

THE TRAVEL BOOK

"The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page."

St. Augustine



Contents

Dear [Insert Name],

All of us in the PSG Family would like to wish you and yours a wonderful Holiday Season and a happy and healthy New Year!

May 2012. be filled with joyful experiences, new friends and delightful travels. Let this book be the first step towards that goal, and may it take you places you have never seen before.

Sincerely,

PLANet Systems Group

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Aegean Sailing

Greece 38° 30' N, 20° 30' E



Branislav Zaklan
PHP Programmer

If you like being at the sea as much as possible, from the moment you open your eyes in the morning, till the moment you fall asleep, sailing the Greek islands will likely be the best vacation you can have!



Be it the Aegean or Ionian sea, you will definitely experience something new and completely different from the stereotypical Greek summer vacation we all already love so much. No more packing after breakfast, towels, toys, snorkeling gear or realizing you forgot to bring your sunscreen halfway to the beach. No more praying that you will find a few square feet of space for your towel.

Forget about having to pack everything up in the evening and reluctantly walk back to your room thinking: "What would it be like to spend the night right here by the sea?"

Imagine your entire vacation as one long and beautiful beach-sleepover. If you like to wake up early, you will experience the morning tranquility and silence of Mediterranean marinas and in the evening you will feel like the sailors when they reach their port of destination and get their night out before continuing their voyage on the morrow.

In 2009, my family and I spent two weeks sailing the Greek islands in the Aegean sea or, as they are also known, the Cyclades. There are several ways you too can do this and still keep it affordable.

The best way is to be a licensed skipper and rent yourself a boat and sail with a group of friends wherever you want.

The second best is to be BFF with a licensed skipper and have them select, rent and sail the boat as part of a crew of your friends.



For most of us, one of these two options remains:

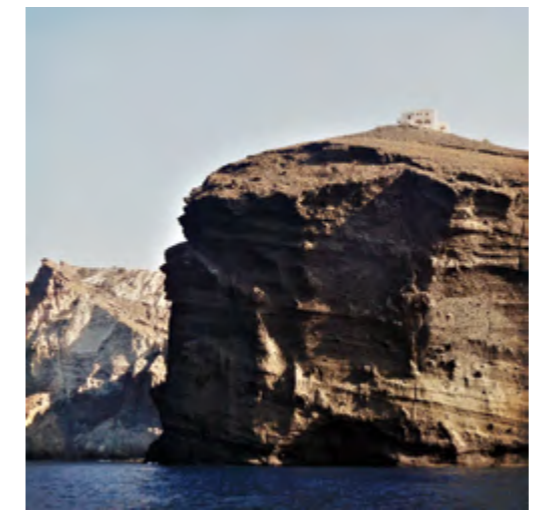
1. Collect a group of people who would like to spend their summer vacation this way and then find an agency specializing in sailing vacations (sometimes it will be a skipper looking for some summer work), where you and your friends split the cost of the skipper's fee amongst yourselves, as well as renting the boat, fuel, fresh water, marina fees, and food & drinks.
2. Find an agency that will rent you a cabin on the boat while you provide the food and drinks.



We went with the latter option and haven't regretted it. We were able to meet the other family which was to travel with us prior to the trip and found we had a lot in common and that we probably would get along just fine on the boat. This proved to be true and made the whole experience so much better.

Once your ship sets sail, where you will go and what you will see and experience depends almost entirely on you and the rest of the crew.

Beginning with the boat itself, you can be just a quiet passenger reading a book on the deck all day and leave all the 'sailing stuff' to the skipper, or you can become one of the crew and skip around the boat all day helping the skipper with sailing and docking in marinas.



The best, in my opinion, is to do a bit of both. For the most enthusiastic ones, they say you can learn what is needed to become a skipper in three or four two-week-long vacations, provided, of course, that you do much more sailing than vacationing ;)



We were not that enthusiastic and spent most of our time swimming in the bluest and clearest waters you have ever seen and resting on the deck during the lazy sails between the islands. We began our journey in Athens, and visited about eight islands, going east, all the way to Santorini (Firabefore we headed back to Athens.

If you're anything like us, your typical day will start when you wake up in the marina where you anchored for the night. If you're anything like my wife, you will stumble a few steps to the deck, with your eyes still half closed, and dive into the sea right away.

You will then have your breakfast with the crew on the boat and maybe have a large 'Frappe' (a Greek slang name for a large ice-coffee) in one of the nearby cafes. Then you will usually set sail for the nearby beach or bay to spend the day swimming, snorkeling or whatever else you like doing. Depending on the plan, you can also set sail for the next island and do the same there. Right around noon, the designated cook (the best is to shift the duty among the crew) will prepare the lunch which the crew will enjoy on the boat. After lunch, you can spend some more sea or beach time and around four or five PM, you can set sail for the next marina on the next island.

Once there, you will probably look for a nice little taverna and have a traditional Greek dinner: some meze for starters, then lamb kleftiko (to replenish the energy you spent pulling ropes all day ;)) and then a baklava (or two) on the way back to the boat.

I hope you can see now why a sailing vacation is quite an adventure compared to your normal hotel-room-beach-hotel-room kind of vacation. The only downside, if you can call it that, is that once you experience sailing, any other type of summer vacation will no longer be an option.



Bač - One of the Oldest Towns in Vojvodina

Serbia 45° 23' N, 19° 14' E



Branka Malbaša
Peer Review Analyst

In the northwest of Serbia, one of the three parts of Vojvodina province is called Bačka and it was named after the small town of Bač, an ancient town on the dry bed of the Mostonga river. Almost ten centuries ago Bač was the center of a large area in the extreme south of the Kingdom of Hungary. Today it is a quiet family town which attracts tourists from all over the country and around the world.

Bač has still preserved its charm, beauty and rich cultural heritage. Some of the tourists' attractions are a recently restored medieval fortress from the 14th century, a Franciscan monastery and the only Turkish bath in Vojvodina.

The Medieval Fortress

In Bač you can see the ruins of the former fortress, the base of which is in the form of an irregular pentagon. In the ruins there are four lateral and an eighteen-meter high central tower, which has partially been reconstructed. Although in ruins, the fortress still looks impressive.

The fortress in Bač, which is now the oldest fortress in Vojvodina, was built by the Hungarian king Charles Robert of the Anjou family in the 14th century. The fortress was built on a small island in the river Mostonga. It is one of the "Water Towns" because it was completely surrounded by water and the way to reach it was across drawbridges.

The Franciscan Monastery

The Franciscan Monastery is another important medieval monument in Bač. Located in the city center, it was built in the twelfth century by the Knights Templar and later taken over by the Franciscan order. During the Turkish rule, it was converted into a mosque. This is a unique case that a Christian church is preserved together with the most sacred part of the mosque in one place. The monastery has a valuable library and an interesting dining room.



Turkish Bath

Turkish bath in Bač is a well preserved monument of the Eastern culture in this area. The remains of ceramic pipes for hot and cold water can still be seen there.

The Lake Provala

This lake has the largest beach in the municipality of Bač, where in the summer up to 3000 bathers rally. Around the lake there is an amazing camping area perfect for campers. The lake is also very rich in fish (pike, catfish, carp, etc.) and it is a favorite place for fishermen.





Two days in Barcelona

Spain 41° 23' N, 2° 11' E



Bojan Miletić
Peer Review Analyst

It is impossible to see everything in this beautiful city in only two days, but I gave my best to at least try. I just wanted to feel the real spirit and magic of the capital of this captivating place. Barcelona is the capital of the autonomous region of Catalonia. The city of Barcelona lies between two rivers, the Llobregant and the Beson. There are so many great places you must go to and here are just some of them:

Old Town

The old town, with its most famous avenue, La Rambla, is one of the most extensive medieval city centers in Europe. This area is surrounded by the leafy Pard de la Ciutadella, home to the city zoo. The revitalized seafront is a stimulating mix old and new. Trendy shops (very cheap) and restaurants (not so cheap) make up the fashionable marina, contrasted with the old maritime neighborhood of Barceloneta and the new Olympic port.

Park Guell

This is the most original park I have ever seen. Created by Gaudi and based on the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delhi. It is full of stone arches and viaducts, Gaudi's sculptures and mosaics made up of broken tiles. Strolling through this park is like being thrown into a fairytale.

Sagrada Familia

As Europe's most unconventional church, it is the true city's emblem. It is the greatest work of Gaudi, crammed with symbolism inspired by nature and striving for originality. It was his life's work and he was buried in its crypt. At the time of his death, only one tower had been completed, but the work was resumed after the Civil War and several more towers have been finished since. The entire church is planned to be finished by his original blueprints by the year of 2036. The work continues today.



