



CROATIA BY LAND AND SEA

August 29, 2023 – 17 Days

Small ship cruising on board MV Aquamarin

Spellbinding beaches, dramatic cliffs, ancient walled towns, and a relaxed way of life — Croatia is ranked among the world’s most popular destinations for a reason! We start with 2½ days in historic Dubrovnik, the “Pearl of the Adriatic”. Its picturesque Old Town is considered to be one of the most beautiful cities in Europe with centuries-old forts, buildings on marble streets, and dazzling views of the cliffs and the sea. We then board the *MV Aquamarin* for a week-long cruise, visiting the seaside coastal towns of Ston, Korčula, Hvar, and Split, and the Adriatic islands of Mljet, Vis, Bisevo, and Brač. The intimate ship has only 19 staterooms and was built in 2017. We finish the tour back on land where we visit Zadar, Pag Island, the waterfalls of Plitvice Lakes National Park, and Croatia’s capital of Zagreb.

Activity Level: 2



32 Meals Included:

14 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 8 dinners

Fares Per Person:

Lower Deck -- \$9,930 twin; \$13,045 single

Main Deck -- \$10,420 twin; \$13,540 single

Please add 0.3% GST.

Early Bookers:

\$250 discount on first 12 seats; \$125 on next 8

Experience Points:

Earn 180 points on this tour.

Redeem 180 points if you book by May 25, 2023.

Departure from: Victoria



ITINERARY

Day 1: Tuesday, August 29

A transfer is provided to New Westminster this afternoon. We stay overnight at the Inn at the Quay, overlooking the Fraser River. Meet your fellow travellers from the BC Interior during a get-acquainted dinner.

Note: While it may seem unnecessary to travel to the mainland the day before your flight, ferries and flights from Victoria can shut down unexpectedly which would cause a missed international flight.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Inn at the Quay

Day 2: Wednesday, August 30

The morning is leisure time and you may want to take a stroll along Westminster Quay. Our flight on Lufthansa departs in late afternoon.

Meals included: Breakfast

Day 3: Thursday, August 31

We change planes and arrive in Dubrovnik in late afternoon. **Welcome to Croatia!** We stay two nights at the 4-star Hotel Valamar Lacroma, located in the green oasis of the Babin Kuk peninsula, close to the old town of Dubrovnik. It has won the 'World Travel Award' for the last five years as the leading hotel in Croatia. It boasts spectacular views of the Adriatic Sea and Elaphiti Islands, indoor and outdoor pools, and a spa.

Meals included: Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Valamar Lacroma

Day 4: Friday, September 1

Founded in the 7th century, **Dubrovnik** is noted for its walled Old Town and several monasteries. A local guide conducts a morning walking tour past its most famous attractions: the 14th century Dominican and Franciscan Monasteries, and Rector's Palace. The **Franciscan Monastery** houses the oldest pharmacy in Europe, dating to 1317. We also walk past the Sponza Palace, dating from the 15th century and noted for its magnificent 30-metre tall tower. Admission to the **city walls** is included and you can take this exciting walk during leisure time this afternoon.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Valamar Lacroma

Day 5: Saturday, September 2

This morning, we ride the **Srd Mountain cable car** up 400 metres and admire a panoramic view of Dubrovnik and the offshore islands. This afternoon, we take the ferry to **Lokrum Island**, a park just offshore which has the ruins of a monastery and a botanical garden. There are good views of Dubrovnik from the top of the island at Fort Royal Castle, built by the French during Napoleon's occupation of Croatia. Afterwards, we board the **MV Aquamarin** and settle into our staterooms. Enjoy a meet and greet reception on board. The ship is docked in Dubrovnik overnight.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: MV Aquamarin

Day 6: Sunday, September 3

The morning is leisure time to relax on the ship or explore more sights in Dubrovnik. We cast off at noon and cruise north along the rugged Adriatic coast to Slano, a peaceful fishermen's village. The mighty **Fortress of Ston** and its defensive walls were completed in the 15th century. This peninsula is famous for oysters and our tour includes **oyster tasting**. Join the Captain for a welcome dinner with live entertainment.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: MV Aquamarin

Day 7: Monday, September 4

This morning, we cruise a little further north to the **Island of Mljet**. The legend says Greek hero Odysseus spent years on this island when he was captured by the nymph Calypso. Join the cruise manager for a stroll to the remarkable salt lakes in **Mljet National Park** where we take a boat ride to St. Mary Isle and visit an ancient Benedictine monastery, an old abbey, and a church dating to the 12th century. Alternatively, you can rent kayaks, bicycles, scooters or convertible cars to roam around the National Park or island on your own, but beware of the nymphs! The ship stays overnight in Pomena on Mljet.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: MV Aquamarin

