Jewish Heritage of the Balkans

Private Program
By Secret Dalmatia
Day 1
Zagreb
Arrival day
Welcome to Croatia! Upon arrival to Zagreb Airport meet your chauffeur for a 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.
Enjoy your first day in Croatia at leisure.
Hotel: Esplanade 5*

Day 2
Zagreb
Private walking tour of Zagreb with accent on Jewish heritage
Meet our local guide after breakfast for a private walking tour of Zagreb. Modern Zagreb grew out of two medieval settlements, Kaptol, founded in 1094 and Gradec, proclaimed a free royal city in 1242. 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). Today, the capital of Croatia is a lively Central European city bustling with activity. The 20th century brought the Secession style to its public buildings, parks and fountains, emanating the lofty spirit of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. With a rich tradition of art, music and culture, strolling the Upper and Lower town to enjoy numerous galleries, colorful open-air markets, coffee houses, fine restaurants and parks is marvelous. Learn how Jewish community was created in Zagreb, from 14th century and the first arrival of Jews in Zagreb, over the gold years in the 19th and early 20th century, until total destruction of Jews heritage during the Holocaust. Find out who was Lea Deutsch and why she is an important character in Zagreb’s history. After the tour, enjoy remainder of your day at leisure.
Hotel: Esplanade 5* Meals: breakfast
Day 3
Zagreb – Plitvice NP – Split

Wonders of Plitvice Lakes – private guided walking tour

NOTE: long driving day!

After breakfast, check out and meet your chauffeur for a private transfer to Split. On route you will stop at Plitvice Lakes for a private walking tour of Croatia’s most famous National Park. According to legend, the Plitvice lakes were created after a long drought. The "Black Queen" took pity on the people and animals that cried for water. Heavy rain began to fall and continued until they formed the lakes we see today. The natural attributes of the Plitvice Lakes NP, uniqueness and sensibility of that phenomenon, deserve the full attention of our visitors. The Plitvice lakes, known as the "Falling lakes", have enjoyed the status of a national park since 1949 and since 1979 they have been under the protection of UNESCO. After the tour (cc 3-4 hours) and some free time for lunch, continue toward Split.

Upon arrival to Split, check in to Hotel Judita Palace 4*. A hotel for lovers of culture is an extensive four-story 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.

Enjoy reminder of your first day in Split at leisure.

Hotel: Judita Palace 4* Meals: breakfast

Day 4
Split

Private guided walking tour of Split with visit to Jewish Community of Split

Meet your local guide, member of Jewish Community and the only Jewish guide in Split for a private walking tour of Split concentrated on the rich Jewish heritage in the city. Split is one of the Adriatic’s most amazing seaports and Croatia’s second-largest city. This 1700-year-old harbor has its share of historic monuments, museums and galleries. Diocletian’s Palace, as the ancient heart of Split, is one of the best-preserved Roman royal residences on the planet. Learn about the ancient background of this fascinating city, as well as the influence its Jewish citizens had on its development.

Jews have been a living part of Split since the early Roman times. The town’s synagogue, created in the 16th century, is one of the oldest in Europe and has been in continuous use for more than 500 years. The Jewish cemetery overlooking the city on Marjan hill dates back to 1573. Although the current congregation numbers only 100 or so, the place of Jews in the history of Split is profound: Jews like David Rodriga and Vid Morpurgo played important roles throughout history of Split. Our private tour will begin with a walk through the 1700
year-old Diocletian Palace that will reveal the little-known Jewish aspects of what was first a pagan and then a Christian compound. Then we will enter the ghetto, via the Jewish Passage, to visit the Synagogue. Meet the Jewish Community of Split and your guide’s family. Finally, a light hike to the Jewish Cemetery on Marjan hill follows where we will see fascinating tombstones, some with rare double carved “illuminated” Hebrew letters, of Split’s most celebrated Jews. Enjoy reminder of the day at leisure.

Hotel: Judita Palace 4* Meals: breakfast

Day 5
Split

Private tour of Salona and Trogir with exclusive “behind closed doors” lunch

Today your journey through ancient history continues in Salona, the largest Croatian site of antiquity-era monuments that earned the title of “Croatia’s Pompeii”. Join your guide and depart to Salona. 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. Before the arrival of the Romans, there lived the Illyrian tribe of Delmati and Greek merchants. The size, the prosperity and splendor of the ancient city is attested by the remains of the imposing walls with tower sand gates, a forum with temples, a theater, an amphitheater, as well as the unique structures of Episcopalian early Christian churches in the cemeteries where they buried Salona Martyrs (Manastirine, Kapljuć, Marusinac). Visiting one of the three Roman amphitheaters on the east Adriatic coast gives you the chance to experience the emotions of the ancient gladiators standing in the middle of this spectacular construction. After exploring Salona, continue to tour the UNESCO protected island-town of Trogir. Another historical gem of the Adriatic! This island oasis connected to the mainland with a bridge is filled with Greek, Roman and Venetian influences. Most of the town walls that were once used as protection are preserved and the old center of Tragurium was formed in the 13th century.

