

SOUTHERN SEA VENTURES

CROATIA EXPLORER

ELEVEN DAY TRIP-NINE DAYS SEA KAYAKING

Croatia is home to one of Europe's largest archipelagoes with over 1,200 islands. Curving around Bosnia, the coastline stretches along the Adriatic from Slovenia in the north to Montenegro and Albania in the south.

Our area of exploration is the Kvarner archipelago, in the northern Adriatic. We start our kayak trip from the island of Rab, paddling between eight islands, each with wildly different landscapes. Each open channel crossing takes us to new surroundings, from moonscape barren ground to lush forests and sandy beaches. Forests are home to deer, mouflon (wild sheep), owls, hawks and caves filled with thousands of bats. While overhead, Griffon vultures look down at us from cliff ledges. We visit ruins dating back to the 4th century and paddle in the first reserve for Adriatic dolphins in the Mediterranean. We take time out from paddling for coastal treks and daily swims. We finish kayaking on the island of Ilovik before transferring by boat back to our hotel in Rab.

Designed for people with paddling experience, this is a voyage of exploration **and may be subject to some deviations in the itinerary depending on the weather conditions we encounter.** Overnight campsites include remote beaches, private islands and the occasional public campground. Join us for this challenging and exciting adventure!

A QUICK ITINERARY

23 Jun	Meet at Zadar, transfer to Rab, overnight hotel.	D
24 Jun-01 Jul	Kayak through island chain.	BLD
02 Jul	Paddle to Ilovik, finish kayaking. Boat transfer to our Rab hotel.	BLD
03 Jul	Transfer to Zadar. Trip concludes	B

MEETING PLACE AND TIME

As people arrive directly from overseas and also from various points within Croatia, we have a number of meeting options on Day 1 of the trip.

1. Zadar airport - we will do one group pickup at the airport at approximately 3pm.

This time will be confirmed closer to the trip departure.

2. Mediteran Hotel in Zadar. Pick up will be mid afternoon.

3. Make your own way to the Istra hotel on the island of Rab.

Please make sure we know of your preferred meeting arrangement and do check with us before booking your flights. Local flight times may change so please allow enough time for connections. If you are concerned with delays, we recommend you arrive in Zadar the day before the trip.

Transfer time from Zadar to Rab is about two hours.

HOW TO GET THERE

Several airlines have flights to Zadar from European cities, including Ryanair from London (Stansted) and Lufthansa from Munich. Croatia Airlines flies from Zagreb to Zadar twice a day. There are several bus companies in Croatia with extensive networks around the country and a very good coastal ferry service. Your travel agent and/or internet research can provide timetables and costs.

PADDLING EXPERIENCE

This trip is designed for people with some previous paddling experience. You do not have to be an expert or know how to roll. However, you should have practiced a wet exit and assisted re-entry before the trip. This can easily be practiced in waist deep warm water with a friend's help or under tuition. We are always happy to discuss your experience and can often suggest how intermediate

paddlers might gain the necessary experience at home to prepare for the trip. We require all participants to complete and return our "Experience Form" shortly after booking. It is important to recognize that the weather **and wind** will influence greatly what we can and can't do.

We predominantly use single kayaks on this trip, but some doubles are available. The degree of difficulty of the trip will depend on the weather we encounter. The wind in the Adriatic can vary from gentle puffs to strong gusts so you should be used to paddling in a variety of conditions. We paddle between three to six hours per day. It is important to realise that the group will kayak at the speed of the slowest members. All participants should feel confident in swimming.

The kayaks we use are stable, easy to paddle and control. They are designed as expedition boats and it is important to keep gear to a minimum as we carry on board all our food and equipment. Our trip leaders are highly experienced sea kayakers and professional guides. On Day 2 you will be given a thorough briefing on your equipment and trip safety with time to adjust your individual boats. ****Note – if you choose to use a double kayak then you will have less storage space and should take that into consideration when packing. Please refer to our equipment list for details on what to pack.** As with most activities, the fitter you are, the more you will enjoy the paddling. We highly recommend participants become involved in regular exercise (paddling, walking, jogging, cycling, aerobics or swimming) some months prior to the trip. We generally limit our group to a maximum of 10 clients, plus the two guides.