Montjuic

The hill of Monjuic, 213m high and rising above the commercial port, is Barcelona's biggest recreation area. Its museums, art galleries, gardens and nightclubs make it a popular place in the evenings as well as during the day. The 1992 Olympic Games were held on its southern slopes. On the hill there is a Stadium with the same name, the home of FC Espanol, which is always in the shadow of its famous neighbors Barcelona FC.

Camp Nou

Camp Nou, the largest football stadium in Europe, is home to the city's famous football club, Barcelona FC (known as Barca), the current European champions. The stadium is a magnificent structure, built in 1957. There is a museum in the stadium that displays club memorabilia and trophies, and there is a souvenir shop. When Barca are playing, there is always the full stadium, great atmosphere and fantastic football. If you are a football fan, get a ticket, a few beers and enjoy the magic with Messi, Villa, Xavi, Iniesta...

Dali's Museum

The new Dali Museum, in a small town of Figueres, near Barcelona, is unique in terms of the art collection and the museum building itself. Salvador Dali's art, at once classically-based and at the same time provocative and imaginative, resonates in the geometry of concrete and glass. What amazed me most was the painting which represents either Abe Lincoln or a naked woman from behind, depending on the viewing distance.

This is only a small piece of beauty that Barcelona has to offer. We should not forget the Picasso's Museum, Chocolate Museum, the famous flamenco and sangria with cheese, corrida (which was banned 3 years ago); but even a short visit is an experience for itself. And you simply must try some of the local specialties. I would recommend conillamb cargols – a country stew made of rabbit and snails, with spices and Codorniu, a famous Catalan wine.





New Year's Eve in Barcelona

Spain 41° 23' N, 2° 11' E



Bojan Ritoc
Software Test Engineer, Quality Assurance (QA)

If someone was to ask to recommend a perfect place to spend their New Years' holidays, my answer, without hesitation, would be Barcelona.

Pleasant temperatures, the sea, great food and drinks, joyful people, fantastic parties and, if you're left over with some cash, shopping at incredible prices, are all proof that Barcelona has it all.



We stayed in our friend's comfortable apartment, located in a wonderful, central location. An incredible view immediately attracted our attention., mostly due to the Sagrada Familia cathedral, which is the work of famous Spanish architect Gaudi. The construction has been a work in progress for more than 40 years and remains unfinished to this day.

We took the opportunity to walk down a promenade, known as Las Ramblas, which is quite long and full of both tourists and locals.

Packed with activity, this place is known for live human statues, restaurants, cafes, city market Bokerija and leads right to the port and the famous, 87 m high statue of Christoffel Columbus whose hand is directed toward his hometown of Genoa, Italy.

We welcomed the New Year on the amazingly decorated streets of Barcelona, in pleasurable Mediterranean temperatures, cheering and drinking fantastic Spanish wine while enjoying the music that came from all parts of the city.

During the rest of our stay, we took walks through the Park Güell, which is a treasury of Gaudi's creations and also visited the famous house Batljo, a typical example of Gaudi architecture.

We didn't pass up a chance to visit the zoo, aquarium and stadium of FC "Barcelona" - Camp Nou.

Another memorable experience was a visit to the Montserrat mountains, which are located 50 km from Barcelona and at over 1000 m above sea level, where we had the opportunity to visit the monastery dating from 1025, which houses the sculpture, of its patron called "The Black Virgin" or "Virgin Montserrat."

To top our wonderful time in Barcelona, we welcomed a traditional Spanish holiday on January 6th - the Three Kings. A carnival parade and a multitude of children's smiles gave a perfect ending to our unforgettable travelling adventure.





Berlin – City in Motion

Germany 52° 30' N, 13° 23' E



Aleksandar Ružanović
Peer Review Analyst

What can one say about Berlin? My visit lasted for two short weeks, just enough to do a little exploring, and leave you wanting more. The city was constantly changing that even Berliners could find themselves surprised.

So here is my view of Berlin.



City of Contrasts

Berlin is a big city, 60 km across, and yet everything is within reach by the great metro system. Everybody is using it, and any traveler should. You can even bring your bicycle with you. Another option is the public bus system – great for sightseeing, and the same 7-day ticket is valid for both ways of transportation.

Almost completely destroyed during WWII and the cold war, it was rebuilt anew.

Potsdamer Platz is the perfect example of this. It is almost unbelievable that 20 years ago it was no-man's land between two sections of the wall.

Today, it is the commercial, cultural and business center of the city, Sony Center, Daimler-Benz, Kollhoff Tower with "Panoramapunkt" just to name a few.

Reichstag is another example of the change: rebuilt with a modern glass dome, it has become one of the biggest tourist attractions, along with being the site of the German Parliament. The glass dome also gives you a chance to peek down on to the Parliaments' main hall.



History

Berlin has had many interesting moments in its history, and reminders of them can be seen everywhere.

Near the restored Brandenburg Gate, the symbol of German victory and freedom, is a Memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. Despite surrounding controversy, in my opinion everybody should go and experience it.

Topography of Terror is an open air exhibition in the basement of the former Gestapo headquarters, its main purpose to uphold the memory of those dark times.

One of the remaining parts of the wall still stands there.



Berlin Wall

Visit to Berlin would be incomplete without a visit to the Wall, well, what's left of it. Finally unified, Berliners were very industrious in removing it. Only small portions of the wall was preserved, as a reminder of that time. Former route of the wall is marked with cobblestones, in a way of a scar in the city centre, for everyone to see and remember. Checkpoint Charlie is the center where one can familiarize with the Wall's history and I would personally recommend a hot chocolate in the nearby Einstein Cafe (Berlin is notorious for its changeable weather).

Underworld

An unusual peek into Berlin's history is via Underworld tours. A group of enthusiasts – engineers, lawyers, architects, historians –lead the tours into hidden underground Berlin. Flak tower, abandoned underground railway station, bunkers from WWII, escape tunnels from the cold war era to name a few. This is definitely a fascinating way of familiarising yourself with Berlin.



Tiergarten

I highly recommend taking a stroll from Tiergarten Metro Station to Reichstag through Tiergarten Park.

Tiergarten is a wild forest, not a tidy city park one would expect (being in Germany and all).

In the center of the park is the Victory column, with the famous Victoria statue (the Angel). Unfortunately, it was under repair during our visit, however this just adds to another reason to go back.

Olympic Stadium and Le Corbusier

Located near the famous Olympic stadium (famous for Jesse Owens' 4 gold medals) is Le Corbusier's Housing Unit (Unité d'Habitation) – a building that's not on Berlin's list of mainstream attractions. Because Le Corbusier made so many changes to the original blueprint he was forced by German law and building regulations to stick to his original idea, which resulted in his refusal to be further associated with the structure. However it still bears his name to this day.

This is a must see for any architect.

Food - Kreuzberg

Traditional German food evolved to Currywurst, widely popular sausage seasoned with curry ketchup. Immigrants from Turkey brought another fast-food: Döner.

I opted for something completely different and headed to the neighbourhood of Kreuzberg.

This is the place to be for a hungry traveler. Set in the very heart of the city, it is packed with restaurants and pubs. Every nation seems to be represented. It's a world in a plate: German food, Thai, Vietnamese, Chinese, Turkish, Lebanese, Korean. Prices vary, but quality of the food is excellent.

So many cuisines, so little time!





An August Week in Bernese Oberland

Switzerland 46° 38' N, 7° 33' E



Ivanka Jević Ajcev
Client Manager

It's a bit inconvenient to write about a country as well-branded as Switzerland: cheese and chocolate, watches and banks, mountains and lakes, political and military neutrality... While reading this, the white cross on the red flag representing the so-called Swissness has probably already popped on your mind.

What else can be found in Switzerland?

Peace and Quiet

We stayed in a traditional wooden house near the villages of Oey and Diemtigen, where summer mornings are fresh and the view on the surrounding hills is breathtaking. The silence is disturbed only by the murmur of a nearby spring. You can see (and sometimes even smell) the cows grazing around, and the only thing missing is Heidi, a small orphan girl from one of the best-known Swiss novels, who lived high up in the Swiss Alps with her grandfather.

Fancy and Luxurious Touristic Site: Interlaken

Interlaken is beautifully situated between two lakes - Thun and Brienz, with a view over three high mountain hills: Jungfrau, Mönch and Eiger. The main city in the Berner Oberland is full of lovely (and very expensive) hotels and restaurants, cafés and watch shops. The Thun lake offers many opportunities for water sports: sailing, windsurfing and, of course, swimming, but please be very careful: the average water temperature for July and August is 17 degrees Celsius (63° F) – do not forget that it is an Alpine lake!



