

Self-Drive From Istria to the Alps

Country(ies): Slovenia , Croatia

Tour type: Overland

Transport: Self-drive rental electric car

Group size: Min: Any | Max: Any

Days: 10 days

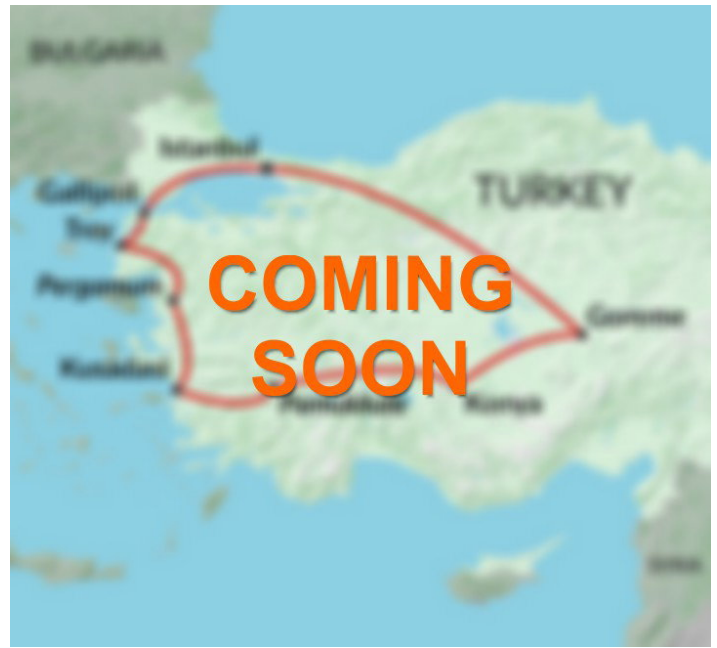
Start Location: Ljubljana, Slovenia

End Location: Ljubljana, Slovenia

Meals: Breakfasts - 9, Lunches - 0, Dinners - 0

Highlights:

TBC



Itinerary

Day 1: Ljubljana airport – Ljubljana (27km, 30min)

Upon arrival at Jože Pušnik airport (Ljubljana), pick up your rental car and drive to Ljubljana. Check in at the hotel and have the rest of the day at leisure.

Ljubljana is the pocket-sized capital of Slovenia, which boasts with a dazzling hilltop castle and the green Ljubljanica River. Enjoy an evening walk through the narrow streets of Ljubljana, take a funicular to the Castle of Ljubljana and have the most beautiful view of city.

Finish your day with a delicious dinner at the castle.

OVERNIGHT: Ljubljana

MEALS: None

EXTRAS:

Day 2: Ljubljana – Plitvice Lakes National Park (262km, 3h15min)

After breakfast explore the old town of Ljubljana with its narrow streets, admire stunning buildings by famous architect Jože Plešnik, a classicist, who tried to model the city on ancient Athens.

Have a lunch in Ljubljana and then continue your journey to Croatia towards Plitvice Lakes National Park. Arrive at hotel Lyra and spend the rest of the day at leisure after a long drive. In the evening enjoy a delicious dinner with traditional local dishes. And when the night comes you will have a great opportunity to admire the star-studded sky.... (there are installed telescopes in the rooms).

The hotel Lyra is perfectly located in the area with the smallest amount of light pollution in continental Europe, making it ideal for stargazing!

OVERNIGHT: Ličko Petrovo Selo

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 3: Hotel Lyra - Plitvice Lakes National Park (15km, 15min) – Opatija (178km, 2h50min) – Rovinj (84 km, 1h 20min)

Have a breakfast and drive towards Plitvice Lakes National Park. Plitvice Lakes is the oldest and largest national park in the Republic of Croatia, listed on the UNESCO List of World Heritage sites. With its exceptional natural beauty, this area has always attracted nature lovers.

The National Park covers 16 lakes, connected in between by either streams or waterfalls and divided into two groups – Upper and Lower lakes. Numerous waterfalls connect all sixteen lakes. The most popular and well-known waterfalls are Velik Slap, Sastavci and Veliki Prstavac all located in the Lower Lakes. The park offers several different and well-maintained walking and hiking paths. You can use also electric boats and shuttle buses

inside the park, or rent a rowing boat. Choose the route that suits you (routes vary from 2 to 7 hours of walking) and explore the unique beauty of this place, admire its impressive nature and landscape!

