

Croatia & Slovenia

Where the Hills meet the Sea

Five-night tour: 3 nights in Rovinj, 2 nights in Bled

HIGHLIGHTS

ISTRIA - mystical land of alluring aromas

BRIJUNI - pieces of heaven

LJUBLJANA - small city with a vibrant atmosphere

BLED - the pearl of Julian Alps

BOHINJ - the valley of Gods

EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIENCES

- Private truffle hunting demonstration in Istria with a local farmer and his sniffer dog
- Private wine tasting at the famous Franc Arman winery in Istria

DAY 1: arrival to ROVINJ

Arrival to Rovinj by public catamaran from Venice. Upon arrival to the port, meet your driver for a private transfer to Monte Mulini hotel - one of the most luxury properties in Croatia. Overnight in Rovinj.



DAY 2: tour of ISTRIA region

This morning your guide and driver will meet you in the hotel to begin your exploration of the Istrian Peninsula. This region has always attracted a special kind of visitors: those who

consider gastronomy as one of the most important reasons for traveling. The alluring character of this region lies not only in its beautiful coast but also in the inland, described as the terra incognita - an unknown, unexplored land. This magnificent region thus combines two different climates and forms a unique gastronomic entity consisted of the exquisite Mediterranean seafood of the coast and the products of the inland's gardens, orchards and vineyards. As a whole, the gastronomy of Istria represents a complete harmony of flavors and it is yours to discover...As you drive through the rugged and hilly terrain you will come to **Grožnjan** - a small ancient hilltop town in northwestern Istria. Grožnjan takes great pride in its

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wealth of tradition, cultural heritage and natural beauty, all of which is ennobled by art.

Today, numerous cultural and historical landmarks serve as backdrops for cultural manifestations and entertainment in approximately twenty private galleries and studios. You will continue to the picturesque village of **Nardući** where you will enjoy a private wine tasting at the famous Franc Arman winery. Grape-growing and winemaking have long been the economic mainstay of generations of families in Istria. Traditionally passed down from father to son, vineyards were cultivated and worked by hand, often with little or no mechanisation, well into the mid-twentieth century. Established in 1850, Franc Arman Vineyards and Winery,

headed today by Franc and Oliver Arman, continues the family tradition and core values set out by founding father Edoardo, while taking the art and science of winemaking to new levels. After the wine tasting, you will head out to the village of Livade, one of the most important centers of truffle farming in Europe. Here you will enjoy a **CALVADOS CLUB Extraordinary Experience: truffle hunting demonstration with a local farmer and his sniffer dog**. Until recently the Istrian white truffle was unknown on the world's stage of luxury gastronomy. Only those who are the true connoisseurs of this magical fungus come to visit the small corner of the world from which this delicacy originates. We recommend you to try the exceptional cuisine of the famous **Zigante Restaurant** (cost of lunch is not included). It's owner, Mr. Zigante, has earned his place in the Guinness Book of Records as the one who has found the biggest (2.88lbs!) white truffle in the world. The restaurant offer truffles, as well as the other Istrian delicacies such as Pršut (Prosciutto) and local cheeses and meats, complimented by wines from Croatia's vineyards and the native grappa of the region. Not far from Livade, you may wish to visit the medieval ruins of the town of **Motovun**, an excellent example of the ancient townships that dotted the Istrian peninsula. You will complete your tour in the charming town of **Rovinj**. The Old Town of Rovinj rises up on a peninsula and is a witness to times gone by and the valuable accomplishments of its past artisans. Experience the sights of this magical town while strolling with your guide down narrow streets to the magnificent



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church of St. Euphemia, the town's most important monument. This baroque building made in Venetian style was dedicated to the saint and martyr whose sarcophagus was miraculously washed ashore somewhere around 800. The town of Rovinj was declared a cultural monument in 1963.

DAY 3: ROVINJ - BALE - BRIJUNI - PULA



Meet your guide and driver in the hotel lobby for a private full day tour of Istria's finest sights and towns. First you will visit **Bale (Valle)** - a hidden pearl of Istria inland. A town of exquisite beauty, it was rather forgotten in the past and thus it avoided the abrupt tourist development that destroyed so many cities. A magical town is all made in stone and once allegedly attracted the great lover Casanova in the 18th century. The agricultural land around the town of Balle,

called "stancije", is known for the good quality olive oil and wine. This area is also known as the butterfly county -with over 390 butterfly species, many of them are protected and endangered species.