Trümelbach Falls

With glacial water thundering inside the mountain with up to 4400 gallons of water per second, these waterfalls are truly unique in Europe. Since it would be a pity not to be able to see this incredible force of nature, the Swiss dug a tunnel through the mountain, and built a super-modern elevator to take tourists from all over the world inside to witness this.

72 Waterfalls of the Lautenbrunnen Valley

72!!!, In letters: seventy-two waterfalls in total thunder down the rocks of this beautiful green valley.

You will be able to picture this amazing green valley easier if you know that it inspired J.R.R. Tolkien's sketches of the valley of Rivendell when he was hiking here in 1911. This valley with its 72 falls was also the mise en scène for the 1969 James Bond movie "On Her Majesty's Secret Service".

The Urban Experience of Bern

After pastoral landscapes of Bernese Oberland, the city of Bern offers a nice urban contrast. Its Old Town, founded in 1191, is protected as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Take a walk under its 16th century arcades, cross one of the bridges on the green Aare River to find many fine restaurants and shops... but be careful not to go on a shopping spree since Bern is the 16th most expensive city in the world!





Summer Vacation in Bodrum

Turkey 37° 02' N, 27° 26' E



Jelena Crnobrnja
Peer Review Analyst

Bodrum is a town on the Aegean coast of Turkey. Near Bodrum there are lots of resorts with wonderful beaches. The beaches are mostly sandy and sometimes pebbly. Lying on lounge chairs under beach umbrellas or in a shade and sipping you drink is a perfect way to spend a hot summer day.

Sightseeing

Gümbet Windmills are situated on a hill between Bodrum and Gümbet – and provide a wonderful view of both of the resorts and the Greek Island of Kos.

When it comes to Bodrum, one of the most beautiful sites is Saint Peter's Castle. It is situated in the heart of Bodrum. The castle is home to The Museum of Underwater Archeology that stores an impressive collection of treasures and artifacts from shipwrecks. But if you are not interested in history, there are a lot of other things to see, such as wells, benches, fountains, mosques, and enjoy the abundant vegetation. Everything looks absolutely amazing. This is definitely a place to sit, relax and enjoy the view.

An interesting thing about Bodrum is that you can find bazaars as well as small shops located along the old town's narrow streets. Aside from branded clothes, you can find leatherwear, jewelry, Bodrum souvenirs, shoes, carpets... The most interesting souvenirs are the Evil Eyes. They represent talismans that are supposed to protect you by reflecting the malicious gaze back to the sorcerer.

All along the coast there is a promenade passing by Bodrum marina. Lots of beautiful, small boats are tied to the docks. Strolling along the shore, especially at night, is something one would certainly enjoy.

Need a Ride?

Turkish dolmus (dolmuş)/mini buses connect nearby resorts with Bodrum. They are cheap and they go quite often. There is a bus stop at each few hundred meters. The drivers actively look for passengers by honking as they pass by individuals and groups along the road.

Turkish Cuisine – Yummy!

Kebab is a dish made of small cuts of meat grilled on a skewer. The traditional meat for kebab is lamb, but it can also be beef, chicken and pork. It is either served on a plate with salad and French fries or wrapped in dough which tastes like a tortilla.



Pide is a pizza-like dish made of *pide* dough topped with different ingredients such as minced meat, tomato paste, cheese and different spices. When in Turkey do not eat pizza, eat pide! Their pizza is a complete disaster.

Casseroles (güveç) consist of pieces of meat (such as chicken), various chopped vegetables (usually onion and tomato) and a crunchy cheese topping.

When you finish your dinner you must try delicious chocolate cream brownies topped with fruit such as: melon, watermelon, kiwi, blackberry, raspberry, strawberry, banana or peach.

Turkish tea, called çay, is a sort of black tea, but the most popular one among tourists is apple tea (*elma çayı*). Tea is usually served after the meal. Offering tea is considered to be a sign of friendship and hospitality.





Transylvania and Dracula’s Castle Bran

Romania 45° 40’ N, 25° 37’ E



Marijana Bajić
Peer Review Analyst

My friend gave me the most original wedding present - a five-day visit to Transylvania, Romania. For some people it may sound bizarre to spend your honeymoon “with Dracula” during Halloween Holidays, but my husband and I enjoyed this experience so much. This is the most visited tourist attraction in this part of Europe and I can assure you that there is a good reason for that.

Especially because in this beautiful country we can still see the remnants of the communist period and the impact of the new age, which are mixed with the myths about vampires, Dracula and witches.

Brasov

We were located in the captivating mountain town of Brasov - which is also known as the most beautiful city in Romania. Old painted facades, overwhelming old city walls and fortifications, clean downtown, many young tourists and many opportunities to go out, have made this town become one of the most famous towns in Romania. Here, you have to visit Biserica negra / The Black Church, the largest gothic church between Istanbul and Vienna, which was built between XIV and XV centuries. In 1689, the “Great Fire” destroyed almost the entire city and burned the walls of the Church and since then this impressive building has been called The Black Church.



The must-see tourist attractions are certainly Turnul Negru and Turnul Alb / The Black Tower and The White Tower, from which you can enjoy the incredible views of the entire city, and for the brave ones there is a cable car which will take you to the top of the Tampa hill. Piata Statului / Statului Square is the main Square where even today, at the weekends, there is a small market place where locals sell typical Romanian specialties (Romanian cuisine has been influenced by Turkish, German, Serbian and Hungarian cuisine) like cheese, sausages, sweets (trdlo- pastry with sugar, cacao, nuts), candies (almonds and nuts rolled in sugar), baklava- pastry filled with nuts and sweetened with honey/sugar syrup, pancakes...

Now it is a bit hard to believe that, some five hundred years ago, it was perfectly normal to walk around the market, trying to bargain for the best price, while dead women (which were suspected to be witches) were hanging all around.

Peles Castle

The most visited Castle in Romania (except for Dracula’s Castle of course) is Peles Casteul / Peles Castle. This is one of the most beautiful Castles in Europe, the former summer residence of the first Romanian royal couple. It is located in the majestic Carpathian mountain region. Peles was built in neo-classical style, in the period from 1873. to 1914. It has 30 bathrooms and 170 rooms that include offices, libraries, art galleries, and present one incredible mixture of styles - Florentine, Turkish, Moorish and French. Here you can find one of the most valuable collections of art in Eastern and Central Europe consisting of statues, paintings, furniture, armor, gold, silver, ivory, Chinese porcelain, tapestries, carpets and stained glass windows hand-painted in Switzerland.

Bran Castle

Bran Casteul/Bran Castle is known for the legend of Dracula, probably one of the most famous legends of Romania. Bran castle was made by Teutonic Knights back in 1212, but it was destroyed and rebuilt during the years. Vlad Tepes (Drakula) was notorious for his cruelty towards the Turks, and other enemies, and he got an unusual nickname, Duke, or Kazik Tsepesh which means - he who kills with the stake. His surname meant the son of Dracula/a dragon, but the meaning later changed to a modern Romanian word for the devil. Bran was his temporary residence during XV century, and today is the most visited place in Romania.

It is a mystical place with small rooms, hallways, stairs and dark tunnels and it is very exciting since you have a feeling that every moment you can meet the famous vampire who feeds on blood of young women around the corner.

And of course the experience would not be complete if we’ve missed the Halloween costume party!

One more very important thing! If you - visit this part of Romania, beware of bears! Here is a headline from a local newspaper two years ago: “Romanian authorities announced they will begin to use modern technology to prevent the bears to go down into the Carpathian town of Brasov.” So, don’t say that I haven’t warned you. :)





One Day at Brijuni Islands

Croatia 44° 55' N, 13° 46' E



Mladen Dukić
Chief Technology Officer (CTO)

One of the most beautiful groups of islands of Croatian coast, Brijuni (Brioni) are famous as having been Josip Broz Tito's residence for the last 30 years of his life, and though Tito added some interesting stories to the history of this place, there is so much more to it than what happened in the 20th century. Romans, Venice, Austro-Hungarian Empire and, in recent years, Yugoslavia, all left their mark here.

Unless you are conveniently located somewhere in the Adriatic on a 100ft yacht, you will have to get a short ride on one of the tourist boats that sail to Brijuni from Fazana.

