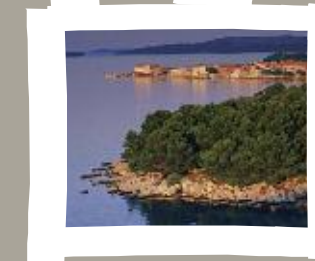




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THERE ARE MORE THAN 1,000 ISLANDS LARGE AND SMALL OFF THE COAST OF CROATIA, INCLUDING THE SPECTACULAR SUNKEN LANDSCAPES OF THE DALMATIANS. CAPTAIN **NICK LINE** OF MOTOR YACHT VA BENE EXPLAINS WHY SO MANY OF HIS CHARTER GUESTS COME BACK AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND WHY HE IS SO GLAD TO BRING THEM.

DALMATIANS



Croatia is a place that surprises everybody. It blows away any preconceived ideas you may have and whenever we take people there for the first time they are just amazed. Croatia always exceeds expectations.

If you're the sort of person who enjoys being on a yacht, as opposed to being seen to be on a yacht; if you want to enjoy the boat, the sea, the place - then go to Croatia. This is where you can really relax and just enjoy being on the water.

For anyone used to the buzz of the Côte d'Azur, the Dalmatian Coast is a haven of tranquillity. Instead of fiercely competing for berths, you'll probably be the only big yacht tying up alongside an ancient stone quayside. In just a few paces you can find yourself in a medieval walled city, meandering through a maze of cobbled lanes, surrounded by immaculately

preserved history and architecture.

This relative solitude is a major attraction of the area: in any of the harbours, you might only see one or two other large motor yachts. With hundreds of islands providing an endless supply of coves, great anchorages, inlets and islets, there are simply more choices, more places to go. You can almost always find a place to yourself, if that's what you want. Many of the nicest bays are too deep for smaller sailing yachts to anchor, and you can tie up for the night, stern to the rocks and be undisturbed.

Of course, if you're feeling sociable there are also ports and towns with plenty to do ashore. Hvar, Split and Dubrovnik all have good restaurants, shops and nightlife. From the crew's point of view, it's getting easier to obtain fresh supplies in Croatia and we tend to pick up our fine wines and other

specialities in Venice, which is a great place to begin the cruise. For me the highlight islands are Trogir, Vis, Korcula - which competes with Venice for the title birthplace of Marco Polo - and Mljet, famous for its pine-scented honey.