Then you will continue towards the small town of Fažana where you will embark a small public boat to the national park of **Brijuni islands**- known as the pieces of heaven. A stunning archipelago of green islands sinks into the turquoise-blue sea in front of your eyes and shows a unique harmony of intact nature and cultural heritage. Brijuni were also known as the exclusive beach resort for the aristocrats and the personal summer residence of the Yugoslav president Tito. You will enjoy a private safari tour of the island with a private golf cart and visit some of the numerous archaeological and historical sites with your guide.

Back on the mainland, you will continue towards the town of **Pula**, where your guide will take you for a private walking tour of this beautiful, 3000 year old Roman town. Pula is the largest town on the Istrian peninsula and offers a diversity of attractions to lovers of culture. The rich itinerary, where every step you take through the old town is a landmark, begins and ends with the Roman amphitheatre, popularly called the Arena of Pula. Built in the 1st century AD, at the same time as the magnificent Colosseum in Rome, it was once the site of gladiator fights. In the Middle Ages it was the site of knights tournaments and fairs and today it is the venue for summer performances. While



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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 centre. In the afternoon, your guide and driver will take you back to your hotel. Overnight in Rovinj.

DAY 4: ROVINJ - LJUBLJANA - BLED



This morning meet your driver in the hotel for a private transfer to Slovenia and the region of Bled. On your way, you will stop in Ljubljana – the capital of Slovenia – for a private sightseeing tour with a local guide.

Ljubljana is known to be one of the smallest and most charming European capitals, whose name means „the beloved“. The city combines facilities

and efficiency of a metropolis and the relaxed ambiance of a small town. Its young and vibrant pulse lures one to wander around the cobblestone streets with numerous cafes, galleries, parks and green areas. Ljubljana has one of the best preserved baroque quarters in Europe that blends harmoniously with the younger Art-Nouveau buildings. The city is crowned by a mediaeval castle, protected by a mighty dragon and crossed by the river of seven names. You will explore the city center with your guide, starting from the Baroque Town Hall building, the seat of the municipal government. You will continue to the Town Square with the famous Fountain of the Tree Rivers by the Italian Baroque sculptor Francesco Robba, who was inspired by Bernini's Fountain on Piazza Navona in Rome. Then you will have a chance to experience the funicular ride which will take you to the top of Castle Hill. The Ljubljana Castle offers spectacular views over the city and the surrounding countryside. Back in the Old Town, you will continue across the Dragon Bridge - an Art Nouveau masterpiece adorned with dragons and the symbol of Ljubljana, and stroll alongside the Ljubljanica River to the centrally located and bustling Preseren Square. If you wish, you can also enjoy some time on your own.

Later this afternoon, you will arrive to



Bled and your hotel – Vila Bled – charming boutique situated on the beautiful Bled Lake. With its traditional style reminiscent of the 1950' and unique historic ambience, it is a favorite retreat from everyday life.

DAY 5: BLED & BOHINJ tour



This morning meet your private guide and driver for a full day exploration of Bled and Bohinj. Sheltered by picturesque mountains, the town of **Bled** reigns in the middle of an Alpine lake. Cosmopolitan seekers of diversity and beauty find their inspiration in the tranquil surroundings of Bled, its cultural treasures and natural wonders. Your guide will take for a walk around the lake and a traditional boat ride to the tiny island on the lake. That is where the ancient Slavs worshipped Živa, goddess of love and fertility. You

will also visit the baroque Church of the Assumption, which stands in the middle of an islet. Your guide and driver will take you the beautiful **Bled Castle**, which the oldest castle in the country. The image of the castle forms a dramatic backdrop to the romantic island and the church on it and lures you to explore its rich cultural legacy. Today the castle is preserved as a museum, where you will be able to discover various exhibits depicting the history of the region. Enjoy the spectacular view over the lake and the mountains before you guide and driver take you to Bohinj. **Bohinj** is an idyllic alpine valley surrounded by an amphitheatre of mountains reflected in the crystal-clear lake. The legend about Bohinj says that the gods thought of it as the most beautiful part of the world. So when the gods were dividing the world among people, there was a small group standing by the side and not struggling to get to the front. The gods took pity of them, seeing how patient and modest they were. Therefore they gave them the most beautiful part of their own world. That part is now called Bohinj – after God, who is called “boh” by the local people. You will discover the natural beauty of the green forests and meadows, the cultural and historical monuments and the friendly villages of the valley, all overshadowed by the sombre face of high mountains. The journey continues with a cable car ride to the mountain Vogel (5.000 ft), from where there is a spectacular view of the lake and the Julian Alps. Overnight in Bled.

DAY 6: BLED – onward

This morning meet your driver for a private transfer to the airport for and your flight onward.

We wish you a memorable journey...



RECOMMENDED HOTELS

ROVINJ

Monte Mulini Hotel

BLED

Vila Bled Hotel

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