There are no cars on the island, except for a few maintenance vehicles and Tito's 1954 Cadillac, so once on the island, you could take a tour in a tourist train, but the best way to see the island is on a bike, or in a golf cart since the organized tour will not get you to the old Byzantine sight built in 500 or the dinosaur beach where there are preserved dinosaur footprints in stone.

If you decide to walk, the best place to start is the 18c Church of Saint Marry, continue through the quarries of fine stone that was exploited by Venice for hundreds of years, stop by the 1700 year old olive tree and the little Church of St. Rocco form the 15c, built after the plague which almost destroyed life on the island, and finish the walk by visiting the Robert Koch's & Tito's museums.





Robert Koch is in this story because he saved the Big Brijun Island in 1900 when it was almost deserted due to malaria. The good doctor literally changed the landscape to get rid of the swamps and mosquitoes which carried the disease.

Tito's 30 years on the island are well documented in his museum. Countless celebrities and more than 100 heads of nations world wide visited Tito on the island. One week - Liz Taylor, next week, it's Fidel Castro, a visit by Nasser & Nehru and then Gina Lollobrigida stops by.



Unless you speak Slavic languages, you should simply ignore the crowd around the big bird cage located close to the port. Koki, Tito's parrot still lives there, and gets a lot of attention from the regional tourists, mostly due to the fact that he has a really bad mouth and when he's in the mood, you can hear him curse in Serbo-Croatian, the legacy of the late president.

There are only three hotels on the Island, but they feature good selection of local food and wine. I recommend Hotel Neptun for the food served there - start with dried Istrian ham and white wine Malvazia and see where that will take you.

Unfortunately you can only see the Big Brijun. All other islands (there are 12) are off limits. But the best and only way to visit Little Brijun, the second island in size, is to check out Theatre Ulysses that plays Shakespeare in an old fortress called 'Forte Minor'. If you are lucky enough to get tickets for King Lear, you will get on board in Fazana with kings of France and Burgundy and sail with them to Fort Minor to ask for Cordelia's hand.



All Things Brussels

Belgium 50° 51' N, 4° 21' E



Stevan Bekvalac
Software Test Engineer, Quality Assurance (QA)

Welcome to the land of beer, chocolate, politics, trains, waffles, French fries, euthanasia and bakeries. Belgian is one of those countries where everything makes sense, everything is in perfect order and you can rely on the fact that that what you see is what you will get.

Food and Drink

Over 800 kinds of beer are made in Belgium. Some brands, like Stella Artois, are recognizable all over the world.

However, if you are seeking a unique taste and experience, Trappist beers would be my recommendation. Brands like Orval, Chimay, Achel, Westmalle or Jupiler and many more can be found in local breweries. My favorite place for hanging out was the Delirium Tremens bar, so, if you love live jazz gigs, good vibes and you know how to enjoy your beer, this would be the place to get it.



Belgians consume an average of 150 liters of beer and 22 kg of chocolate per person per year. In case you forgot to buy some chocolate in the city, don't worry - the world's largest chocolate selling point is Brussels National Airport. Therefore, it's safe to start thinking about the gifts just before boarding. Also, leave some room in your tummy and make sure you don't leave before trying the famous Belgian waffles: Liege waffles, Brussels waffles or Galettes , the choice is yours.

Make sure you don't forget this: nod your head to signal approval when Belgians start explaining that they invented French fries.

Manneken Pis

Manneken Pis is a symbol of the French (Walloons) and Dutch (Flemings) cohabitation in Brussels. Since the end of the Second World War, Brussels has been the main center of international politics. Hosting principal EU institutions as well as the headquarters of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the city has become the polyglot home of numerous international organizations, politicians, diplomats and civil servants. When you finish touring the institutions that are often present in the news, make sure to visit the Royal Palace of Brussels. Also, when you see Peter Minuits' name, remember that this is the man who purchased the island of Manhattan from Native Americans for goods to the value of \$24, back in 1626.

Other Places to See

If you liked comic strips as a child, you probably know that Lucky Luke and Tintin are Belgian characters Therefore, don't miss the opportunity to visit the Belgian Comics Museum.

In case you have some extra free time, over 80 museums in the City of Brussels will certainly keep you occupied.





Budapest

Hungary 47° 28' N, 19° 3' E



Budimir Jelić
Peer Review Analyst - CSR

To capture the essence of Budapest and put it in writing is an almost impossible task.

The city that expands through over a millennium, that originated from the Celtic settlement, followed by the Romans and finally Hungarians, is a place where history and legend intertwine to create one of the most beautiful cities in Central Europe.

Set between the Buda Hills to the west and the start of the Great Plain to the east, modern Budapest consists of two parts: Buda and Pest.

Buda, set on the west bank of the Danube occupies one-third of Budapest's complete territory and is mostly hilly and surrounded by woods. With Citadella (Hungarian word for Citadel, a kind of fortress), Buda Castle and Castle District (Várnegyed), famous for its Medieval, Baroque and 19th century buildings, Buda represents a unique experience.

There is a panoramic view over the Danube and its eight bridges of which The Széchenyi Chain Bridge (Hungarian: Lánchíd) is most famously known.

The bridge was designed by English engineer William Tierney Clark and it was the first permanent bridge across the Danube in Budapest. Maybe the most famous thing about this bridge is an anecdote about the Chief engineer Adam Clark who would challenge anyone to find any fault with his masterpiece. When it was discovered that the lions at either end of the bridge didn't have tongues, feeling ashamed he attempted to commit suicide by jumping off The Bridge that he somewhat arrogantly described as perfection.

Nevertheless, a light stroll across the bridge will reward you with a view that is breathtaking and the blurred line between the myth and reality may just add up to its charm.

Not far from Lánchíd The Hungarian Parliament Building appears, in all its glory. A notable landmark of Budapest and one of oldest legislative buildings in Europe. It is a great building, built in the Gothic Revival style which makes a compelling sight in both daylight and by night.

Another must see is a Heroes' Square (Hősök tere), one of the major squares in Budapest. It's the iconic statue complex also known as the Millennium Memorial. At the center of the square, a 36 m column rises with the statue of the archangel Gabriel. In his right hand the angel holds the Holy Crown of St. Stephen (Istvan), Grand Prince of the Hungarians and the first King of Hungary.

A group of beautifully crafted knight-like figures representing the Magyar (Hungarian) chieftains are at the base of the column. Ahead of them rides Árpád, the founder of the nation, who led the Hungarian people into the Carpathian basin.

At the back of the monument, surrounding the square from two sides are the two matched colonnades, each with seven statues representing monarchs and significant historical figures and topping the outer edges of the colonnades are statues that represent Labor, Wealth, Knowledge and Glory, War and Peace.

The whole scene looks like a cluster of set pieces taken from epic fantasy novels.



A modern experience can also be found in this city of landmarks.

Váci Street (Váci Utca) is the main promenade and with a large number of restaurants and shops perhaps one of the most famous streets of Budapest. Nearby is The Café Gerbeaud, one of the most traditional confectionery and coffeehouses in Europe with a great tradition and even better cakes and candies. Gerbeaud is a Synonym for quality sweets.

There are lots of restaurants that offer authentic Hungarian cuisine and although one may find dishes like goulash, fish soup and chicken paprika a bit too heavy, spicy and fatty, their rich flavor, aroma and texture compensate for the excessive calorie intake.

When it comes to nightlife, Budapest offers plenty of pubs, bars and clubs, dance halls, discos. Many stay open until late and the drinks are reasonably priced, so you can have a good time without going bankrupt.

With museums filled with treasures, boat rides up and down the Danube, parks and bridges cultural events and exciting night life the Hungarian capital is a delight both by day and by night.





Vacation on Corfu Island

Greece 39° 40' N, 19° 45' E



Jelena Kohajm
Professional Editorial Support
Account Manager

The one thing that follows you after you leave the island of Corfu is the unbelievable azure sea and the smell of the greenest island of Greece dominated by over two million olive trees. Ten days is a short period of time to see, feel, smell and experience all the beauties of this island.

Beside its beauties, it played a very important role in Serbian history. That is why, while you are lying on a beach, you can hear Serbian language as if you never left your country. My husband and I spent ten amazing days on this olive island and will certainly go back there.

The island has a lot to offer and we tried to make use of as many things as we could although there was much still left to see and do. Let us see what Corfu has to offer.

Paragliding

If you are crazy tourists you will try paragliding, like we did.

Kassiopi

You should visit this charming little fishing village, with an old harbor.

Beaches

The best beach on Corfu is Paleokastritsa. It is Corfu's most beautiful spot and we really enjoyed riding in a little yellow submarine - this was like we were in the movie "Le Grand Bleu". The greatest experience was swimming in the numerous rocky coves filled with crystal clear waters.