After the tour you can have a lunch in the area near the park, there are several restaurants. Then drive to your next destination – Rovinj, a Croatian fishing port on the west coast of the Istrian peninsula. Enroute make a stop in Opatija, one of the most elite destinations in Croatia, which is also called the 'Nice of the Adriatic'. The charming 19th century villas, botanical gardens and amazing views are reminiscent of the French Riviera. Walk along 12 kilometre-long coastal promenade Lungomare, which connects the picturesque fishing village of Volosko with Opatija.

Then continue your trip further to Rovinj, check in at the hotel.

OVERNIGHT: Rovinj

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 4: Rovinj – National Park Brijuni (Fažana, 30km, 35min) – Pula – (10km, 20min) - Rovinj (36km, 45min)

Today you will have a day trip to the National Park Brijuni, one of the most amazing Croatian parks. The park is located in Brijuni islands along the coast of western Istria. There are several groups of islands among which the most interesting, the largest and the most indented is the Brijuni group of 14 islands and islets.

To get there you need to take a boat from the small town of Fažana. The boat ride takes about 15 minutes. Upon arrival to the Veliki Brijun port, you will be welcomed by a tourist train and a guide. Brijuni are truly a unique combination of natural, cultural, historical and geopaleontological heritage. There are so many ways to discover the island – you can take an electric car or rent a bicycle and enjoy a pleasant and relaxing ride. A tourist train will take you to the most beautiful and important places in the park, such as Safari Park where you can observe wild animals in their natural habitat. During summer season, you can also go scuba diving and kayaking.

Following your trip to the islands visit the largest town on the Istrian peninsula – Pula. The rich history of this city has been preserved from ancient Roman times, the early Christianity, the times of Venice, Napoleon, Austria and Italy. See all the important monuments as Amphitheater, the Hercules' temple, the Cathedral, Forum Romanum with Augustus Temple, and the City Hall. Go to the gates of the Roman city and enjoy a stunning view of the city from the Castle of Pula.

Return back to your hotel in Rovinj.

OVERNIGHT: Rovinj

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 5: Rovinj – Motovun (47km, 55min) – Portorož (38km, 50min)

After breakfast, check out from the hotel and have a city tour of Rovinj. The city is like a small "Croatian Venice", it's one of the most romantic and fascinating cities in Croatia. In the centre of the Old Town is the Church of St. Euphemia, a Venetian baroque building, which is also the highest point of Rovinj. The Church tower is a replica of the bell tower of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice. Climb up the tower for breathtaking views of the city and the surrounding archipelago. Stroll through the famous cobbled streets of Rovinj – Carrera, Bregovita and Grisia. Don't miss the most attractive natural attraction of Rovinj – The Golden Cape Park Forest, which is rich in native plants such as Himalayan cedars, cypresses and pines. Later than continue your journey to Motovun, the most

famous and attractive medieval town in the heart of Istria. It is located in the Mirna River valley, on a hilltop with a magnificent landscape. A Motovun Film Festival is held here every year. Motovun is also very famous for truffles. The world largest white truffle was found in the woods around Motovun. There are several restaurants where you can have a lunch and try local dishes with truffles. In the afternoon drive to Slovenian Istria and stay in Portorož. The town on Slovenian Adriatic coast is considered one of the warmest places in Slovenia, lies in a bay surrounded by beautiful hills. Check in at the hotel and have the rest of the day at leisure. Portorož is a well-known tourist resort famous for its spas. Enjoy some pleasurable activities today - relax and pamper yourself in a wellness centre and swimming pools.

OVERNIGHT: Portorož

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 6: Portorož – Slovenian coastline

Morning is a great time for a cycling along the Slovenian coast. E-bikes make the tour suitable for everyone. First you will take a ride along the coast to Sežovlje Salina Natura Park. Then you will go through the idyllic village of Korte and continue down through wooded area. Followed by this diverse up-and-down section you start descending towards the lovely town of Strunjan. The next stop is the beautiful town of Piran, Slovenia's most picturesque seaside jewel. With its tiny winding streets and Venetian architecture, Piran will be a blast to explore.