The entrance to St. Lawrence cathedral is decorated by the Romanesque portal of Radovan, the most significant of its kind in this part of Europe. Visit the Palace of Cipico, home to one of Trogir’s most prominent families and the Tower of Kamerlengo, which served as the Venetian governor’s palace. After your tour enjoy a special Secret Dalmatia exclusive lunch ‘behind closed doors’ in a 13th ct. palace home with Tatjana Ciciliani. Return to Split in the afternoon.

Hotel: Judita Palace 4* Meals: breakfast, lunch
Day 6
Split – Dubrovnik

Private guided walking tour of Dubrovnik Old Town with emphasis on Jewish heritage

Check out in the late morning hours, meet your private chauffeur and depart toward Dubrovnik.

Upon arrival, check in to Hotel Villa Dubrovnik 5*, one of Croatia’s most exclusive and most awarded boutique hotel. Prominently positioned on the cliffs above Dubrovnik’s prestigious St. Jacob’s beach, Villa Dubrovnik is minutes away from the fortified beauty of the Old City’s cultural landmarks and a few steps from everything that Dubrovnik offers to its guests. With spectacular views of the Old City and the Island of Lokrum, Villa Dubrovnik provides exceptional service as it embodies contemporary luxury and refined elegance.

Meet your expert local guide in the afternoon for a private tour of Dubrovnik with an emphasis on the rich Jewish heritage. Dubrovnik truly is a stunning city with its amazing Old Town, which became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979. Beyond the city is a heavenly landscape of beaches, wooded peninsulas and a sea strewn with lush islands. Despite the small size of Dubrovnik’s Old Town, the synagogue here has global significance and is the central part of Jewish heritage in Dubrovnik throughout history. It’s the second oldest Sephardic synagogue in the world, established in the 14th century and rebuilt in 1652. Today there are only a handful of Jews still living here and the synagogue is mostly a museum— but from time to time prayer services are still held.

Enjoy your evening at leisure.

Hotel: Villa Dubrovnik 5* Meals: breakfast
Day 7

Dubrovnik

*Private Montenegro day tour*

Meet your chauffeur and head south toward Kotor and Boka Bay. Upon arrival to Kotor meet your local expert guide and embark on a private tour of Boka Bay and Kotor Old Town. Nestled against a backdrop of ancient walls and fortifications is Kotor, a Venetian city of traders and famous sailors, with many stories to tell. The Old City is a well-preserved walled structure, typical of the Middle Ages, built between the 12th and 14th century. All of this wonderful medieval architecture and the city’s cultural heritage have made Kotor a UNESCO protected World Heritage Site. Explore Kotor’s 12th-century cathedral, the symbol of the city, and an unusually fine Maritime Museum with a local guide. In the beautiful Bay of Kotor enjoy a boat ride to the tiny Church of Our Lady of the Rocks and enjoy a delicious lunch in Kotor on your own before returning to Dubrovnik. Enjoy reminder of the day and evening at leisure.

Hotel: Villa Dubrovnik 5* Meals: breakfast

Day 8

Dubrovnik

*Art and Culture in Cavtat and Konavle with traditional silk making presentation*

Meet your chauffeur and private guide and enjoy your art and culture exploration in Cavtat and Konavle. Only minutes south of majestic Dubrovnik is the ancient Roman settlement of Cavtat and the rolling arcadian Konavle valley—the very southernmost parts of Croatia before it meets the rugged coastline and mountainous terrain of Montenegro. Combining Cavtat and Konavle makes for a wonderful day tour that takes you from an historic seaside village into the hidden interior of southernmost Croatia. Cavtat’s past, present and future are very closely tied to Dubrovnik’s and this historically rich area is a delight - its Old Town is a warren of narrow streets and cobbled alleys and its serpentine waterfront promenade that frames a picturesque harbor is simply charming. After visiting Cavtat, you continue into the beautiful interior of the area known as the Konavle. Framed by the southern mountains of Herzegovina and Montenegro, its small population lives in some 32 picturesque villages scattered across this south-easterly tip of Croatia. What makes Konavle so intriguing is how its folk traditions and way of life have remained so intact until today. We continue our journey to Konavle valley and the town Gruda for a presentation on silk production and the embroidery of Konavle. The area comprising the Konavle region has for centuries been renowned for the production of silk yarn, where it was used to decorate male and notably female national costumes. The Konavle embroidery is an important part of the national costume of this small region and through the ages it has developed its own artistic language transforming into something much more than simple decoration. Enjoy a delicious traditional lunch in Konavle before returning to your hotel.