Corfu Town - Kerkyra

This tasteful combination of a French and English town became a part of Greece in the 19th century. The town is dominated by a 16th century fortress overlooking a labyrinth of narrow streets. The most visited and most famous church on Corfu is Saint Spiridon's Church. It has an impressive tower and is definitely worth visiting.

The Achillion Palace

This is definitely a place to take your camera with you. This beautiful building surrounded by picturesque gardens overlooking Corfu town and the sea is one of Corfu's top attractions.

Aqualand Corfu

Corfu has several water parks, but Aqualand Corfu is the largest. Regardless of whether you have a child or not, this park will make you feel like a child again, at least my husband felt so. This was one of his favorite excursions.

The Serbian House and Vido Island

If you are Serbian, you definitely need to visit the Serbian Museum of Corfu, also called Serbian House, and Vido Island. In the First World War, sick Serbian soldiers were hospitalized on Vido, a small island near Corfu, which served as a hospital and quarantine during the retreat of Serbian army and civilians through Montenegro and Albania in 1915. Those who died there, more than five thousand soldiers, were buried in the sea due to the island's rocky soil. The waters surrounding Vido have been named the Blue Sea Tomb by the Serbian People after a poem by Milutin Bojić written after World War One. There is a story that local residents didn't swim in these waters for over 50 years after the war ended.

Sidari

This is the most popular tourist destination of north Corfu and one of the most visited parts of the island. It is famous for its "Canal d'Amour", an underground path passage between two rocks, with shallow waters. It is recommended for diving as there are a lot of underwater caves, although we didn't try to (unfortunately, there are so many parts we didn't manage to see and visit).

Dassia

We were settled in Dassia, one of the first tourist villages built up along the sea. It is also famous for its taverns with traditional recipes of Corfu. It has a very long sandy beach filled with green vegetation and noisy tourists.





Donji Dubac

Serbia 43° 40' N 19° 42' E



Nataša Novčić Petrović
Peer Review Analyst

I found a little, unattractive brochure about the cooperative of weavers in Donji Dubac, a little village, actually a hamlet, almost ten years ago, in my pioneer attempts to establish the business of promoting Serbian handcrafts abroad.

This spot was the destination where I used to go almost every year, with my family or colleagues, for business and/or pleasure.

After a few years the business of promoting the handcrafts developed into promoting Serbia as a tourist destination. Instead of going out we attracted people to come to Serbia. Still, the handcrafts were an important topic of the tour.

Scent of Season Fruits

In the Western part of Serbia, around 20 km from Čačak, hidden in the mountain Jelica lies Donji Dubac. Modest houses with warm, friendly hosts in front of them will welcome the visitors.

If you come during the summer you will probably scent the fresh raspberries or raspberry juice being cooked nearby, while you are drinking the welcoming glass of "rakija" – a domestic brandy and eating "proja" (corn pie). You don't need to be a very skilled cook in order to bake "proja", but you could never buy the kind of white corn that is used here. At some of the households the corn fields are just behind the houses.

The village is divided by a spring, which needs to be crossed over the old wooden bridge. A bit down the flow there is an old water mill which is still used for making flour.

Cooperative of Weavers

In the center of Donji Dubac lies a big weird building, not what you would expect to see here, which was the cooperative of weavers. Over 10 years ago, hundreds of weavers used to gather there bringing their handcrafts for sale. The cooperative was found during the Second World War and was used for education of women from surrounding villages. Almost all the women from there were the members. When you enter their houses you will notice the pieces of woven cloth, mostly made of hemp and cotton, or some other local material decorating their houses.

Nowadays, a local association is organizing the weaving courses there, both for the locals and tourists.



Spiritual and Secular

On the way to Donji Dubac, just after Čačak, the road leads through a gorge where a number of orthodox monasteries are situated, hidden in the trees, between the hills, welcoming everyone who comes.

And finally, if you want to break the silence of this place and some fun, you must not miss the Trumpet festival in Guča, 17 km from Donji Dubac, which is held every August. This well known festival, with long tradition, gathers hundreds of trumpet players and orchestras. The program lasts from 4 to 7 days. Apart from the trumpet concerts there are restaurants set under tents with Serbian food specialties like barbeque, cooked beans or cabbage with sheep meat, domestic wine and brandy. There are also stands with various handcrafts typical for Western Serbia.



Franfurt am Main The Gateway to the West

Germany 50° 6' N, 8° 41' E



Jelena Tipšin
Peer Review Analyst

Frankfurt am Main in Germany is located on the banks of the river Main, and known as the gateway for tourists, bankers and migrants to the Western Europe and United States of America.

Beside the bustling city of Frankfurt you can also visit the city district of Bockenheim and the historic site of the city of Mainz.

Frankfurt is the second largest urban area of Germany, an ever growing business city, today a banking center of European Union.

To get to Frankfurt you can take a train from Budapest and find yourself at the amazing humongous Frankfurt Central Station (*Frankfurt Hauptbahnhof*), where thousands of people rush each day to work or to neighboring towns for the weekend. Alternate routes to enter Frankfurt are by plane, landing at Frankfurt Airport, the second busiest airport in Europe, or by bus, arriving at the bus terminal beside Frankfurt train station. For my trip to Frankfurt I chose the longest route, taking a bus from Novi Sad, Serbia.

When visiting Frankfurt, be sure to take a daily or weekly public transport ticket, since it is cheap and easy to get around by U Bahn, S Bahn, or even by bus.

If you like traditional picturesque images of Germany, you would surely like "Römer" which is the German word for "Roman" and the name of a complex of nine houses that form the Frankfurt city hall (*Rathaus*). The houses are one of the main attractions in the old city of Frankfurt. "The Römer" was partially destroyed in World War II and later rebuilt almost from the scratch. The surrounding square is named Römerberg.

The Zeil is the Frankfurt's main shopping street known for both exclusive and budget shops. The street is one of the most crowded streets in Germany, and maybe one of the longest one, as well. The street is a pedestrian area. Don't forget you'll need some change for the street performers, for a take away coffee and Haagen Dazs ice-cream, or, for a pretzel sprinkled with salt.

Delicacies of the region: Apfelwein (*apple wine/ cider*) is regionally known as "Ebbelwoi" or "Stöffsche", and Frankfurter Wurstchen, small tasty sausages made of pork, usually served with potatoes and mustard.

"Hauptwache" is also a must- see; It is a baroque building which in 18th century served as a prison.

With more than 30 museums Frankfurt is a city of a great cultural offer. At the time of my visit, I had a chance to see Luminale" the festival of light" that takes place in Frankfurt, across the entire city for the 11th time. During the festival, the buildings are lit with special light installations created by visual artists.



One of the buildings you should visit is The IG Farben Building, also known after its architect Polzer I. G. Farben. It was built for the German chemical industry in 1930's, but served as the headquarters of Nazi Germany during WWII, as well as for creation of Zyklon B - the deadly gas used in concentration camps. Today, this enormous building complex is a part of Frankfurt University.

Since Frankfurt am Main is a fast growing metropolis, with large business and trade centers (Frankfurt Fair), its 12 skyscrapers are the city's trademark. The European Central Bank (*Europäische Zentralbank*) is one of the world's most important banks. The ECB sets monetary policy for the Eurozone.

For me the most impressive non-commercial centers to visit are the alternative social centers, the so-called squats. A Squat is a building, where a residential community lives. An abandoned space or building is occupied and inhabited by activists, homeless artists, and various communities, who do not own or rent the house, and usually only pay the electricity or water bills. They invest in a house that would otherwise be torn down, or destroyed from decay. There an alternative and activist culture has thrived for over 30 years. At such places, alternative bands and activists have an opportunity to exchange ideas and to create under a non-commercial flag of LGBT, feminism or anti-fascism.



The Erasmus Year in Graz

Austria 47° 4' N, 15° 26' E



Sonja Bogojević
Peer Review Analyst

Styria, the second largest Austrian state, with more than half of its land covered with forests and the other with grasslands and vineyards, is known as "The Green Heart of Austria". Popular summer activities include trout fishing, hiking and mountain climbing, and in winter time Styria continues to gain reputation as a renowned skiing destination. Graz, the capital of Styria, is the second-largest Austrian city and represents an excellent mixture of all things Austrian.

I've had a wonderful privilege to spend a year in this awesome city and experience it through all four seasons.

