

Cruise Port Spotlight: Dubrovnik, Croatia



Aerial view of the western gate with its ancient monuments and restored buildings of the UNESCO World Heritage Site city of Dubrovnik on the Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic Sea on May 13, 2011 in Dubrovnik, Croatia. The old town is surrounded by a 1,9 km long city wall and called the Pearl of... (EyesWideOpen, Getty Images)

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🐦 - "The pearl of the Adriatic:" Explore the cruise port in Dubrovnik, Croatia

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Often referred to as "the pearl of the Adriatic," Dubrovnik, Croatia is a popular stop on Eastern

Mediterranean cruises. A fortified seaside town with impressive walls, and pretty as a picture with buildings with red tile roofs that shimmer in the sun against the blue of the sea, Dubrovnik has enough beauty, legend and history to satisfy the most experienced cruise passenger.

Its history is fascinating. The first island-protected port on the maritime route in the Adriatic Sea, the area of Dubrovnik already had a settlement in the 6th century, was expanded by the arrival of the Croats in the 7th century following the abandonment of ancient Epidaurus, and flourished during the 12th and 13th centuries in the trade routes during and after the Crusades. It achieved legal status as the Dubrovnik Republic in the 15th century with the Venetian Republic as its main rival and enemy. Napoleon dissolved the Dubrovnik Republic in 1908, and at the Vienna Congress of 1815, the Dubrovnik region was joined to other parts of Dalmatia and Croatia. Following Croatia's declaration of independence, Dubrovnik was attacked by Serbians and Montenegrins in October of 1991, but the city and surrounding region have been restored after those fierce hostilities.

Excursions sold onboard cruise ships typically include walking tours of the pedestrian-only Old Town section, a UNESCO World Heritage Site – a veritable open-air museum with ancient walls that can be walked, five forts, and 16 towers and bastions. Most tours enter the Old Town through the Pile Gate (the western gate, with the eastern entryway being the Ploce) and proceed down the broad Stradum, a picturesque street dating back to the 11th century and adorned with fountains, churches, monuments and museums, and lined with cafes and shops. Among the Stradum's highlights are the City Bell Tower with a clock and its figures of two green men that strike the bell with hammers on the hour and the

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half-hour; the Rector's Palace, in Gothic-Renaissance style; the Orlando Column with a carving of Orlando (Roland) son of Charlemagne and legend of minstrel ballads, and a statue of a medieval knight holding a sword in his hand; and the baroque Church of St. Blaise, patron of Dubrovnik, with relics of the saint as well as a statue that depicts him holding a model of the city in his left hand.

Other highlights of the Old Town include the Dominican Monastery, the Franciscan Monastery and the Cathedral of Dubrovnik -- the latter with Titian's 1552 work depicting the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Among the Old Town's lovely squares is the Ruder Boscovic Square, with fine Baroque buildings and magnificent Baroque steps leading to St. Ignatius Church -- the stairs are reminiscent of the Spanish Steps leading to the Trinita dei Monti Church in the Piazza di Spagna in Rome.

Walks in the Old Town can be combined with a ride in the Dubrovnik Cable Car to Mount Srđ. At the top, from a height of more than 1,200 feet, there are two terraces for viewing panoramas of the city and the sea below. There are binocular telescopes, snack bar, souvenir shop and restaurant. The cable car may be boarded at its lower station at King Petar Kresimir Street where tickets may be bought.

Other popular excursions in Dubrovnik include sea kayaking tours, sailing and scuba diving as well as trips to nearby islands including Lokrum, where according to legend, Richard the Lion Hearted sought refuge on his way back from the Crusade in 1192, and Korcula, where Marco Polo was born. Dubrovnik beaches are generally rocky or pebbly. Popular sandy beaches in the vicinity of Dubrovnik include the Sunj Beach on the island of Lopud. A naturist beach is located on the island of Lokrum.

Local flavors not to be missed include smoked hams; "kontonjata" a delicacy made of quince; olive oils from Korcula; and "pasticada," beef studded with carrots, garlic and smoked bacon and marinated in wine, oil, vinegar, orange and lemon.

Cruise lines that visit Dubrovnik include Disney, Holland America, MSC, Oceania, Princess, Royal Caribbean, Seabourn and Silversea.

IF YOU GO – For additional information on Dubrovnik, visit the Croatian National Tourist Board website at www.croatia.hr/en-GB/Homepage.