
Flights
Insurance
Gratuities
Optional tours