From Piran take a ride back to Portorož. If the weather permits, spend the rest of the day sunbathing on the beach or doing some water sports.

OVERNIGHT: Portorož

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 7: Portorož – Škocjan Caves (49km, 50min) – Štanjel (29km, 30min) - Goriška Brda (39km, 45min)

After breakfast check out from the hotel and drive towards the Škocjan Caves – one of the monuments in Slovenia and the Classical Karst region on UNESCO's list of natural and cultural world heritage sites. The Škocjan Caves have a highly multi-branched system of cave passages totalling 6.2 kilometres in length, the lowest point being 223 metres deep. They represent the largest and best-known natural phenomena in the region. Enjoy a guided tour through the underground Canyon, which will take approximately 1.5 - 2 hours of walking (3km). The tour will take you to the man-made passageway in the Globočak Collapse Doline, the Silent Cave (Tiha jama), a fossil passage filled with numerous dripstone formations. Exiting the Cave, you will be enthralled by the view of the underground canyon of the Reka River that you cross over on the Cerkevnik Bridge, suspended nearly 50 meters above the riverbed. When you finish the tour continue your trip to the medieval village of Štanjel, which is mesmerizing with its panoramic views, charming narrow streets, the Štanjel Castle and famous Ferrari Garden, which is best known for its pond with a small island. Here you can have a lunch and try local specialities of Karst region as prosciutto and Teran wine.

Later than drive to Goriška Brda region, which is often referred to as the "Tuscany of Slovenia". Admire its hilltop villages, orchards, cypress trees and of course, its rolling hillsides lined with vineyards.

Stay at the hotel, enjoy a local dinner accompanied by wine tasting.

OVERNIGHT: Goriška Brda

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 8: Goriška Brda – Bovec (66km, 1h15min) – Lake Jasna (via Vršič Pass, 43km, 1h15min) – Bled (40km, 40min)

After delicious breakfast you will continue your trip to the picturesque world of the Julian Alps, Triglav National Park, and the emerald green River Soča! The Soča Valley is one of the most popular outdoor destinations in Europe. The River Soča, which has a distinct emerald green colour, is considered to be one of the most beautiful rivers in Europe. Make your first stop at the town of Bovec – the center of outdoor activities. Have a unique experience of rafting on the Soča River, which takes 2 – 3 hours. There are no special skills required for rafting except swimming. The most popular rafting is 10km long and runs from the bridge near Log Jezsoški, in the immediate vicinity of Boka Waterfall, to Trnovo ob Soči. Have a lunch in a local restaurant in Bovec and then drive to the Upper Sava Valley along the scenic Vršič road. Vršič pass is the highest road passage in Slovenia. The road was built by Russian war prisoners, guarded by Austrian soldiers in World War One and there are still some remains of military hideouts alongside the road. Today the pass is a tourist spot that attracts great number of visitors from Slovenia and all over the world. Along the road you can see the Russian chapel that was built in memory of more than 300 Russian prisoners that died here because of an avalanche. The next stop we recommend is the Lake Jasna in Kranjska Gora. The area around the lake offers nice trails. Spend some free time here, have a drink in the bar or ice-cream, and enjoy on the beach, surrounded by mountains. After a relaxing break, continue the journey to the one of the most beautiful Alpine resorts in Europe – Lake Bled. Check in at the hotel and take an evening walk around the lake. In the middle of the lake there is an island with the Church of the Mother of the God. The Bled Island is easily accessible, as there are numerous traditional boats with the name Pletna, making their trips there daily.

OVERNIGHT: Bled

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 9: Bled – Savica waterfall (35km, 45min) - Vogel (Ukanc, 4km, 10min) – Bohinj (5km, 10min) – Bled (27km, 30min)