Spring

March is still very cold here, but when April arrives, all the adventures start! One of the "must do" things here is to have a coffee up on Schlossberg. That is the city's landmark, very similar to Novi Sad's Petrovaradin fortress. The view from there is unbelievable. You can see entire Graz and even further, with river Mur disappearing in the distance. When I first saw the stairs which lead up to the top of the fortress I said – No way! But there is an elevator, so I went up there very often. They have a great coffee shop there, a little bit fancy, but still very enjoyable. On the first of May we made barbecue and, afterwards, spent a perfect day in the City Park (Stadtpark). The best thing for a young person in Graz is the fact that it is a student city, with a lot of parties organized almost every day - and you can probably imagine how that looks like...

Summer

Graz is surely beautiful during the summer, but it is not a fun season for students, at least regarding the night life. Everyone is on holiday so one can easily say that the city is "dead". However, one can always find something to do there – I found it to be the perfect time to visit Eggenberg Castle. The castle is surrounded with a big garden and park, and most attractive are certainly peacocks that are wonder and strut around the castle.

Near the city of Graz, just 30 minutes by bus, is a lake called Schwarzen See (Black lake). It's a great complex, very well organized, with coffee shops and children playgrounds with slides which my friends and I used as well.



Autumn

When September starts, one can notice that everything becomes more vivid. Students are returning, city center gets more crowded - even the perfectly organized Jakominiplatz because of all the trams and buses! That is the time when new Erasmus students arrive, and many Welcome parties are organized for them every week, so that they can meet, talk and drink/ have a good time. Of course, the liveliest place is the Campus of the Karl-Franzens University. The fact that all students use bikes leaves a lasting impression! Just imagine hundreds of students riding their bicycles every day - a pretty cool scene!

Winter

Even though it's gets very cold, I'm sure that the great majority of my friends would agree that this is the best time of the year to be spent in Graz. This part of Styria has its own microclimate and there are many days filled with snow. However, the festive atmosphere is present everywhere around you. On the main square – Hauptplatz, a Christmas Market is held every year, with a huge decorated Christmas tree and mulled wine and punch served everywhere. There is also a great "dancing" light show on the City Hall with a perfect musical background. It looks amazing! And yes, it's freezing, but when you are with friends, holding mulled wine in your hands, the cold doesn't matter!

As you see, I've had many memorable experiences in Austria, and I will go back for sure. Now, it's up to you to choose a perfect time to visit Graz, but it should definitely become one of your must visit places!



Istanbul

Turkey 41° 0' N, 28° 58' E



Dejan Cvetinić
Peer Review Analyst

Byzantium, Constantinople, New Rome

Before my first visit to Istanbul I had many prejudices in relation to this city. However, on my first day in Istanbul I knew I would keep coming back. So far, I have visited this big city, four times - each time experiencing and seeing something new. If I am brought to Istanbul again, I believe, I would experience and see something new once again. I will try to describe the most precious and most important sights of this magnificent city.

Throughout history, it was celebrated, burnt, conquered and named differently. It has been the center of culture, trade, the crossroads of civilizations and religions and the 'center of the world' for more than a few centuries.



It is the only city in the world built on two continents. Modern Istanbul consists of European and Asian parts connected with two bridges over the Bosphorus. The city attracts with its size of nearly 6000 square kilometers and with over 13 million inhabitants. On average, tourists, businessmen, workers and students included, around 15 - 17 million people circulate the city daily.

The European part is divided into the old and the modern one which are separated by the Golden Horn Bay and connected by the Galata Bridge.

The Old European Part of Istanbul

Hagia Sophia (built in 6th century A.D.), once the largest church in the world and then the largest mosque, which was turned into a museum in 1933 is certainly one of the biggest attractions of Istanbul. Although many buildings in this part seem to be more impressive, its importance and beauty are realized only when we learn more about it and enter this impressive edifice.

The Blue Mosque (built in 17th century A.D.) or the Mosque of Sultan Ahmet, is one of the most recognizable and most beautiful buildings in Istanbul. It is one of the three largest mosques in Turkey and it is famous for its 6 minarets.

The Hippodrome (now Sultanahmet Square) is located in the area between Hagia Sophia and Blue Mosque. It used to be a Byzantine arena for chariot racing, once able to receive up to 100,000 visitors. Only a few fragments have survived to this day, most famous among them would be the three pillars: Constantine's pillar, the Egyptian obelisk and Serpentine pillar. The Kaiser Wilhelm Fountain (Alman Çesmesi) was built in 1900, in the northern end of the hippodrome.

Yerebatan sarnici (The Basilica Cistern) is located across Hagia Sophia. This sight should surely be visited as it is quite unrealistic and leaves a strong impression.



Topkapi Palace is located behind Hagia Sophia and was the residence of Ottoman Sultans from 15th to 19th century, while today it is a museum with a vast collection not to be missed, especially the Imperial Treasury where the world's fourth largest gem, the Spoonmaker's Diamond, is kept.

Istanbul Archaeological Museum, also near Hagia Sophia, is one of the richest museums of ancient cultural heritage in the world.

The New European Part of Istanbul

Galata tower, is a medieval stone tower which offers a breathtaking view of the old European part of the city, the Golden Horn, the Bosphorus bridges and the Asian part of the city.

Dolmabahçe Palace, built in the rococo style, the palace of Sultan since 19th century, is situated by the sea and considered to be one of the five most beautiful palaces in Europe.

The Asian part of Istanbul

The Asian part of Istanbul is a mainly residential part of city where you should definitely visit another lookout - Çamlıca Hill, famous for its sunset view of Istanbul and Bosphorus - probably one of the most beautiful impressions that tourists bring from Istanbul.

This is not the end of Istanbul's sights, but if I tried to count all that are also worth visiting: Süleymaniye Mosque from the 16th century AD - the greatest work of the Ottoman architect Sinan, Mosaic Museum, the ancient defensive walls of Constantinople, Grand Bazaar (Kapalı Çarşı), Market of Spices (Egyptian Bazaar), Taksim Square with Istiklal Street (pedestrian zone with lots of shops, restaurants and cafes) ... I fear that this text would never come to an end.

If you love to travel, you should definitely plan a visit to this remarkable city. It will certainly be an unforgettable experience, and those who have travelled to Istanbul already know that.





Jerusalem

Israel 31° 47' N, 35° 13' E



Maja Vujović
Peer Review Analyst

Israel has long been the traditional destination for individuals or groups seeking religious pilgrimages. The regular tour groups are seldom capable of showing you what it's actually like there. To really experience it, I recommend going without a tour group, or, like I did, with a group of believers led by a Christian monk.

At the Tel Aviv Airport

Israel is a largely religious society which is visited by many foreigners. However, as a casually dressed young woman with freshly dyed blond hair, I probably did not fit into a profile of a religious traveler and managed to raise a few doubts. At the border, both on arrival and departure, I was separated from the group and questioned about the reasons for my visit. Fortunately, it all ended well!

The Road to Jerusalem

Having left Tel Aviv, we were suddenly surrounded by the vastness of a vanilla-colored desert.

All the way to Jerusalem, we saw almost nothing but the desert, with only a few dry palm trees and bushes, but the environment we were passing through, although empty, wasn't boring at all. I later learned that more than 60 percent of the territory of Israel is covered with deserts.



Jerusalem

As well as being the holiest city of Jews and the third most important Muslim city, it is equally important to Christians, Armenians, Palestinians and many other religions.

The Old City of Jerusalem consists of four major quarters: Armenian, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. This is the city of diversity and similarities, full of places of worship shared among different religions. To me it seems as if it is a mirror of the entire human civilization.

Jerusalem (which stands for the perfect "peaceful town") is the city that has been through almost a lot, but, ironically, never experienced true peace. Nowadays it's a city interwoven by different faiths and political influences, which lives its life intensely between cramped walls of the Old City.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and Via Dolorosa are just two of many important Christian sites worth a visit. Just like all Oriental cities, Jerusalem is completely chaotic, and unless you have someone to guide you, you should be an expert to be able to find and see all the famous sites. Even then, if you arrive very late at some of these sites, you may happen to be locked and bound to stay there until the early morning hours - like it happened to us in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In the end, no matter how much time you spend there, you will get the impression that your visit was underachieved, since there will always remain things you longed to see and experience. For these reasons, I decided to take a plunge and flow through its bloodstream, until it throws me to the surface, worn out, but at peace.

This City will continue to haunt you long afterwards, like a persistent thirst which cannot be easily quenched.





Κουκουράβα

Greece 39° 24' N, 22° 59' E



Jelena Prole
Peer Review Technology Expert

Why “The Balcony of Greece”?

