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## **HIKING CRUISE IN THE BALKANS: CROATIA, GREECE, ALBANIA, AND MONTENEGRO (PORT-TO-PORT CRUISE)**

**Trip Code:** DCA\_RANPP

**Duration:** 9

**Destination:**

**Travel Dates:** 2022

### **DAY 1 DUBROVNIK (CROATIA)**

Passengers are welcome to board our ship at 5:00 p.m. We'll introduce our crew at a welcome cocktail. We'll enjoy dinner on board. The rest of the evening is yours to do as you please.

### **DAY 2 DUBROVNIK**

Dubrovnik stands boldly under limestone mountain peaks along the rocky coastline of the gorgeous sea. It is no wonder why Lord Byron described it as the "Pearl of the Adriatic." Once the center of the Republic of Ragusa, the city's medieval wall and stone streets are now famous worldwide as the main filming location for King's Landing in Game of Thrones. **HIKERS** Following an antique aqueduct in Dubrovnik. The old aqueduct—built over 500 years ago to supply inhabitants with fresh water from a nearby spring—is now a path dotted with ruins that takes you to the views overlooking Dubrovnik. This is a great opportunity to learn more about the area's history and to take in the spectacular scene of the river and city from above. You'll descend on foot to the Nuncijata district. (2.5-hour hike, 4.3 miles (7 km), intermediate level.) **NON-HIKERS** Set off on a tour of Dubrovnik, which captivates tourists with its beauty and sublime views. Dubrovnik is a precious gem that adorns the coast along the Adriatic Sea. Discover the natural beauty and rich history of this majestic city. We'll spend the afternoon cruising alongside the Albanian and Montenegrin coastline. We'll enjoy dinner and an evening of entertainment.

### **DAY 3 CORFU (GREECE)**

We'll spend the morning cruising to the splendid island of Corfu. According to Homer's poems, Ulysses made a final stop here before returning to Ithaca. In the afternoon, **HIKERS** Hike from Achilleion Palace through Gastouri to the Holy Church of Agia Kyriaki. Starting at Achilleion Palace—just one of former Empress Elizabeth of Austria's splendid castles—we'll hike through Gastouri to a vista that is home to an old chapel (945 ft./288 m). What makes this hike so special is the beautiful overlooks. The best panorama is from the chapel, where you'll be able to see the islet of Pontikonisi and Corfu in the distance. (4 hours with 2.5 hours hiking time, 919-foot elevation gain (280 m), intermediate level.) **NON-HIKERS** Visit the old town in Corfu. Today a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the old city dates back to the 8th century BC, but what we see today is approximately 500 years old, built mostly by the Venetians. We'll visit Achilleion, the island's emblematic palace built by the beloved Empress Sissi. After our excursion, we'll return on board the ship. Join us for an

evening of dancing in the lounge.

## **DAY 4** **CORFU - SARANDA (ALBANIA)**

We'll cruise to Saranda in the early morning. Excursions for all passengers This morning, we'll visit the Butrint ruins (an approx. 4-hour tour, including 1 hour and 40 minutes of driving). These ancient ruins are famed for their size, beauty, and tranquility. They're in a fantastic natural setting and span over 2,500 years. An acropolis once sat at the top of the hill. The views give you a good idea of the city's layout, and you can see the Vivari Channel connecting Lake Butrint to the Straits of Corfu in the distance. This afternoon, we'll set out on a tour of Gjirokastër (an approx. 5-hour tour, including 3 hours of driving). Historic Gjirokastër is one of Albania's three UNESCO sites. Described as "a rare example of a well-preserved Ottoman town," the city is dominated by Gjirokastër Fortress. Gjirokastër contains several remarkable homes with turrets—some dating back to the 17th century and more elaborate examples dating back to the early 19th century. The Gjirokastër Bazaar is known for handmade wood pieces, handwoven rugs, and crafts such as delicate lace items. We'll enjoy a tasting of local products at the end of our tour. After our excursion, we'll return on board and begin to cruise to Vlore. Our ship will cruise through the night. We'll enjoy dinner and an evening of entertainment.

## **DAY 5** **VLORE**

We'll arrive in Vlore early in the morning. HIKERS Llogara National Park and Caesar's Pass (lunch included). The trail begins near the forest ranger station in the park. We'll hike through the pine forest and wilderness until we reach Caesar's Pass. The name comes from Julius Caesar himself, who traveled the path in 48 BC during the Roman Civil War. The summit provides spectacular views of the valley, the bay, and the Karaburun Peninsula. (Approximately 6-hours with 2 hours and 15 minutes hiking time, 1.55 miles (2.5 km), 3,127-foot elevation gain (953 m), intermediate level.) NON-HIKERS Join us for a full-day tour of Apollonia and Berat (lunch included - approx. 10.5 hours, including 4.5 hours of driving). Our first stop will be Berat. In 2008, the village was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site as a rare example of a well-preserved Ottoman town. We'll then continue on to the largest archaeological site in Albania: Apollonia. Set on rolling hills among olive groves with impressive views all around, Apollonia was founded by Greeks from Corinth and Corfu in 588 BC. While the ruins are minimal, the onsite Apollonia Museum complex is an excellent experience. After our excursion, we'll return on board the ship. Tonight's festivities will have an Albanian flair! This evening, our ship will begin to cruise to Durrës.

## **DAY 6** **DURRËS**

We'll arrive in Durrës early in the morning. HIKERS Hike to the Black Cave of Pellumbas. We begin our trek along the mountain slope that takes us down to the river canyon. Once we arrive at the cave, we'll use flashlights to get a better look at the impressive stalactites and stalagmites. Leading experts believe it was one of the first prehistoric dwellings in the region based on relics and tools dating as far back as the Neolithic era. If we have the time, we'll jump in the river for a swim on our way back. 2-hour 45-minute hike, 1.2 miles (2 km), 1,148-foot elevation gain (350 m), intermediate level. NON-HIKERS This morning, we'll visit Tirana and its Natural History Museum (approximately 5 hours long, including 2 hours of driving). Tirana, the capital and largest city, is the heart of Albania's cultural, economic, and governmental activity. We'll visit the National History Museum, which takes you chronologically from ancient Illyria to the post-communist era. We'll also see Skanderbeg Square, where you can get a good look at the city's oldest building, the historic Et'hem Bey Mosque (the mosque is currently closed for renovations; the initial visit to this site will be replaced by a tour of

the Blloku area). Once the area where the communist elite resided, it is now an upscale location for dining, shopping, and entertainment. We'll spend the afternoon cruising. Join us for an evening of dancing in the lounge.

## **DAY 7 BAR (MONTENEGRO)**

We'll spend the morning visiting Stari Bar. Enjoy a guided tour of this old urban settlement in the mountains above the city of Bar. The tranquil feel of this place will make you fall in love with the whole country. Together with the stronghold towers, city gates, gun powder room, Prince's Palace, and Bishop's Palace, we can imagine the impressive town that it used to be. We'll spend the afternoon cruising alongside the Montenegrin coastline and through the Bay of Kotor. Tonight is our festive gala evening.

## **DAY 8 DUBROVNIK**

Enjoy breakfast on board this morning before disembarking at 9:00 a.m. End of our services.

## **DAY**

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