

Istria

Istria is on the doorstep of Europe. A miniature heart shaped continent in the middle of Europe. The nearest peninsula after the alps, where the Mediterranean sea is the deepest.

Many different cultures met on this hand-full of red soil with its green vegetation over the last centuries: Romans, Slavics and Germanics left heir marks in form of a cultural heritage that is still present today.

If you plan your holiday, also don't forget the warm summers, mild winters, the crystal clear sea, and the delicious truffles, olive oil, wine and seafood of the Adriatic.

Today, millions of tourists flock to the idyllic ancient fisher towns that reach far into the blue Adriatic.



Istria offers more than just a beach holiday with many green islands. Especially the Kvarner Gulf with its beaches and bizarre rocky coves. But also inland Istria with its still unspoilt and wild nature.

Istria offers more variety than any other region in the Mediterranean. Moreover, it is the crossroad of East and West. You can read like in a historical book in the numerous towns and fisher villages, and explore the past of this small peninsula. You can start with Roman amphitheatres, Basilicas, and baroque fortresses....

The colourful choice of sights mirrors a big fraction of Europe's history. For this reason it is a region of contrasts in respect to: landscape, ethnology and art history.





Like almost nowhere else, there are sleepy ancient hilltop towns in the rolling hills of inland Istria: Motovun, Groznjan, Oprtalj, or Zerenj. Forgotten and romantic. You can feel the sunken centuries with every step: walls, piazzas, loggias, churches, gates, and wells...

There is an international film festival in ancient Motovun every summer. Groznjan is meeting point of many talented young jazz players of whole Europe in July and August. Many of these rarely known places deserve a visit: Hum, the smallest town in the world, or Roc, meeting point of accordion players. But also Visnjan, Sv. Loverc or Pican offer many hidden secrets.

To live on the peninsula is almost a physiological decision. The Adriatic peninsula has preserved it's cleanness of the sea. Also the coast with its sweet little bays is one of its kind: one cove after the other, then long peninsulas and numerous small islands. With one word: a landscape to dream.

Istria is a treasury of the flora and fauna. A landscape of small forests, fields, rivers, waterfalls, hills and the mountain Ucka with its 1000 meter height.

An excursion inland leaves to Motovun. One has to see this hilltop town, 300 meters above sea level. The old fortress town with its towers and defence walls from the 14th century is still today one of most picturesque hilltop towns and the most popular inland tourist destination in Istria.

The first town gate (16th century) shows the lion with wings of San Marco, the sign of Venice. Also the church was build after the plans of the famous architect Andrea Palladio. A walk around the walls with breathtaking views is a must!





Novigrad, a small fisher town with excellent restaurants, an old and a new 5* marina is an ideal start to explore the coast. Many little bays surround a wonderful old town that reaches far into the sea.

Over the longest river in Istria, the Mirna, you will soon arrive in Porec. Here many small beaches, palm lined piazzas, colourful painted houses, and an old town with many bars, restaurants and clubs melt together. Especially for sports the offer is huge: sailing, surfing, scuba diving, water ski, tennis and horse riding. And on top: the famous Euphrasius Basilica in the old town of Porec which is protected by Unesco.

Vrsar, is the second largest town of the Porec Riviera. There you will see a slim, white church tower. Only in 1990 this Roman church St. Maria from the sea (13th century) was reconstructed. The sea in front of Vrsar is a scuba diving's paradise, and today the big event is the wreck-diving: there are many sunken ships in 40 meter depths- an oasis for fish swarms.

The 600m wide Limski fjord reaches more than 9 km far into the mainland. The restaurants along the fjord are famous for their oysters and prawns.

After the Limski fjord you will arrive at the pearl of the Adriatic's west coast: Rovinj. It is the most Italian influenced town. Out of the 13.000 inhabitants are still today 1/3 Italians. The bar Valentino serves the best coffee in Istria and drinks with a panoramic view! The red clock tower on the harbour's main square remembers with its Markus Lion relief that Venice ruled here from 1283.

One of the most striking natural phenomenon of Istria are the Brioni Islands. A natural park with 14 islands that remind of far away tropical seas. Romans and Austrian-Hungarian aristocrats constructed here beautiful palaces and summer residences. Today you will find a golf course and a zoo.



Almost on the south peak of the Istrian triangular is Pula, the biggest city of the peninsula. The massive, antique amphitheatre needs to be mentioned first. The colosseum, constructed under the emperor Augustus, Claudius and Vespasian - 31 before and 79 after Christ, is one of the six most biggest and best kept Roman arenas.



Also from these times are the leftovers of a small Roman theatre, and the double gate Porta Gemina. Because of the ideal parking is the Arena an excellent starting point to explore the old town and the harbour. The "beach" Pula lies outside the city with hotels, marinas, and leisure facilities reaching a few kilometres until the south peak of Istria.



The Istrian cuisine

The gastronomic history is a symbiosis of three European cuisines: the Roman, the Germanic, and Slavic. The secret of the specialities lies in the variety of ingredients from the coast to the inland mountains: crude ham, homemade pasta, minestra, venison, asparagus, mushrooms, but also mussels, squid, lobsters, oyster and fish melt to a Mediterranean cuisine that has to be found. However, the ultimate pleasure is the white truffle from the Mirna valley.

Wine

Roman writers did not only praise the olive oil, but also the wine of the Adriatic peninsula. The Roman emperor Julia Augusta enjoyed her vitality and remarkable old age from the Istrian wine. Also Giacomo Casanova wrote in his memoirs about the excellent Istrian Refosco. Famous wines are the Malvasier, Teran, Merlot, Hrvatica, Borgonja as well as yellow and red Muskatell.

Climate and When to go

The best months for a visit to Istria are between April and October. The average daily temperature is 24 degrees in the main season July and August. The sea is still warm enough for swimming in September.

Istria is one of the sunniest areas of whole Europe with 2400 sunny hours per year, or 300 sunny days. Where the water is around 24 degrees in the summer months and you will find hot and dry summers and mild winters. Rainy months are only November, February and March.

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