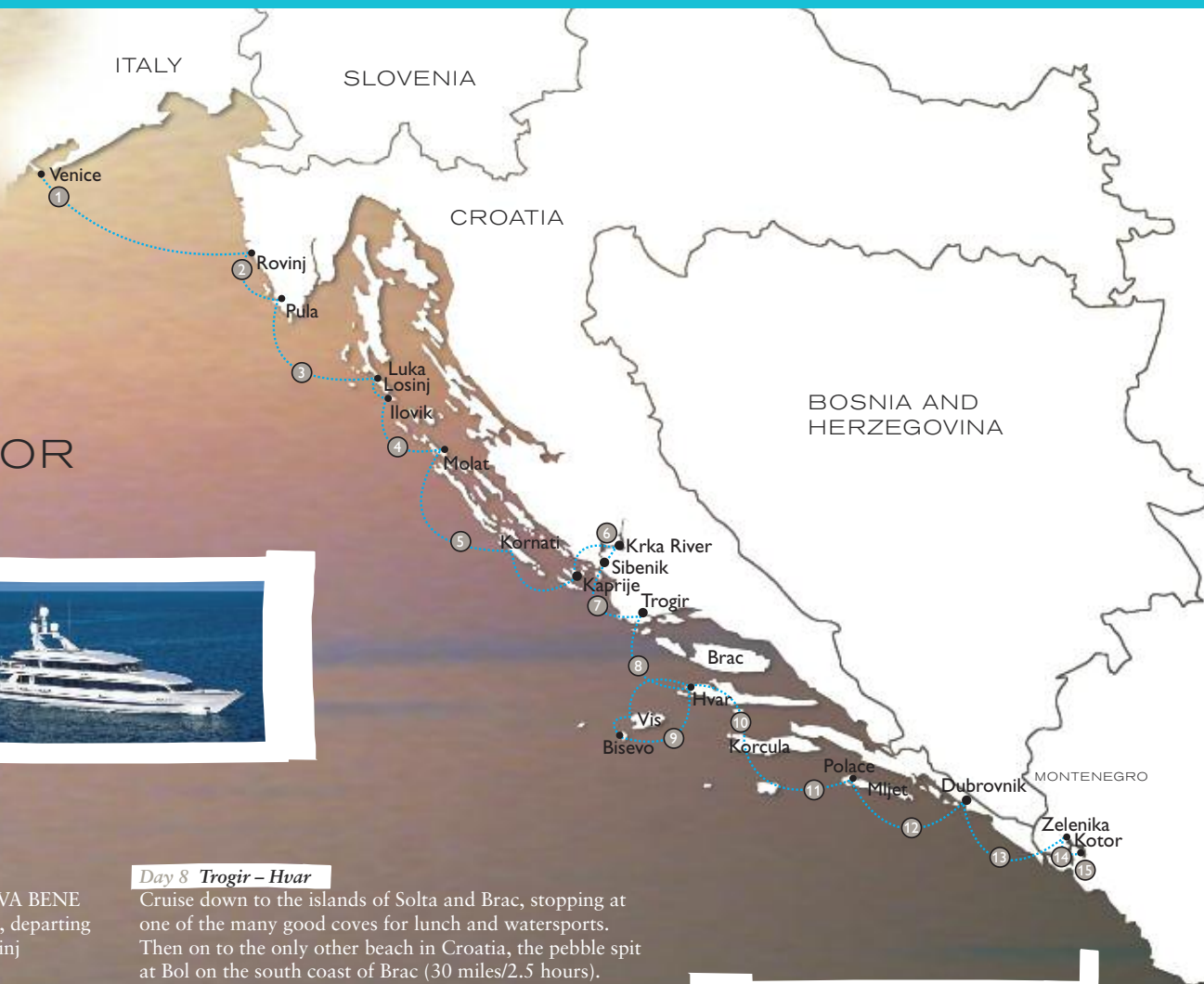
For anyone on board a yacht, the great bonus of Dalmatian geography is that, whatever the weather does, you can always find shelter among the islands. The scenery is breathtaking: turquoise seas, wooded islands, with a backdrop of towering mountains on the mainland. As you go further south, the scenery becomes more and more spectacular and there are fewer and fewer people. Everyday our guests wake up and go 'wow!' At which point I generally say: "Just wait, tomorrow will be better." And it always is.

Overleaf, we take you through a 2 week itinerary in Croatia with Captain Nick Line >>



VENICE TO KOTOR

A 2 WEEK CROATIAN CRUISING ITINERARY, SUGGESTED BY CAPTAIN NICK LINE OF THE CHARTER YACHT, VA BENE.



Day 1 Venice

Arrive by water taxi from the airport and join VA BENE moored near St Mark's Square. Explore Venice, departing after midnight for an overnight passage to Rovinj (about 5 hours).

Day 2 Rovinj & Brioni Islands

An early arrival in Rovinj to clear customs and immigration into Croatia. Explore the pretty town of Rovinj, before cruising down to the Brioni Islands (12 miles/1 hour) to enjoy lunch and watersports at anchor. What was once President Tito's private island hideaway is now a National Park with its own quaint harbour, one of Croatia's rare beaches, Roman ruins and the remains of Tito's personal zoo.

Day 3 Brioni Islands – Pula – Luka Losinj

An early morning cruise to the town of Pula (about 1 hour) to visit the well preserved Roman Amphitheatre and Roman Forum. Then head for the island of Losinj (29 miles/2.5 hours) to anchor in a sheltered spot off the harbour area for lunch and watersports. Remain at anchor overnight in the shelter of Luka Losinj.

Day 4 Losinj – Ilovik – Molat

After visiting the town of Losinj, cruise round to a secluded bay on the island of Ilovik (12 miles/1 hour) for lunch at anchor, followed by a cruise through the northern end of this island group. This is clearly a sunken coastline and the experience of cruising down what were once valleys and around what were hills is quite surreal. Anchor for the evening in a quiet bay on the island of Molat.

Day 5 Molat – Kornati – Kaprije

Continue southwards through the drowned valleys of the Dalmatian Islands to the Kornati Islands and National Park (24 miles/2 hours). Enjoy lunch and watersports followed by a tender expedition to explore the crater-like lakes. Later, cruise down through the remainder of the Kornati National Park and across to the islands of Kakan and Kaprije (24 miles/2 hours) to a quiet night anchorage.