Day 8: Tuesday, September 5

The Island of **Korčula** is one of the greenest islands in the Adriatic Sea. Like most of the Croatian islands, the Greeks first settled Korčula and

gave it the name *Korkyra Melaina* or 'Black Corfu' for its dark and densely wooded appearance. We have a guided tour of the town, admiring its typical medieval architecture such as towers and clusters of red-roofed houses. Marco Polo, the famous world-traveller, writer, and Venetian merchant was born in Korčula.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: *MV Aquamarin*

Day 9: Wednesday, September 6

Our next stop is the **island of Vis**, once a strategic naval Yugoslav base and closed to the public for years. Due to this isolation, Vis has a special charm – “the Mediterranean as it once was” making it really interesting to visit. Vis town, situated on the northern side of the island, has developed near the remains of ancient Issa, the first urban centre in Croatia. Try some exquisite local wines. If interested, visit the remains of the Roman thermal place, City museum, or enjoy a walk with views of the beautiful *Villae Rusticae* situated along the waterfront. Overnight in the port of Vis.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: *MV Aquamarin*

Day 10: Thursday, September 7

The ship cruises toward the small island of Biševo to visit the **Blue Cave**, a magnificent natural phenomenon. We continue past the Pakleni Islands with a stop for swimming and arrive at **Hvar**. It is the longest and sunniest island in the Adriatic, consistently listed among the world's top 10 islands by *Condé Nast*. With its colourful fields of lavender and carefully cultivated vineyards, the island is truly appealing. Carpeting the hillsides around its cozy harbour are terracotta-roofed villas, Gothic palaces, and 13th century ramparts rising to an impressive citadel. Our tour includes the Renaissance cathedral with its original tower, and the oldest community theatre in Europe founded in 1612. Hike up the zig-zag path to the fort overlooking the harbour for great views of our ship and nearby islands. In the evening, Hvar offers plenty of entertainment – numerous bars, restaurants, and clubs, many open long into the night. The ship stays overnight in the port.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: *MV Aquamarin*

Day 11: Friday, September 8

This morning, we stop at **Brač island** where swimming is planned at the most famous beach in Dalmatia, *Zlatni Rat* near Bol. Its shingle promontory shifts from side to side as the wind and waves constantly cause the shape to change. Bol is a typical fishermen's village, converted into a popular tourist destination, yet retaining its charm. This afternoon, the *Aquamarin* cruises to **Split**. Founded in the 2nd century BC, this is now the second largest city in Croatia and has some amazing sights with both Roman and modern architecture. Enjoy a guided walking tour through the many facades of this beautiful city. Of special interest is the magnificent Diocletian Palace, once inhabited by the Roman Emperor. Our last night on the ship is in Split.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: *MV Aquamarin*

Day 12: Saturday, September 9

We disembark the *Aquamarin* in Split and our coach is waiting to continue touring Croatia. Our next stop is **Primošten**, built in the 15th century on a small island protected by walls and towers. After the Turkish invasion of 1542, the drawbridge was replaced with a causeway. A local guide conducts a walking tour of this unique town. We continue to **Roca** and tour a prosciutto production facility with sampling. We stay two nights near **Sibenik** at the stunning Hotel D Resort. Its unique design follows the winding shape of the *Mandalina Peninsula* with the ocean on both sides. A guided tour of the UNESCO heritage city of Sibenik is arranged this evening.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch

Accommodation: Hotel D Resort

Day 13: Sunday, September 10

We spend the morning on **Pag Island**, visiting the **Glignora Cheese Factory** with cheese tasting. The famous Pag cheese is made of sage, immortelle, mugwort, cistus, Jerusalem thorn, and fennel, and salted by storms from two sea basins. Like many Adriatic ports, **Zadar** has historically been dominated by strong neighbours including the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Venetians (who wanted to hold off the Ottoman Turks). In more recent times, the city was invaded by the German army during World War II. As a result, Zadar presents a rich architectural history to the visitor. A

walking tour visits **St. Donat**, an extraordinary church in the pre-Romanesque style with a high, round nave and three semi-circular apses.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel D Resort

Day 14: Monday, September 11

Today's highlight is visiting Croatia's magnificent **Plitvica Lakes National Park**. Sixteen terraced lakes surrounded by forest form this UNESCO World Heritage Site. Numerous waterfalls cascade between the lakes which are separated by natural dams of travertine. We stroll the boardwalks for great views of this natural wonder. We continue to **Zagreb** staying at the 5-star Hotel Le Premier which has a great location on the city square. The building was a 20th century palace and has been converted into a luxury hotel.

