

## **Undiscovered Croatia: How to visit the country's most hidden gems**

Croatia is an increasingly popular choice with all types of travellers, welcoming almost 20 million tourists in 2018, but destination experts Unforgettable Croatia offer the chance to experience the authentic Croatia, visiting some of the country's most hidden gems.

With their small ship cruise offering, the Croatia specialists are able to visit remote parts of the country which other larger cruise operators just can't reach.

The [team at Unforgettable Croatia](#) possess an expert knowledge of the characterful Mediterranean country, allowing them to create unique travel experiences exploring some of Croatia's most under-the-radar places.

### **Vis**

The furthest island from the Croatian coastline, Vis also happens to be the most enigmatic. Until just short of 30 years ago, Vis was a Yugoslav military base, which means that the entire island was cut off from foreign visitors from the 1950s right up until the early 1990s, which only adds to the mystery of the island. Much of the island is undiscovered, isolated, and still maintains the traditional "Old Mediterranean" charm; it's slow-paced and rustic, with vineyards and citrus orchards sprinkled around the landscape, and narrow roads lined with old stone houses. The old-time charm of the island is the main attraction for many travellers seeking authenticity, nature, and the all-important peace and quiet. Indeed, the island has a sense of lushness to it, with wild rosemary, capers, and sage found in abundance, as well as Vis' own variety of carob tree lining the streets as you cycle through rolling vineyards.

The sandy bay of Smokova is one of the most fascinating areas of Vis. The quiet beach is home to the remains of a WWII aeroplane which can be seen on the sea bottom. The beach tends to be free from crowds, making it an ideal choice for soaking in the sun while listening to nothing but the soothing sounds of the sea.

Vis is also home to its very own wine speciality which you can try while visiting the island. An ancient variety of the wine produced from the vugava grape which is thought to be over 2,000 years old and originally cultivated by the ancient Greek colonists. Vugava wine is typically very sweet, with a high sugar content and low acid level – making it perfect as a dessert wine, with a flavour best described as "honey-like". The island is free of any wild nightlife, so you can enjoy a cool glass of Vugava wine in one of the local, authentic Vis restaurants overlooking the sunset, or stop at Vis' famous winery, Antonio Lipanović, where barrels of wine are kept in the WWII caves that sit below.

On an Unforgettable Croatia holiday in Vis, guests can visit the City museum, and enjoy a leisurely stroll along the waterfront, gazing out at the beautiful

Villae Rusticae. Or, sample the local Vugava wine with a trip to one of the traditional wineries.

## **Motovun**

A tiny village in central Istria, Motovun has a population of just 531 people, and the local area is abundant with natural beauty, traditional architecture, and nearby forests full of hidden treasures like black and white truffles.

The picturesque village is built in an elegant system of towers, walls, gates, and piazzas, making the hilltop Motovun a striking example of Venetian colonial architecture. It sits roughly 227 metres above sea level, a striking village in the sky, looking out over the verdant valley.

During the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Venetians decided to fortify the town, building two sets of thick walls. Travellers to the town can walk along these walls, taking in the views of the surrounding vineyards that produce Motovun's fine Teran and Malvasija wine. The dark, mythical Motovun Forest is also visible, containing an abundance of hidden treasure in the form of Istria's famous truffles.

Sightseeing in Motovun is one of the best experiences in Croatia; remainders left behind by Venetian rulers litter the streets, from the 14<sup>th</sup> century stone lions that stand guard over the town's gates, to the late-Renaissance church of St. Stephen, designed by Andrea Palladio. There's also the Renaissance Municipal Palace, the largest secular building in Istria that remains from that period, and a painting of the Last Supper behind the St. Stephen's church altar, contributed by an unknown 17<sup>th</sup> century painter.

With Unforgettable Croatia, guests have the option to go truffle hunting through the famous Motovun Hills and Forest. As part of this, guests will work with a local family learning about the truffle hunting process, where to find them, how the dogs forage for them, and even how to identify between the different types of truffles. After the hunt, the family will cook a selection of traditional dishes from lunch – including some made from the very same truffles guests hunted for at lunch.