Drive towards a spectacular waterfall Savica. It is considered to be the most beautiful waterfall in the country with its height of 78 meters. The shortest trail will take about 15-20 minutes to get to the view point. The pathway leads the 553 stone steps. The ascent is not difficult, as the stairs are not steep. After about 15 minutes walking up the stairs, you will get to the wooden pavilion that offers wonderful views of the Savica Waterfall. After hiking you will visit the next highlight of the day – Vogel resort. Drive to the Vogel cable car station in Ukanc. Vogel cable car will take you to the upper cable car station, to a height of 1.537 metres above sea level. Already during cable car ride, you will admire all magnificence of the Bohinj Valley and the Julian Alps. Have lunch with home-made dishes in a panoramic cafe with a stunning view of the mountain Triglav (the highest peak of Slovenia, 2.864 metres). Vogel Ski Resort offers a great choice of sport activities and today we advise you to try a tandem paragliding (the flight takes around 20-30min). If the weather conditions are not suitable for paragliding, there is also a mountain bike park and zipline experience available. After descending from Vogel, drive to Bohinj and explore the largest Slovenian natural lake choosing one of the numerous walking trails, rent a bike or even kayak. Later than drive back to Bled. We recommend you to visit the Bled Castle, which is rising 130 metres above the glacial lake. Take the opportunity and have a special dinner at the castle's restaurant with a stunning view of the lake, island and mountains around it.

OVERNIGHT: Bled

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Day 10: Bled – Ljubljana airport (35km, 30min)

If time permits, spend some more time in Bled before departure to the airport. Take a relaxing walk around the lake, make a stop for a coffee in the shore cafe and try the famous Bled cream cake - the symbol of Bled cuisine. Drive to Ljubljana airport, drop off the car and catch your flight back home.

OVERNIGHT: N/A

MEALS: Breakfast

EXTRAS:

Included:

TBC

Excluded:

TBC

Notes

Covid-19

Our [Safer Encounters](#) audits have been completed in Slovenia before operation of this tour. Additional cleaning is done to all hire cars before pickup. Hotels also have additional hygiene and distancing protocols in place. More information will be provided before departure.

Options

Our tours are designed to include all that you need to enjoy a really special time in the destination you're visiting. However, we do also offer some extra options to complement the tour and add some additional sightseeing or activities, or some extra time at either end of the tour.

All accommodation based options (e.g. Single supplements, extra nights, cruise upgrades) should be booked and paid for in advance so that we can make the appropriate arrangements. Other options may either be booked and paid for in advance or while you are on the tour, though we recommend booking in advance to ensure there are no issues with availability.

Many options are priced the same throughout the year, but some may incur single or high season supplements - full details are given on the tour reservation form or on request.

No Options

1. Booking & Payment

If you would like to book a place on this tour, please complete the online reservation form on our website (via the Dates & Prices tab on the tour page). You may make a deposit or full payment online, or just hold a reservation if you prefer (full payments are due 8 weeks before departure). We will then contact you with more details about how to complete your booking. Payments may be made by debit or credit card (subject to a card processing fee), or by making a bank transfer, or posting us a cheque/bank draft. Full details will be provided in your booking confirmation email. Please [contact us](#) if you would like any more information or have any questions before making a booking.

2. Financial Security

We are a UK registered company and are committed to providing our customers with financial protection to provide peace of mind and to allow you to book with confidence.

We have therefore partnered with Trust My Travel Ltd., which provides financial protection services to over 2000 partners around the world. Funds paid to us by our customers are protected via an Insurance policy held by Trust My Travel. Each traveller and the description of services sold is declared against Trust My Travel's insurance policy directly against our financial failure. In the event of our insolvency, you will be refunded for any unfulfilled products and/or repatriation to the UK (where applicable). Please see [our website](#) or [booking conditions](#) for more information.

3. Responsible Tourism

It is impossible not to have an impact on the local environment, cultures and eco-systems when you travel. However, it is very possible to try and ensure that these impacts are as limited, or positive as possible. We are committed to ensuring that we try to leave our host countries in a better state than we found them and encourage and assist our travellers to help us with this.

The following are a few simple tips that require very little effort on your part but which will help ensure that any effect you have on the locations you visit is positive rather than negative.