PROPOSED ITINERARY

The following itinerary should be seen as an approximate guide only. Our aim is to have a genuine Croatian adventure and a great time rather than being governed by a rigid schedule. Our program may change over the 10 days to take advantage of any opportunities that may arise, local weather conditions and preferences of the group. **Please note that weather conditions, transport breakdowns and other factors can cause alterations and delays to our itinerary.**

23 Jun – Transfer to our hotel accommodation in Rab, the Istra Hotel. Trip briefing is held at 7.00pm followed by a welcome dinner. We will give out dry-bags to pack for the kayak trip. Dry bag size is approximately 20 litres. Any excess luggage that you do not take kayaking can be stored at our Rab hotel where we return. A tour of the old city of Rab may be possible, depending on everyone's arrival time.
D...Hotel.

24 Jun – Breakfast at hotel. We transfer to the north east side of Rab where we pack and adjust the kayaks. After a briefing we begin our paddle, exploring cliffs and caves before stopping the night in Podshilo Bay.
BLD...Camping.

25 Jun – We paddle the rugged north side of St Gregory Island. After lunch we cross the channel to the Island of Prvich and camp.
BLD...Camping.

26 Jun – We start early on our longest paddling day by crossing the Senjska Vrata channel to the island of Krk with its numerous beaches and coves. In the afternoon we cross to the island of Plavnik and our camp in the oak forest.
BLD...Camping.

27 Jun –We paddle coastline inundated with caves, high cliffs and nesting vultures before crossing to Cres, Croatia's largest island. We will stop for a swim on one of the numerous beaches before reaching our camp in the Bay of Mail Bok, underneath the historic town of Orlec (eagle).
BLD...Camping.

28 Jun – We'll start the day in our usual style with breakfast, coffee and swimming. Then it is onto more caves, vultures and bats. Later in the day we enter the first reserve for dolphins in the Mediterranean. We camp in the sandy bay of Meli.

BLD...Camping.

29 Jun – The landscape is transformed today as we pass several beaches before reaching the dense beech forest of Punta Kriza-Cape Cross. Deer, mouflon and extensive birdlife keep us entertained as we kayak the coastline to the bay of Kolorat. We camp with distant views of Rab and the scent of forest herbs in the air.

BLD...Camping.

30 Jun – Today is a shorter paddling day as we kayak past the beaches of Cape Cross before crossing the Nerezine channel. On the far side we reach our camp in the bay of Poljana. We have the afternoon to catch up on our washing before stretching our legs as we head in to explore the town of Mali Losinj.

BLD...Camping.

01 Jul –We start early and paddle and walk to the marine institute, "Blue World", which was established to aid in the protection of the dolphins of the Adriatic. After 'adopting' a dolphin we paddle on to the Island of Orjule and camp. Not far from these islands is the founding site of the unique bronze statue of Apolksiomem, dating back to the 4th century BC.

BLD...Camping.

02 Jul – Our last paddling day. We kayak towards the island of Ilovik passing by the island of St.Peter on which is situated an 11th century abbey. People from Ilovik enjoy a long life expectancy, some say due to the healthy diet and the island being car free! After lunch we will paddle further around the island until we come to the bay of Parzine and our final chance for a swim. Then we load up our kayaks and transfer by boat back to our hotel in Rab.

BLD...Hotel.

03 Jul – Group transfer to Zadar and final farewells. Trip concludes.

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CLIMATE

Summers in Croatia are hot and dry, especially in July and August. The months of May, June and September are a little cooler – still shorts and T-shirt weather at most times during the day, evenings a little cooler and with the possibility of occasional showers. The weather is generally settled but wind can be a factor.

ACCOMMODATION AND CAMPING

Rab: We will have simple twin share bed and breakfast hotel accommodation for two nights in Rab at the Istra Hotel – Tel: +385 (0) 51 724 134. Website: www.hotel-istra.hr/en

Our office can book pre and post trip nights at the Istra Hotel in Rab or the Hotel Mediteran in Zadar if required.

Hotel Mediteran : website: www.hotelmediteran-zd.hr

For an upmarket option in Zadar, contact Hotel Kolovare: Tel +385 232 11017, website: www.hotel-kolovare.com

Camping: We supply two-person tents, foam mats and communal camping equipment. You can either bring your own sleeping bag or rent one. If bringing your own sleeping bag, ensure it is compact to conserve space. Rental charge is 20 euros for a sleeping bag. Please note, the ground can be rocky so you should take that into consideration. We recommend bringing your own Thermarest. Some public campgrounds can be basic, offering only cold-water showers. We will have occasional access to electricity later in the trip.