Meals included: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Le Premier

Day 15: Tuesday, September 12

The settlement of Zagreb by the Romans dates to the 1st century and the name to 1094. It became the new capital of Croatia after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. A local guide takes us on a city tour through Zagreb's Old Town, including the Opera House, St. Mark's Church, and the Cathedral. The afternoon is free time. You may wish to explore the fruit and vegetable Dolac Market. A **Farewell to Croatia** dinner is arranged tonight.

Meals included: Breakfast, Dinner

Accommodation: Hotel Le Premier

Day 16: Wednesday, September 13

Our flight leaves Zagreb and arrives in Vancouver in mid-afternoon.

Meals included: Breakfast

Accommodation: Fairmont YVR Hotel

Day 17: Thursday, September 14

Transportation is provided to your Victoria pickup point.

WONDERS OF CROATIA

Croatia is a country at the crossroads of Southeast Europe, on the Adriatic Sea. It borders Slovenia to the northwest, Hungary to the northeast, Serbia to the east, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro to the southeast, and shares a maritime border with Italy. Its capital is Zagreb. Croatia has a population of 4.3 million. Inhabited since the Paleolithic Age, the Croats arrived in the area in the 6th century and organized the territory into two duchies by the 9th century. Croatia was first internationally recognized as an independent state in 879, then it became a kingdom in 925 which lasted for two centuries. During the 20th century, the country was called the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs, the Independent State of Croatia, the Federal State of Croatia, and part of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. In 1991, Croatia declared independence and the War of Independence devastated the country for the next four years. Today, Croatia has a very high standard of living, and is a member of the European Union. Tourism is very important, and Croatia is now ranked among the world's top 20 most popular tourist destinations.

ON BOARD *MV AQUAMARIN*

MV Aquamarin was launched in 2017 and is operated by Katarina Line. With just 19 staterooms and only 3 decks, the experience is intimate and deluxe. The ship is 43 metres long. Public areas include a large salon-restaurant, a lounge at the front with great views and comfortable furniture, an outside covered terrace with sitting area, and a huge partly shaded sun deck with sun beds and jacuzzi. Wi-fi is complimentary. Comfort is essential, so the dress code is relaxed and casual throughout the days and nights. Wine or beer is complimentary at lunch and dinner (2 glasses per person). Two dinners are on the ship and the rest are on your own in ports where we dock overnight. A shore excursion is included at each port and these are usually walking tours with a local guide providing commentary.

There are two categories of staterooms, either Lower Deck or Main Deck. Staterooms are equipped with air conditioning, safe, free wi-fi, satellite TV, hair dryer, and private bathroom with toilet and shower. Most luggage fits under the bed. Main Deck staterooms have a window and Lower Deck staterooms have a porthole. Expect your stateroom to be compact in both categories.

WHAT'S INCLUDED

- Transportation to/from Vancouver airport
- Flight from Vancouver to Dubrovnik, Croatia
- Current air transport taxes and fuel surcharges
- Airline luggage fee for 1 suitcase per person
- 8 nights of hotel accommodation and taxes
- Transfer from Dubrovnik airport to hotel
- Coach transportation for 6 days in Croatia
- Multilingual guide on Croatia land tours
- Guided walking tour of Old Town Dubrovnik
- Franciscan Monastery
- Dubrovnik City Walls walk
- Srđ Mountain cable car
- Lokrum Island ferry
- 7 days and 7 nights on board *MV Aquamarin*
- Cruise gratuities
- Port charges and cruise taxes
- Guided tour of Ston with oyster tasting
- Guided tour on Mljet Island
- Boat ride to St. Mary Isle and monastery tour
- Guided tour of Korčula
- Guided tour of island of Vis
- Blue Cave on island of Bisevo
- Guided tour of Hvar
- Guided tour of Split
- Guided walking tour of Primošten
- Stankovci prosciutto production facility
- Pag Island tour with Gligora Cheese Factory
- Guided tour of Zadar with St. Donat Church
- Plitvica Lakes National Park
- Guided tour of Zagreb with Opera House
- Transfer from hotel to Zagreb airport
- Flight from Zagreb to Vancouver
- Knowledgeable Wells Gray tour director
- Gratuities for Croatia guides and drivers
- Luggage handling at hotels and ship
- **32 meals:** 14 breakfasts, 10 lunches, 8 dinners.

TOUR & CRUISE NOTES

Please book early. The operator of the *MV Aquamarin* has confirmed a block of staterooms for this tour. Our sales will be reviewed on January 31, 2023 and some unsold staterooms may be recalled if the ship is getting full. Small ship cruises in Croatia are very popular and most are sold out long before departure. **It is unlikely that we will be able to secure more staterooms after any unsold rooms are recalled.**

Documentation: A valid passport is required with sufficient blank pages and must not expire until three months after return date. A visa is not currently required. Please bring your passport to the Wells Gray office or your travel agent to be scanned, either at booking or at the latest at final payment.