- Don't prejudge: Things in different countries will almost certainly be different. That doesn't make them worse or inferior, just different.
- Communicate: Don't expect locals to speak your language. Take the trouble to learn a few words or phrases of the local language. Don't worry about sounding silly. Most locals are patient and accommodating and appreciate you making the effort to communicate in their language.
- Conserve energy: Be careful not to waste valuable resources. Use local resources sparingly. Switch off lights, air-conditioning and fans when you leave the hotel room and don't waste water. Remove superfluous packaging. Many countries have far less efficient waste disposal systems than ours. Remove packaging from newly acquired items before leaving home.
- Don't litter: No matter how untidy or dirty the country you're travelling in may look to you, avoid littering, as there is no need to add to the environment's stress. Many of the countries we visit have a tough challenge dealing with rubbish and waste. Please consider taking home as much plastic waste as you can (e.g. water bottles).
- Choose environmentally friendly products: By using environmentally friendly (bio degradable) sun creams, shampoos and detergents you can help reduce pollution.
- Respect local customs and traditions: As you are a guest in these countries, you should also comply with the local customs. If you are friendly and well mannered, the locals will reciprocate and it will only enhance your experience. It's important to follow dress and behaviour guidelines especially when visiting religious or sacred sites (your tour leader will advise you how best to do this).
- If a client commits an illegal act the client may be excluded from the tour and Encounters Travel shall cease to have responsibility to/for them. No refund will be given for any unused services.

All porters are employed and equipped following guidelines set by the International Porter Protection Group (IPPG).

4. Follow Us Online

You can stay in touch with us online by following us on Facebook and Twitter. We post updates on relevant travel news in our destination countries, special offers and discounts and other interesting travel related news and information.

www.facebook.com/encounterstravel

<https://x.com/encounterstravel> (yes, without the 'e')

5. Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is compulsory on all of our tours and needs to cover personal accident & liability, medical expenses and repatriation, travel delay & abandonment. We also strongly recommend that you take out cover against cancellation and lost/stolen baggage. Personal medical insurance does not normally provide sufficient cover and is generally not suitable for travel on our tours. You will not be able to join your tour if you have not provided us with details of your insurance or if you arrive without cover in place (no refunds will be due in this event).

Considering travel insurance for your trip? [World Nomads Travel Insurance](#) offers coverage for more than 150 adventure activities as well as emergency medical, lost luggage, trip cancellation and more.

If your tour includes car hire, or if you plan to arrange a hot air balloon flight locally or do some scuba diving during your tour, you should check the small print in your policy to make sure these are covered (these are covered in our policy). Please also check the maximum altitude that you will be reaching and that full cover including emergency evacuation is provided up to this altitude.

If you are taking expensive camera gear or other electronic equipment with you then please check the coverage and the fine print of your policy to ensure that you have sufficient cover.

IMPORTANT: We must have your travel insurance details (policy number and type of insurance) before you depart or you may not be allowed to join the tour. If you haven't told us already, please let us know the details when you can. You should take a paper copy of your insurance policy with you as you may be asked to show this at the start of the tour.

Covid-19

Before purchasing any travel insurance, please check the coverage provided for situations related to Covid-19, and for the rules about government travel advice. Your normal policy may not be suitable.

6. Before you travel

It is important when considering and preparing to travel anywhere in the world that you have a good understanding of the country you are visiting, its laws and customs, and the possible risks and situations that may occur. This includes specific risks related to your itinerary (eg. does it involve water & can you swim, are you fit enough for the activities included), as well as more general risks such as terrorism and natural disasters.

General details and links to more information about health risks, visa requirements, money, and travel insurance are given in these tour notes. We recommend that you re-read all these before your departure as well as the small print of your travel insurance policy so you know exactly what is covered and what is not.

You should take copies of your important travel documents with you and ideally also store them online securely as a backup. Make sure that you have given us your emergency contact details and told that person where and when you are travelling. Ensure you take enough money with you and that you have access to emergency funds.

Finally, you should read through and stay updated with the current [official government travel advice](#) for your destination. We are registered partners with the UK Foreign Office's ['Travel Aware' campaign](#) which provides further useful and invaluable information.

7. Reduce Plastic Waste with Water-to-Go Filter bottles

Traveling responsibly means minimizing plastic waste, but staying hydrated on the go is essential. At Encounters Travel we are committed to reducing single-use plastics, which is why we've partnered with Water-to-Go. Their portable filtration system removes over 99.9% of contaminants from any non-saltwater source, turning even questionable water sources into safe drinking water.

Given that tap water is un-safe to drink in many of the countries in which we operate, we recommend purchasing a Water-to-Go bottle prior to departure. This will help you avoid the use of single use plastic bottles and keep you hydrated on the go.

Save big! Get a huge 25% off your Water-to-Go bottle and other Water-to-Go products (such as filters, lids, and carriers). Use code **ENCOUNTERS25** at checkout (valid in the UK, USA and Canada).