## **Rab**

One of the greenest islands in the Adriatic Sea, Rab is covered with enchanting pine forests and miles of sandy beaches. The island has the highest number of sandy beaches in the Adriatic.

Rab was declared a geopark in 2008, home to some of the most diverse landscapes in the Kvarner region. The varied terrain of the island contributes to its pleasant climate: the three ridges of the Velebit Mountains protect the landscape from the cold winds that blow over from the north, which allows for the cultivation of olives, grapes, and even vegetables.

Travellers can witness and explore the cultural and historical city of Rab, characterised by four elegant bell towers, and the church of St. Mary the Blessed, built in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

Rab is also known as the Island of Love, after King Edward VIII visited the island in 1936 with his married lover, Wallis Simpson – who he would later abdicate the throne for. He reportedly brought naturism to the island, bathing naked in the Kandarola Bay.

As part of their [Opatija to Dubrovnik cruise](#), Unforgettable Croatia offers guests a guided tour of Rab Town, a charming little town with artist filled streets. During the tour, guests have the opportunity to try their hand at making their own version of the famous Rab Cake, which is produced on the island and sold throughout Croatia, as well as other European countries.

## Šolta

Part of the Dalmatian Islands, Šolta is one of the most undiscovered islands in the Adriatic – providing a completely off-radar experience for visitors to Croatia.

The island is known for its long nurtured agricultural traditions and legends about the harshness of the environment. The island is hilly with steep shores and is home to beautiful crystal-clear sea and peaceful pebble beaches. Šolta is also one of *the* places to go for exceptionally authentic and interesting food, from local restaurants and cafes that dot the coastline and countryside; from the locally cultivated honey that's known for its therapeutic properties, to the extra-virgin olive oil, or superb red wine made from the indigenous island grape. All of these are grown on the island, and have been used in recipes for generations.

Explore the bunje, the common buildings on the Dalmatian island, located where locals had – and in some cases still have – their fields, or visit the Roman heritage at the villae rusticate. There's also the Slavića kaštel in Grohote, representing the centre of Šolta, and once owned by the Split noble family Slavić. The castle was developed over three different stages; first, it was a 3-storey tower, before being converted into a 4-storey tower as protection from pirate attacks, and then during the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was used as a residential house.

Unforgettable Croatia offer an incredible honey and olive oil bike tour through Šolta. The half day tour takes guests through the stunning vineyards and olive groves, after which they will be met by an expert bee keeping family. Here, they'll have a go at bee keeping themselves, learn about how the honey is produced, the different flavour varieties that are created, and then attempt to collect honey themselves from the hive to take home with them. This is then followed by a visit to a local olive oil producer, complete with a demonstration into the different methods of how olive oil is produced.

## Mljet

Just 23 miles from Dubrovnik, you'd be hard pushed to find someone that knows about Mljet, as overshadowed as it is by the city at the heart of *Game of Thrones*. The island is shrouded in forest, making it one of the most secluded of the Adriatic islands, with a national park that covers half of the island.

Mljet's national park is the island's main attraction; home to two saltwater lakes – Veliko and Malo Jezero – where travellers can kayak, or just enjoy a calming swim in the waters. There are also plenty of well-marked paths nearby, perfect for cycling through the rolling green landscape, and if you fancy a hike then the stunning views from the top of the hills found all along Mljet's coastline are breath-taking.

The island is covered in a stunning green landscape, full of woods and lakes, making it the perfect place for hiking, cycling, swimming, and even kayaking.

With Unforgettable Croatia, guests can take a boat across Veliko Jezero to St. Mary Isle, and explore the ancient Benedictine monastery, abbey, and 12<sup>th</sup> century church that can all be found here.

***Explore all of these fantastic destinations and more on one of [Unforgettable Croatia's Luxury Cruises](#), island-hopping along the Croatian coastline with a luxury experience and personalised service you wouldn't get with a large cruise ship company. Find out more [here](#).***

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