Enjoy reminder of the day at leisure.

Hotel: Villa Dubrovnik 5* Meals: breakfast, lunch
Day 9
Dubrovnik – Sarajevo via Mostar

Private tour of Mostar

Check out after breakfast and meet your chauffeur for a private transfer to Sarajevo. En route you will stop in Mostar. The entire Balkan region is a fascinating mix of tradition, ethnicity and heritage, where one’s experiences can vary from village to village, as proud communities uphold the traditions of their ancestors. Although there is more than enough to keep you busy in sunny Dalmatia, travelling a border to Bosnia and Herzegovina is well worth it for visiting its majestic Old town of Mostar!

The whole part of the eastern, Muslim part of the city has a distinctly Turkish feel, in stark contrast to the Croatian western half of the city. Taking its name from a combination of two Croatian words, 'star' meaning old and 'most' meaning bridge, there is little debate on what is the outstanding attraction in Bosnia’s second city - the world famous 500 year-old Old Bridge of Mostar, which stands imperiously over the emerald Neretva river below. Originally commissioned by Suleiman the Magnificent in 1557, it took designer Mimar Hayruddin some 9 years to complete the Old Bridge, which entirely consists of local stone called tenelija. Take some time on the bridge – or even under the bridge - and wait for the famous local divers, who will dive into the cold Neretva below from the middle of the bridge. This is a long-standing tradition in the city, dating back to the first recorded jump in 1664. One to watch rather than participate!
After approximately 2 hours drive you will reach Sarajevo – Sarajevo - the “Jerusalem of Europe”. Check in to hotel President 4*, brand new hotel opened in July 2015. Situated just 100 meters from Latin bridge and 200 meters from Sebilj Fountain, Hotel President Sarajevo boasts a terrace and views of the city. Bascarsija Street is only 150 meters from the hotel. The hotel has a sun terrace and views of the river Miljacka, while guests can enjoy a drink at the lobby bar. Each air-conditioned room has a flat-screen TV, a mini bar and a safe. Enjoy your first day in Sarajevo at your leisure.

Hotel: President 4* Meals: breakfast

Day 10
Sarajevo

Private guided walking tour of Sarajevo’s historic center with emphasis on Jewish heritage
Your adventure begins just after breakfast. What makes Sarajevo so compelling is its rich pastiche of cultures and religions. Jews, Christians and Muslims all still keeping their ancient traditions alive and still cherish their common Turkish roots. And when it comes to cuisine, even Istanbul’s own Orhan Pamuk (Nobel Prize winner for literature in 2006) considers Sarajevo to have the best Turkish food in the world! Our tour includes visiting Sarajevo’s historic old town district including the Old Town Hall, the Sarajevo City Museum and Kazandžiluk Street where traditional coppersmiths have worked for ages. Then it’s a tradition to see the old and new synagogues as well as a visit to the neo-Moorish Ashkenzi Synagogue and the Latin Bridge. Spend the afternoon exploring Sarajevo on your own.

Hotel: President 4* Meals: breakfast

Day 11
Sarajevo

Check out and meet your chauffeur for a private transfer to Sarajevo airport for your departing flight. „Dovidjenja“ Until we meet again!

Meals: breakfast

****End of program****
Program cost includes:
2 nights in Zagreb, Hotel Esplanade 5*
3 nights in Split, Judita Palace 4*
3 nights in Dubrovnik, Hotel Villa Dubrovnik 5*
2 nights in Sarajevo, Hotel President 4*
Breakfasts daily, all taxes and VAT
Professional English speaking local chauffeurs and local guides for your tours
Basic Insurance
24-Hour-Emergency-Assistance
Private arrival transfer Zagreb Airport – Hotel Esplanade
Private Jewish heritage walking tour of Zagreb
Private transfer Zagreb – Split with en route stop at Plitvice NP (private guided walking tour and entrance tickets included)
Private guided Jewish walking tour of Split (entrance tickets to Cathedral, Diocletian Substructure and Jupiter’s Temple included)
Private guided tour of Salona and Trogir
Exclusive Secret Dalmatia ‘behind closed doors’ lunch at Tatjana Ciciliani’s home
Private transfer Split – Dubrovnik
Private guided walking tour of Dubrovnik (entrance tickets to Jewish museum, Synagogue included)
Montenegro day trip (private guided tour of Boka Bay and Kotor, entrance tickets to Cathedral and museum included)
A day of Art & Culture in Ćilipi and Konavle with silk making presentation and lunch
Private transfer from Dubrovnik to Sarajevo with en route tour of Mostar
Private guided walking tour of Sarajevo with emphasis on Jewish heritage
Private departure transfer Hotel President – Sarajevo Airport

The cost does not include:
Meals and drinks not included in the cost
Airfare, Insurance
Personal expenses
Gratuities
Optional tours