How Water-to-Go Technology works:

- Their reusable, BPA free water bottles contain their own unique 3-in-1 filtration technology effectively providing clean safe drinking water from any non-salt water source around the world.
- Three different (1 traditional and 2 nano) technologies are combined in one filter cartridge to remove up to 99.9999% of microbiological contaminants in water.

The three technologies used in a Water-to-Go filter are:

- Mechanical filtration – A tiny pore size, so small contaminants can't fit through.
- Electrical – A positive charge reduces the pore size even further and attracts contaminants like a magnet, trapping them inside the filter.
- Activated Carbon – Unlike most carbon based filters, instead of using adhesives to glue the carbon particles together, (which vastly reduces the carbon's efficiency) it is contained within the membrane, helping to reduce contaminants whilst eliminating bad tastes and odours. Try filtering water from your tap at home and taste the difference!

Water-to-Go filter bottles deliver safe, healthy water worldwide

- Water-to-Go filters remove bacteria, viruses, waterborne disease, protozoa, heavy metals such as lead as well as harmful chemicals.
- Their filters remove Chlorine and Fluoride from tap water.
- The filter will eliminate harmful contaminants from the water but allow beneficial minerals such as sodium and magnesium to pass through leaving you with the healthiest water possible.
- Water-to-Go filters have been independently tested against internationally recognised standards by industry specialists including The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (UK), BCS Laboratories (USA), Bangalore Test House (India) and IMI (China).

Use Water-to-Go products and you'll be healthier, wealthier and helping to make the world a better place!

- Depending on filter size, each Water-to-Go filter is able to replace 260 or 400 single-use plastic water bottles!
 - They ensure you have access to safe water anywhere in the world without ever having to buy environmentally damaging bottled water.
 - Their water bottles deliver safe, clean drinking water at just 5p per litre.
 - The filter membrane is biodegradable and the shrouds are recyclable.
 - The water bottles are used and approved by everyone from backpackers to commuters, gym users to expecting mums. Perfect for everyday, outdoor and travel.
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8. Private & Tailor-made Tours

While our group departures offer a fantastic way to explore with like-minded travellers, we understand that some guests prefer a more exclusive experience. Most of our group tours can be booked on a private basis, allowing you to enjoy the same expert-led routes with your own dedicated party. The primary advantage of choosing a private arrangement is the flexibility it provides; we can easily customise the itinerary to include your preferred style of accommodation or adjust the pace to suit your needs. Private tours can be run on the same start days as our group tours, or on other dates. However, some activities within our trips are restricted to particular days of the week - we will advise you on anything like this that we need to work around. Pricing will be based on the number of travellers in your party, and any customisations you may like to make.

For those seeking something truly unique, our specialist sales team is available to collaborate with you on a completely tailor-made tour, designed from the ground up to match your specific interests, accommodation level and requirements.

To request a quotation for a private or tailor-made tour, please [contact us](#).

9. Voltage

Sockets are two round pronged and 220 volts (Type C). Universal adaptors are available in most airport shops if you don't have one already. Standard European adapters will work fine, though sometimes they may feel a little loose in the sockets. All hotel rooms have electrical sockets where you can re-charge cameras, phones etc. Hair dryers are normally available on request from the hotel reception if not in your room already. If you have US appliances (110 volts) you will need a voltage converter as well as a plug adapter.

10. Transport

Our trips feature a mix of different transport options. We want you to feel like you're really experiencing the country you're travelling through, but at the same time we want you to finish journeys refreshed enough to enjoy the next stage of the tour. The distances involved when travelling around the Balkans mean that we use private vehicles and tourist coaches throughout this tour.

11. Transfers

Our tours in the Balkans include your arrival and departure airport-hotel transfers and all other transfers.

Your airport transfers are only included on the first and last day of the set tour itinerary, plus on any additional days if you book your hotel room with us. If you make your own arrangements for additional accommodation at either the beginning or the end of the tour then you will need to arrange your own airport transfers on these days.

12. International Flights

We want to give you as much flexibility as possible when it comes to booking your holiday with us. So, to take account of people with varying travel plans, we don't normally include international flights in the main tour price. We are however very happy to suggest flights to go with the tour. Please contact us with your preferred dates and departure airport and we'll give you a selection of airlines, times and fares to choose from.