TRIP ORGANISATION

Our paddling days will start early to make the most of each day. It's a good idea to pack your dry-bag before breakfast, prepare your personal items for the day and take down your tent so that loading for departure can be organised.

We mix up our campsites on wild beaches and intersperse this with campgrounds to provide access to more facilities. On arrival in camp you will be expected to unload your own boats and you and your partner will be responsible for your own tent or sleeping site. The guides will also appreciate your assistance in other camp duties. We find that people joining our trips alone soon make friends.

Food

Our guides usually prepare meals in camp and your help is welcome. At some campsites we are able to eat local Croatian food at a nearby restaurant. Restaurant meals throughout the trip will be simple and provide variety and a taste of local cuisine.

We are happy to cater for vegetarians and other special dietary needs, please let us know at the time of booking your dietary requirements.

EXPEDITION STAFF

There will be two experienced kayak guides. Should you have any inquiries during the trip, feel free to ask your guides.

CONSERVATION

It has always been our motto that "we take only photographs and leave only footprints". We are keenly aware of the ecology of the areas we visit and try to limit our impact on them. We ask that each person take out everything they bring in, including sweet wrappers, batteries, etc.

PHOTOGRAPHY

We are paddling mainly in a salt-water environment and the delicate electronics in digital or film cameras can be damaged. You might consider a waterproof camera or a small plastic waterproof case or dry-bag with a supply of silicon packs. Ensure you have sufficient memory storage and batteries for a digital camera, as there is little opportunity to purchase batteries or access electricity during our kayak trip. If you are using a film camera it is wise to keep lenses to a minimum. One variable lens will reduce your load and the amount of your equipment that can be damaged! Low speed films are fine on the water but in the alleyways of a town some higher speed films are useful. If you are buying a new camera, consider a waterproof one and purchase it well before departure so you can practice with it as it is inconvenient to find fault with a camera during a trip.

MONEY MATTERS

Your tour cost includes:

- Bed and breakfast hotel accommodation in Rab on a twin share basis for the first and last night of the trip.
- Expedition kayaks, paddles, life jackets and safety equipment.
- Two-person tents and foam mats.
- 20 litre watertight dry-bag for your personal gear while kayaking.
- Professional guides.
- All meals from dinner on 23 Jun to breakfast on 03 Jul.
- Specified group transfers.

Your tour cost does not include:

- Any flights.
- Entry fees into historic sites.
- Items of a personal nature such as postage and laundry.
- Alcoholic beverages.

- Some bottled water during the trip.
- Airport taxes.
- Travel insurance.
- Tips.
- Sleeping bags (these can be hired at an extra charge).
- Thermarests are not provided but are recommended.

MONEY TO BRING WITH YOU

There are ATM machines in the main centres and this is the most efficient way to obtain Croatian kuna. The kuna is tied to the Euro but does not have much value outside Croatia so it's best to exchange small amounts at a time. Credit cards are accepted in larger stores or hotels. Traveller's cheques and cash can be changed at banks in the larger towns and cities but can be time consuming. U.S. dollars and euros are far easier to exchange than Australian dollars within Croatia, but if you are traveling to Europe before or after it is better to have euros.

During the trip you will need money for alcohol, bottled water and soft drinks, entry fees to a few historical sites and any shopping you intend to do.

TIPPING

We recommend you put aside a little money for general tips, i.e. restaurants, porters.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

It is necessary to take out a personal insurance policy to cover yourself against sickness, accident, loss of baggage, trip cancellation due to weather or other reasons and in the unlikely event that you need emergency evacuation by plane or helicopter due to illness or accident.

Ensure you have read the policy thoroughly and are familiar with the claim process in case it becomes necessary to make an emergency claim.

We strongly recommend you take out insurance at the time of booking. Please supply us with the policy details (insurance company name and contact details and policy number) before you depart.

MEDICAL MATTERS

All participants are required to provide us with a medical questionnaire filled out completely and accurately. Please check with your doctor or medical centre whether you require any vaccinations or boosters. An expedition first aid kit is carried on the trip. We strongly recommend that you bring with you any required medicines and a small first aid kit for your own personal use. Due to the remoteness of the trip it is advisable to have a dental checkup before departure.