Because it is about a 15 minute drive from the nearest beach. You can see the sea from any of the 4 balconies, from the bedroom, or the kitchen. The view is amazing. The temperature is always pleasant, never too hot so the air-condition is not needed at all. There are two ACs in the house and for 15 days we did not even think of activating any of these. Mosquitoes? None! Crickets? Hundreds of thousands! In the house we found everything that we needed during our stay there, we were buying only the food and drinks. Rate this property: Highly Recommended!

What else can you do except enjoying the property?

Depending on your wishes and ambitions, you can either just stay in the house, which does not sound very creative, or you can choose between hiking, riding a mountain bike, exploring the beaches from both sides of Pelion or visiting some of the traditional picturesque settlements and trying to understand how anybody was able to build the houses that look like they are hanging from the mountain. Important to remember: whatever you decide to do, you will need a car. Without this helpful machine it is much better for you to stay and enjoy the house at one of the balconies that you chose for the day!

When somebody says Greece, what is your first association of this country?

Mine is the sea!

Why do I love it?

Because it offers so many options to anybody who is ready to try something different.

Last August we decided to rent a house in the mountains, but not too far away from the seacoast. We found a beautiful property named “The Balcony of Greece”. The house is placed in Koukourava (Κουκουράβα), a small village located on the mountain Pelion (Πηλίου) between the well-known Volos (Βόλος) and the old, famous village of Makrinitsa (Μακρινίτσα).





Beaches to recommend?

Again, the place of varieties! Beaches are all around, at both sides of the mountain.

If you like clear and warm sea water, and do not mind if you are surrounded by other people, try with Mylopotamos (Μυλοπόταμος)! It is placed on the other side of the mountain, so the driving there is not that funny. But when you arrive and see the beach from the top, everything becomes just fine. It is a small white, sandy pebble beach, with bright crystal water and surrounded by vertical cliffs that ensure the natural shade. Very important: A “family” pizza in the beach restaurant is small, hardly enough for one adult person, or perhaps, for a five-member family of mice.

Otherwise, if you prefer waves, visit Papa-Nero (Παπά Νερό). It is never crowded there so you can enjoy the sound of water hitting the shore. It is a peaceful place. This was the favorite beach of my kid. No swimming classes and a lot of fun trying to beat the next coming wave.



In both the above mentioned places, forget on WiFi. If you want to have access to the internet, then just stay on your side of the mountain and go, for example, to Kala Nera (Καλά Νερά). It is a 30 minute drive from the house. It is not the best beach in Greece but it has everything you would need: clear and warm water, sun beds and umbrellas, restaurants with good and cheap food, different kinds of stores and of course WiFi access. Important: you can buy fresh fish and seafood from the local fisherman and prepare it by yourself. We tried it and it was excellent!

What to visit?

It is required to visit Makrinita. This village is different from any other that I visited. Settled at the top of the mountain, with houses that are all beautiful, with hundreds of cozy restaurants, cafes and taverns where you can try the famous local drink Tsipuro (Τσιπουρο), tasting similar to Ouzo (Ούζο), or one of local wines such as Retsina (Ρετσίνα). Great food and atmosphere!

Food & Drinks

The house lures you to stay on the balcony, light up all the candles and drink wine. We mostly prepared the food in the house and enjoyed it on the balcony. Many people asked us why we did not go out for food. It is simple, the atmosphere of having 4 adults and 3 kids who together work on making the dinner is exactly the thing that we came for. The family and friends at one place having a great time together, surrounded with different aesthetics than we are normally used to was our goal. And we made it!



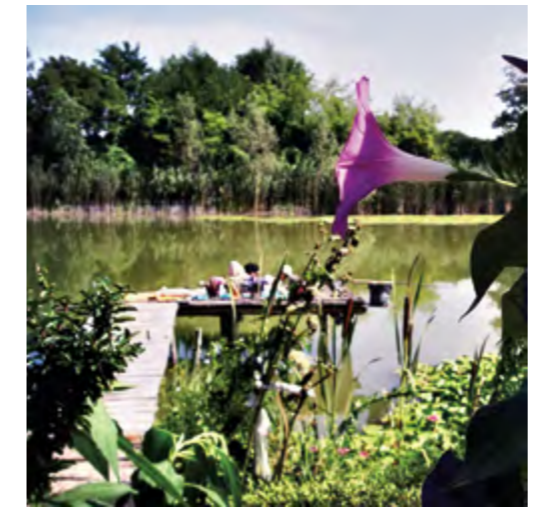


Korlatoš Weekend Settlement

Serbia 45° 51' N, 18° 56' E



Saša Pešić
Peer Review Analyst - CSR



Korlatoš weekend settlement is located close to the town of Sombor and is one of the most beautiful places in Vojvodina, northern region of Serbia. It consists of about one hundred cottages built in a semicircle along a two kilometers long lake. It is an ideal place for rest and relaxation.

We stayed in a beautiful cottage with two separate entrances, only 20 meters away from the lakeshore. On the shore, we had a small river boat at our disposal along with ready-made fishing spots on the dock, with chairs and holders for fishing rods and accessories.

Cottage owners take special care of nature and water purity: driving motor boats is strictly prohibited and throwing garbage into the water is something that, at least in this beautiful place, is deemed unthinkable.

We spent one most relaxing week fishing, barbecuing and wandering around the lake in a small river boat. In the misty mornings, while the fog was hovering over the pond and the birds could be heard singing in the distance, I would just remain silent and enjoy the moment of reunion with nature.

Since we did not manage to catch a lot of fish (and I must admit that we weren't trying very hard at all), we went to the local market to buy fresh carp, zander and catfish and cooked the most delicious fish stew in a cauldron hung on a steel chain in the yard. The stew was made with/by a hundred-year-old recipe that my best friend learned from his grandfather.

A peaceful week in this reservation of nature had passed without noticing. Nobody cared what time of day it was. None of us looked at our watches, watched television or listened to any music. The only company we had were birds, fish, swans and a few local residents who would politely ask where we were from, and if we were having a good time.





Kornati Islands

Croatia 43° 47' N 15° 20' E



Sanja Škevin
Java Developer

Have you ever heard about Kornati? If not, let me introduce you to this beautiful place in Croatia.



Kornati are the densest group of islands in the entire Mediterranean Sea. These islands are situated in the central part of Croatian Adriatic, between Šibenik and Zadar archipelagos, with around 150 islands, islets and reefs stretching for 13 km over the area of about 320 km². Due to exceptional beauty of the landscape, the abundance of natural bays and rich marine flora and fauna, a group of 89 islands has been declared a national park of the republic of Croatia in 1980.

One of the most impressive natural phenomena on Kornati are the long, steep cliffs facing the open sea on most islands, that reach from 100m below the surface to 80m above the sea. These cliffs have always been referred to as "crowns" (Italian: corona) - probably the origin of the name of Kornati.

Although Kornati are not permanently inhabited today, they are rich in cultural and historic remains. The plain of Tarac with its Tureta fortress, built around 6 A.D used to be the center of life on these islands. The Church of Our Lady of Tarac, the Queen of the Sea, built on remains of an early Christian church from the 16th century, is the focus of an annual pilgrimage of the congregation of the Island of Murter to Kornati by boats. This unusual and beautiful procession, made of hundreds of boats, is held on the first Sunday in July.

Nowadays, only a few laborers' and fishermen's houses are scattered around the quiet, well preserved bays on these islands. Some of these houses have been made into restaurants and accommodation, making the islands a favorite destination for many navigators and tourists. The so-called "robinson tourism" is also an option; and if you like to dive, you will most certainly enjoy these dazzling blue waters. It is not allowed to touch or take anything out of the sea and it's strictly forbidden to intentionally disturb or harm the sea creatures during diving visits.



And, I saved the best for last – the domestically prepared food! Oh my god, it was the best food I ever tasted, full of unusual flavors. The sea food is prepared from fresh fish, in traditional ways, and served with delicious homemade bread.

If you want to treat yourself with a well-deserved break, you simply have to come and experience what I tried to describe. You will most definitely enjoy!



Kumbor

Montenegro 42° 26' N, 18° 36' E



Dimitrije Božović
Peer Review Analyst - CSR

Allow me to describe a beautiful and completely non-touristic location: Kumbor, Montenegro.

What makes this place great is, obviously, the sea, but also the mountains that surround it. It is located in the Boka Kotorska bay between the larger towns of Kotor and Herceg Novi. This is not a touristic hot spot, so guests are treated as friends, although I would advise you to avoid mid-season (July and August) if you are up for swimming – the beaches are quite small and packed with guests.

There's a hunting ground in the hills above Kumbor, if you're up for it.