Your airport arrival & departure transfers are included on the first and last days of the tour. Please check your itinerary carefully for more information on where you should book your international flight into and out of as many of our Balkans tours start and end in different locations.

We do also sometimes advertise flight inclusive packages from selected airports. Where these are shown on our website, prices are correct at the time of quoting, but are subject to continued availability of the fare used. Prices will be reconfirmed at the time of booking, and we will also provide the flight times and airline details before tickets are issued.

Flight inclusive prices are based on the cheapest Economy ticket class available which is generally non-refundable and non-changeable unless the flight is cancelled for reasons such as Covid-19, in which case the airlines are more flexible. More flexible ticket options, as well as Premium Economy and Business Class tickets are available on request for an additional supplement. Any changes made to flight inclusive bookings will be subject to the airline rules on your ticket.

Flight CO2 Emissions:

Traveling by air is an amazing way to explore the world, but flights also contribute to carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions that impact the environment. By considering the airline's CO2 emissions when you choose your flight, you can help minimize your travel footprint.

When selecting your international flights and airline, we do therefore recommend that you try and also take into account the flight CO2 emissions. Some airlines and flight search websites (eg. Google Flights, Skyscanner) do publish this information, so you can compare between your flight options and make an informed decision. Thankfully, many airlines are working towards sustainability efforts, and choosing a greener option allows you to contribute to positive change while still enjoying your incredible adventure.

13. Group Size/Tour Leaders/Guides

We are committed to being a small group operator, as we feel this gives everyone in the group the best chance to get to know their fellow travellers and to hear and make the most of their guide. There's no point in us providing great guides if you've got to peer over 30-40 shoulders to see them! So, we won't ever put you in a 50-seater coach with 49 other people and just one guide. Instead, we set our group departures in the Balkans to have a maximum of 20 travellers.

On these tours we provide a fully trained, local English-speaking guide for all of the sightseeing tours. Our local reps in some of the towns and cities en-route are also at your service. At Encounters Travel we try to use local guides and reps as much as possible. We feel this gives you the best experience of the country and the sites you are seeing.

Please note that as we offer multiple tours in the Balkans you may be joined by new passenger part way through the tour or some passengers may only choose to day a part of the tour. Therefore the group size may change mid-way through your tour.

14. Entrance fees, Hotel fees & permits

Our Small Group tours in the Balkans do not include entrance fees to the tourist sites mentioned in the itinerary. We do however normally include these in prices for Tailor-Made and Escorted tours. Please check the Inclusions and Exclusions section below the tour itinerary for details about your tour and the amount you may need to budget. This amount is subject to change and will be reconfirmed at the start of your tour.

Greece Hotel Residence Fees: The Hellenic National Tourism Organization has announced that a residence fee will be applied on all hotel accommodation, starting from 1st January 2018. The fees must be paid by guests directly to the hotel before the end of their stay and are therefore not included in the tour price. Fees are per room per night (not per person) and have been set at EUR 1.50 for 3* hotels, EUR 3.00 for 4* hotels and EUR 4.00 for 5* hotels.

15. Tipping

Tipping is common practice in many Balkan countries, and is always appreciated when good service has been provided. For basic restaurants, taxis and local markets, leave the loose change. For more up-market restaurants we suggest 5% to 10% of your bill. We include a 'tipping kitty' in your tour price which your tour guide/leader will use to tip a wide range of people along the way to help ensure the smooth running of the tour. This does not include local guides, your tour guide/leader, driver(s) or transfer staff though.

Drivers: You may have a range of private drivers on your trip. For those you see for at least several days and who are more involved with the group, a tip of around EUR 1-2 per person per day is generally appropriate.

Tour guide/tour leader: If you think your tour guide and/or tour leader has worked hard and provided a good service then s/he will appreciate a tip of a few Euros. How much you tip is subject to your satisfaction with their service and your personal budget. You should not feel pressured to tip any particular amount. As a guideline, we can suggest that for good service, a tip of EUR 3-5 per day for local tour guides or local tour leaders would be fine.

16. Health and Vaccinations

You should ensure you are fully insured for medical emergencies including emergency evacuation and repatriation. EU travellers visiting other European Union countries including Croatia and Greece should also carry the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) as it entitles travellers to reduced cost, sometimes free, medical treatment in most European countries.