Day 6 Krka River

An early start over to the entrance of the Krka River. Navigate inland for about 15 miles to the town of Skradin. Guests can continue up the river in a National Park launch with a private guide into the Krka National Park to visit the waterfalls (about 2-3 hours). Return for lunch on board in the large sheltered lake just downriver from Skradin. Cruise downriver to Sibenik and moor stern to on the town quay for a visit to the castle and the cathedral.

Day 7 Sibenik – Trogir

Depart Sibenik, passing tunnels that housed German U-boats in WWII, and a Napoleonic fort at the river mouth. Cruise down the coast for 2 hours for lunch at anchor before proceeding to Trogir (1 hour) and docking alongside the old quay. In about 15 paces you are in the old cobblestone streets of the medieval town!

Day 8 Trogir – Hvar

Cruise down to the islands of Solta and Brac, stopping at one of the many good coves for lunch and watersports. Then on to the only other beach in Croatia, the pebble spit at Bol on the south coast of Brac (30 miles/2.5 hours). Later, cross over to the north side of the island of Hvar, and anchor in a secluded cove for a barbecue.

Day 9 Hvar – Bisevo – Vis – Hvar

Cruise out to the west, past the island of Vis to the blue caves on the island of Bisevo (29 miles/2.5 hours). In good weather it is possible to enter the caves by water. Cruise back to the south side of Vis (12 miles/1 hour) for lunch and watersports, then head for the port of Hvar and moor stern to on the town quay for the night.

Day 10 Hvar – Korcula

Cruise along the south coast of Hvar and then over to a secluded anchorage on the little island of Scedro, for swimming and exploring with the tenders. Head down to Korcula (24 miles/2 hours), mooring stern to on the town quay. Once again, in a few strides you'll be in the centre of a cobble-stoned medieval town, where there is often local sword dancing in the evenings!

Day 11 Korcula – Mljet

A morning cruise to the island of Mljet and its National Park (15 miles/1.25 hours). Anchor off the entrance to the inland lakes and explore by tender. Or take the National Park launch to an old monastery, now a hotel and restaurant, for lunch. Afterwards, cruise around to the north side of Mljet, to the village of Polace, where the beautiful overnight anchorage is practically land-locked.

Day 12 Mljet – Dubrovnik

Cruise down the north of Mljet and across to the island of Sipan and Luka Sipanska, which is a great spot for relaxation and watersports. Continue down to Dubrovnik (24 miles/2 hours) and anchor for the night off the old town, where an evening ashore can be enjoyed.

Day 13 Dubrovnik – Zelenika

After exploring Dubrovnik, clear immigration out of Croatia in the port of Gruz and cruise down to clear customs into Montenegro at the entry port of Zelenika (34 miles/3 hours). Then head up to explore the large inland lakes and fjords to anchor for the afternoon and evening.

Day 14 Zelenika – Kotor

Cruise up through the lakes to moor stern to on the town quay of Kotor, which dates back to before AD 1,000. Choose between going ashore to explore the local area, steeped in history, or return to the lake for some last-minute watersports.

Day 15 Kotor

Prepare to depart for Tivat airport, a short 15 minute drive from Kotor.



Need to Know

Charter legislation: foreign-flagged yachts are not permitted to both embark and disembark charter guests in Croatia, although it is possible to do one or the other. VA BENE solves this by embarking guests from the port of Kotor in Montenegro and cruising to Split, in Croatia, for example, or vice versa. For longer charters, Captain Nick Line recommends boarding in Venice. "You can get a taste of Croatia in a week, but you really need 10 days or two weeks. Ideally, you'd spend a month here!"

VA BENE is a favourite choice of Nigel Burgess clients for cruising the Croatian Adriatic. Every season we have a select number of yachts available for charter in Croatia and our brokers have all the details.

VA BENE

- LOA: 156.83ft (47.80m)
- Builder: Kees Cornelissen, The Netherlands
- Cruising speed: about 14 knots
- Guests: 12 guests in 6 cabins
- Crew: 13
- Winter 2005/2006: Caribbean
- Summer 2006: Mediterranean
- Charter rates: from US\$161,000 per week