Currency: The Croatian Kuna is the standard currency, although the Euro is sometimes accepted in some restaurants and shops. After you arrive, you can exchange Euros or US dollars at a bank or withdraw cash from an ATM which will give you a better exchange rate than a hotel. On board currency is the Kuna. Purchases can be charged to your ship account and must be paid at the end of the cruise in cash.

Flight seating: We are unable to take requests for window or aisle seating on the planes. The airline will not accept them, as group seating is assigned as a block. If this is important to you, we suggest you take the "No Flight" option with a fare reduction of \$1,550 and book your own flight which allows seat selection.

Food Allergies: You must notify us no later than at final payment if you have a food allergy. The ship and restaurants in remote areas may not be able to satisfy all food allergies. As restaurants recover from two years of pandemic restrictions, many facing severe labour shortages, we have been informed that food allergies should be honoured, but it is impossible to handle everybody's requests for food preferences. (An allergy causes medical distress, a preference does not.) For some allergies, please consider bringing your own snacks or food items so you are not dependent on what restaurants are able to serve.

Rooms for singles are often a different style or smaller size than twin rooms in the hotels (not on the ship). Many hotels limit the number of single rooms allocated to a group. Book early if you prefer a single.

Triples are not available on this tour.



Activity Level 2: Light activity on the ship and moderate activity during most shore excursions and pre- and post-cruise tours. Due to the historic nature of some attractions, it may be necessary to climb stairs, walk on uneven surfaces such as cobblestone streets, and walk up to a kilometre at an easy pace. Sometimes the coach cannot drive all the way to an attraction. There is no elevator on the ship and there may be stairs between the dining room and your stateroom. There can be longer walks in the airports so you should request a cart or wheelchair in advance or at check-in if this could be an issue for you. The coaches and ship cannot carry a scooter or motorized wheelchair. If Activity Level 2 could be challenging, you are urged to bring a companion to assist you. The tour director, local guides, and drivers have many responsibilities, so please do not expect them, or your fellow travellers, to provide ongoing assistance. Please consider these mobility issues prior to booking this tour. If you are not capable of keeping up with the group or require frequent assistance, the tour director may stop you from participating in some activities or some days. In extreme situations, you may be required to leave the tour and travel home at your own expense; travel insurance will probably not cover you.

TOUR POLICIES

Payments: A deposit of \$800 per person is requested at the time of booking and the balance is due May 25, 2023. By paying the deposit, you agree to the Terms & Conditions, Activity Level and Cancellation Policy outlined. Payments can be made by online banking, cheque, Visa or Mastercard (\$5,000 limit per person per booking on credit cards).

Discounts: Early bookers receive \$250 discount on first 12 seats and \$125 on next 8 seats for booking early with deposit. The discount is not offered after May 25, 2023.

Cancellation Policy: Up to March 24, 2023, your tour payments are refunded less a cancellation charge of \$100 per person. From March 25 to May 25, the cancellation charge is \$400 per person. From May 26 to June 23, the cancellation charge is 50% of tour fare. From June 24 to July 25, the cancellation charge is 80% of tour fare. After July 25, there is no refund.

Itinerary and Fare Changes: As the world emerges from the pandemic, many of our suppliers such as hotels, restaurants, attractions, and transportation providers are struggling with shortage of staff, inflated costs, and supply line challenges. Sometimes we are notified about changes to the itinerary prior to departure and sometimes during the tour. We do our best to substitute a similar service if something cancels, but occasionally the only alternative is to provide a refund for the missed activity. Please note that if we are forced to cancel a component of an extensive tour due to an issue beyond our control, the current penalties still apply if you choose to cancel the entire tour. Fuel surcharges and changes to taxes or other tour costs can occur at any time, therefore Wells Gray Tours reserves the right to increase fares due to such changes up to departure.

Travel Insurance: A Comprehensive Insurance policy is available through Wells Gray Tours and coverage is provided by Travel Guard. Policies purchased at deposit include a waiver of the pre-existing condition clause for medical and cancellation claims, otherwise policies can be purchased no later than at final payment. Please contact us for details.

Home pickups may be offered in Greater Victoria, depending on the number of people booked and coach size. Decision is made about 2 weeks before departure and you will be contacted about your pickup point and time.

Photo Credits: Katarina Line (ship), AdobeStock (Dubrovnik)

Experience Points: This tour earns 180 e-points. Each time you travel on a Wells Gray tour, you earn Experience Points, or e-points. One point equals \$1. Redeem your points on select tours or accumulate enough points to earn a free tour! Redemptions offered until May 25, 2023.

Consumer Protection BC Licences: Kamloops 178, Vernon 655, Kelowna 588, Penticton 924, Victoria 65842

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