Recommended vaccinations and other health protection measures vary according to the country you are visiting and where you are travelling from. We recommend you contact your GP/medical practitioner or a travel clinic for current information on vaccinations needed for your destination.

You should ensure that you are up to date with vaccines and boosters recommended for your normal life at home, including for example, vaccines required for occupational risk of exposure, lifestyle risks and underlying medical conditions. No additional courses or boosters are normally recommended for this region though you could consider Tetanus and Tick-borne Encephalitis.

More information for the countries included in this region can be found using the following links: [Albania](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Croatia](#), [Greece](#), [Macedonia](#), [Montenegro](#), [Serbia](#).

Malaria - there is low to no risk of malaria in this region, none in tourist areas.

Yellow fever certificates are not required.

17. Passports and Visas

Passports should be valid for at least six months after your departure from the country. Please do not bring an almost full or almost expired passport. Visa arrangements are the responsibility of the traveller, and requirements are subject to change by the local authorities.

Some foreign nationals require a visa to enter the countries included on our Balkan tours, though many do not (including UK, EU, US, CA, AU, NZ). More information for the specific countries included on our tours can be found using the links provided: [Albania](#), [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Croatia](#), [Greece](#), [Macedonia](#), [Montenegro](#), [Serbia](#).

18. Time

The time in Albania is GMT plus 1 hour.

The time in Bosnia and Herzegovina is GMT plus 1 hour..

The time in Croatia is GMT plus 1 hour.

The time in Greece is GMT plus 1 hour.

The time in Macedonia is GMT plus 1 hour.

The time in Montenegro is GMT plus 1 hour.

The time in Serbia is GMT plus 1 hour.

19. Money

Currencies:

The currency of Albania is the Albanian Lek (ALL), in Bosnia and Herzegovina the Mark (BAM), in Croatia the Kuna (HRK), in Greece the Euro (EUR), in Macedonia the Denar (MKD), in Montenegro they have adopted the Euro despite not being a member of the EU (EUR) and finally in Serbia the Dinar is used (RSD). If you intend on bringing local currency with you on your Balkan tour then the most widely accepted currency is the Euro which can be used in Greece and Montenegro and is easily converted in other countries. Alternatively you can consider withdrawing small amounts of cash from ATM's in each country on arrival, though we would recommend that you check this with your bank first to ensure they don't place any blocks on your card and to check transaction fees.

Spending Money:

It is difficult for us to specify the amount of money that you will spend per day, however, as a general rule EUR 25 to 50 per day can provide you with additional meals, tipping, snacks and drinks. Should you wish to purchase many souvenirs or other luxuries, of which there is a diverse range, you will have to budget for these.

20. What to take

Luggage: Suitcases, rucksacks or fabric holdalls are all fine to bring with you on our Balkan tours. You should also bring a small daypack/bag to take out during the day. Your main luggage will normally be left in the hotel during your sightseeing trips or within the vehicle if you making stops between cities; you will not need to carry it far, and there are nearly always hotel porters to assist.

Luggage limits: There is no luggage limit for this tour, though since you are travelling around a lot we would normally recommend trying to bring as little as possible. Most airlines restrict you to between 20kg and 25kg for your hold luggage and between 5kg and 10kg for hand luggage. Please check with your airline before travelling to the airport.

Clothing: In the region from late March to May, spring brings with it average temperatures of around 15C, though the weather does gradually warm up with sunny days interspersed with rain showers. From May to the end of October, the climate is hot and sunny, getting cooler as the year progresses. By the end of October you can expect the first of the winter snows. So you must pack for cool and potentially wet conditions late in the year. Most of our tours to the Balkans take place during the summer months when shorts and t-shirts will be the general attire.

Other items: We also recommend you bring a sun hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, a basic first aid kit, toiletries, money belt, small torch, camera and charger.

21. Dates & Prices

We run regular small-group departures on our Balkan tours between May and October. All departures are guaranteed to run with a minimum of 2 travellers and a maximum of 20. Departure dates and prices for your specific tour are listed on our website.

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Note: Please [download an up-to-date copy](#) of these tour notes shortly before you travel as itineraries and information does change from time to time.