PASSPORT

Make sure that you have a signed passport and that its validity will extend to six months after the date of your return. If you are not an Australian citizen and are returning to Australia after your trip, make certain that you have the necessary re-entry permit from the Department of Immigration.

VISAS

For most visitors visas are not required for stays in Croatia of less than 90 days. Your passport may be checked at hotels as all tourists are registered.

WATER

Bottled water is readily available in towns and preferable to tap water that, although chlorinated, is not as safe. Water for the kayaking will be provided throughout the trip but you will have opportunities to buy extra if you wish. We recommend about 3 litres per day per person and will be able to restock with water every 2-3 days.

EXCESS LUGGAGE

Luggage not needed when kayaking can be stored in our Rab hotel where we return.

SECURITY

Before leaving home, photocopy your passport, airline ticket and make a note of your credit card and ATM card numbers in case you lose or misplace them. You should carry your passport on the kayak trip but could leave airline tickets with left luggage at the hotel in Rab. Theft is a consideration in Croatia (like at home) so it is always a good idea not to leave things unattended. Do not carry large amounts of cash with you and always be aware of what you are carrying, especially personal valuables like cameras, jewellery and watches. Do not display valuable items or leave them lying around in such a way that might tempt a thief. It is a good idea to use a money belt or neck wallet.

CLOTHING & EQUIPMENT

Carefully check through all essential items. The dress code overall in Croatia is modest, but it is more relaxed on the Adriatic coast.

Essential Items

The following checklist is a guideline for your trip. Contact us if you have any questions.

- Lightweight waterproof rain jacket.
- Two pairs of shorts and swimming gear.
- One pair of sturdy sand shoes or running shoes or preferably a light weight hiking boot.
- Lightweight socks.
- One pair of sport sandals (e.g. Teva or similar) or paddle booties.
- One pair of lightweight, quick drying, full length trousers.
- Lightweight long-sleeved shirt is recommended in camp for protection from insects.
- Lightweight woolen jumper or fleece jacket.
- One long sleeved thermal or polyester top is recommended while paddling for sun protection or warmth in rainy conditions. Lycra rash vest is also suitable.
- Wide-brimmed hat for protection from the sun is essential. Sun visors are inadequate. A hat with a stiff brim that will hold rigidity in a breeze, and a chinstrap to keep on in the wind. A scarf made from a light material such as silk, to protect your neck, is useful for sun protection.
- Small towel (a chamois towel is ideal).
- Minimal personal toiletries (biodegradable salt water soap may be desired).
- Good waterproof sun cream and lip balm, and Insect repellent (recommend RID).
- Sunglasses with a cord or string for attaching them to prevent loss.
- **Lightweight and compact sleeping bag and inner sheet – sleeping bag can be hired for 20 euro if required. Be sure to let us know if you require a sleeping bag.**
- Small torch and batteries.
- A small daypack, bum bag or dry bag is good for holding things like sunscreen, glasses, etc. both for paddling and day walks.
- A small drybag is also useful for keeping a camera and valuables handy while paddling.
- A wetsuit vest is useful for snorkeling.
- 1 or 2, one litre water bottles (the type used by cyclists are good and inexpensive).
- Lightweight cycling gloves can ease blistering if you have not paddled recently.
- Small blowup pillow or pillowcase, this takes up little room and easily stuffed for a comfy sleep.
- Snorkeling gear (mask and snorkel only to save space or just swimming goggles).

Optional Items

- Power points require a plug with two round pins.
- Cards/games, book or magazine.
- Lightweight clothesline.
- Binoculars, camera –bring sufficient film, batteries, and storage cards for digital cameras.
- **Thermarest (highly recommended)**

END OF THE TRIP

The trip finishes in Rab after breakfast on 03 July. We can offer a group transfer to Zadar town or Zadar airport if catching a flight that day. Please allow enough time on this day if you are booking onward flights, a transfer from Rab to Zadar airport takes approximately two hours.

OTHER PLACES TO SEE IN CROATIA

It's worth considering extending your time in Croatia as there is a huge range of fascinating places to visit. Please contact our office for recommendations.

DELAYS OR PROBLEMS

In case of last minute delays or problems, contact Southern Sea Ventures in Australia on +61 2 8901 3287. The guide's contact number will be noted on your final itinerary.

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