Fishing is a must-do. It's not quite the kind of fishing you would likely imagine – rod and stuff with lots of waiting. Instead, the fishing in this area is fun, fast and does not require too much effort or skill. Catch and go. There are several ways to try:

Parangal – line with hooks attached (5-100). Sit in, open a bottle of wine – set the baits and plant them into the sea. After a few hours (get a bite or take a swim) just go back and take it out. Either you caught them or not.

Pendula – get into the boat- let the lures float behind and start the engine. You can swing the line or not, but you better hold it tight. You are catching the fast surface predators. They can pull. You can use the rod but I feel that there's no point. Relax on the stern and let the boat engine get the fish.

Feral – It's most common during the night so take a spotlight. Get in the boat and head for the deeper waters. Get the lure in the water and bring the squids in the boat. It's that simple. And tasty.

Harpoon – Do I need to describe this one? OK. There is plenty of fish around. Don't kill them all. Leave some for tomorrow.



I tried all these methods and had a load of fun, which was the point. Didn't catch too much – as that was not the point. There's a fish market in a nearby village and you can buy all the fish you can eat. The most expensive is about \$25/kg. For \$5 you can buy the fine blue fish (my personal favorite) for the entire family to feast on White fish is more expensive but for \$10, you can find nice pieces. If you sit on the docks and you don't mind getting wet, you'll probably spot an octopus or two and if you sneak up on them properly, they're easy to catch. If you're lucky and agile, you'll pull out up to 1kg/piece. And that is plenty. One very important detail about fishing: get a permit! It's quite affordable.



Things to See:

Dubrovnik, Kotor. Herceg Novi, Mamula, Rose... I'll stop there. For history buffs, there are plenty of ruins around. There are a lot of historical sites, too. All mentioned above are about 20 km from Kumbor.

Dubrovnik

It's close. It's great. It's expensive (if compared to the other places I mentioned)

Kotor

You've got to see The Maritime Museum. You've got to climb up to the Fortress. You've got to visit the Old Town.

Herceg Novi

You'll get it when you get there. Depends on what you like, you'll get around.

Mamula

An Island. It used to be a fortress and later - a prison. Currents are strong but the place is great. If I try to describe it, I'll fail miserably. It's that good.

Rose

A romantic, isolated village at the entrance of the bay. Diver's heaven. Go there even if you're not a diver.

The mosquitoes are annoying. In the early evening they are really annoying. The solution was that electric thingy that you plug into the wall. Since It can't be bought in Kumbor, we had to bring our own, but on the other hand, it was a new experience for the mosquitoes also so they avoided us and we weren't sorry.

I'd guess you've got the picture. Nothing fancy. No rush. No pressure. No hotels. Just a simple holiday with a few extra features. The best part? No best parts. Pick your own. I've been there with my family and we had a great time. All of us. Hope you will too!





Summer Holiday in Kusadasi

Turkey 37° 51'N, 27° 15'E



Zoran Dragović
Software Test Engineer, Quality Assurance (QA)

Turkey, the former Ottoman Empire, is the country that was once known for its famous war campaigns, coffee and impalements. Today, modern Turkey is the land of cheerful, pleasant people and great tourist potential.

Kusadasi

In the last couple of years we had a pleasure of visiting several Turkish cities, including Marmaris and Kusadasi.



The town of Kusadasi is situated on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea, the Aegean Sea to be more precise. As most of the tourist destinations on the Mediterranean coast, the climate is almost ideal with long and hot summers and short, rainy winters. A pleasant atmosphere of a small town fills the air. Sometimes you have a feeling that everyone knows everyone.

Sports and Shopping

Turks are widely known as great sports fans. As far as I can tell, their most popular sport disciplines are drinking "çay" while working, yelling on the local market and running after foreign tourists. The most interesting traders are ice cream vendors (you can find them at every corner), however, the biggest tourist attraction is bargaining. You can get from 10 to 80% discount, depending on the time you are willing to spend on bargaining (10 or 80 minutes).

Hotels, Beaches and Aqua Parks

The town is surrounded by beautiful beaches, the most famous being: Ladies' Beach, Long Beach, Paradise Beach, Love Beach and Kustur Beach. That practically makes going to the beach an everyday adventure. For those who don't like the sea, Kusadasi has two Aqua Parks named Adaland and Aqua Fantasy (we spent one whole day in Adaland and it was tons of fun). As for the hotels, sometimes I had the impression that every building in town was a hotel. Cabs are extremely expensive, which makes the city bus, called Dolmus, the cheapest and most practical means of transportation.

Pamukkale

Pamukkale (a three hour drive from Kusadasi) are famous hot springs with calcified waterfalls - the name itself means "Cotton Castle". It is said that the water in these natural pools can heal any disease, but I can only confirm that it's very hot and mostly enjoyed by



pensioners. Near the pools, you can visit the old antique town called Hierapolis, including Cleopatra's Pool. The myth says that the Egyptian Queen Cleopatra enjoyed spending her vacations there.

Ephesus

The Ephesus is another interesting antique town - once the biggest port in West Asia, today one of the most valuable archeological sites and the bond between the ancient times and the present. It feels as if you entered a time machine and travelled back to the times of old Greeks and Romans. Well preserved Roman baths, temples of Greek and Roman gods and an ancient Greek library can be seen there. The heat at this site is extreme, so I would strongly suggest sightseeing during late hours when the sun is low and the colors are more vivid.



京都 Kyoto

Japan 35° 0' N, 135° 46' E



Akane Nišić
Peer Review Analyst, Professional Editorial
Office Support - Japanese Language

Kyoto, the formerly imperial capital of Japan, welcomes nearly 50 million tourists from all over the world each year. It is one of the well-known destinations, and one can easily name its famous sites such as Kinkakuji (Temple of the Golden Pavilion), Kiyomizudera (Kiyomizu Temple) and Ponto-cho, known as the home to many geisha houses and traditional tea houses. Here I would like to introduce the city to you from a different angle, the local's point of view.



Kamo-gawa (Kamo River)

With its source in Mount Sajikigatake, the Kamo River runs across the city. When you feel exhausted from visiting the temples or museums, grab a coffee and sit by the river to rest. You will see many locals passing by- students commuting to schools by bicycles, workers having a lunch break, the elderly taking a walk, and children playing. Along the river there are many cherry blossom trees blooming in spring and trees of different shades of colors in the autumn, entertaining the locals and tourists alike. A great location to have a peek at what the daily life of the locals is like.



Nishiki Ichiba (Nishiki Market)

Spear a few hours to visit Nishiki Ichiba, the Nishiki market. Surprisingly it is in a busy and fancy downtown Kyoto, located on the road between Teramachi street and Takakura street. The locals are very fond of this 400-year-old market and it is best known as Nishiki or Kitchen of Kyoto. If you want to buy anything unique to Kyoto and/or Japan, this is the place to go. You can find vegetables (including Kyoto vegetables which only grow in the city) and fruits in season, the old tea shop, fish store, butcher, flower shop, local restaurants, shoe store, souvenir store, you name it! It is extremely lively, so be prepared to walk into the crowds.

Obanzai - Taste of Mom

There is a word called Ichi-ju-san-sai which refers to the concept of a menu in Japanese cuisine - the menu of one main dish, one soup, three side dishes and pickles. Obanzai means side dish, particularly in the category of a home-cooked meal. Each region has slightly different side dishes, and Kyoto's Obanzai is known to have dishes made with Kyoto and Shojin (Buddhist vegetarian cuisine). I highly recommend you to go to a restaurant that serves Obanzai to experience local dishes, besides sushi.





Weekend in Andalusia

Spain 36° 43' N, 4° 25' W



Dragana Čerimagić
Peer Review Analyst,
Professional Editorial Office Support

Malaga, a tourist region on the Costa De Sol in the south of Spain, is well known for its extraordinary rich architectural history, Mediterranean cuisine, wine, beautiful sandy beaches and one could not but mention birth the place of Picasso. Together with other seven cities it is a part of the Andalusia region.

Andalusia has a pleasant Mediterranean climate all year round, which makes it an ideal holiday destination.



We stayed with a friend, an Irishman who has been living in Malaga for over 10 years now. Our friend being a professional photographer meant that we could not have had a better guide.

He said that the best way to explore Malaga is on the Malaga bike tours, as it allows you to maneuver through narrow alleys and discover sights which otherwise would not be discovered.

Because of our limited time there, we stayed just a few days, we decided to rent a car in order to see a bit of surrounding places as well.

Malaga among other things is a very good city to be based in when you want to explore Andalusia.

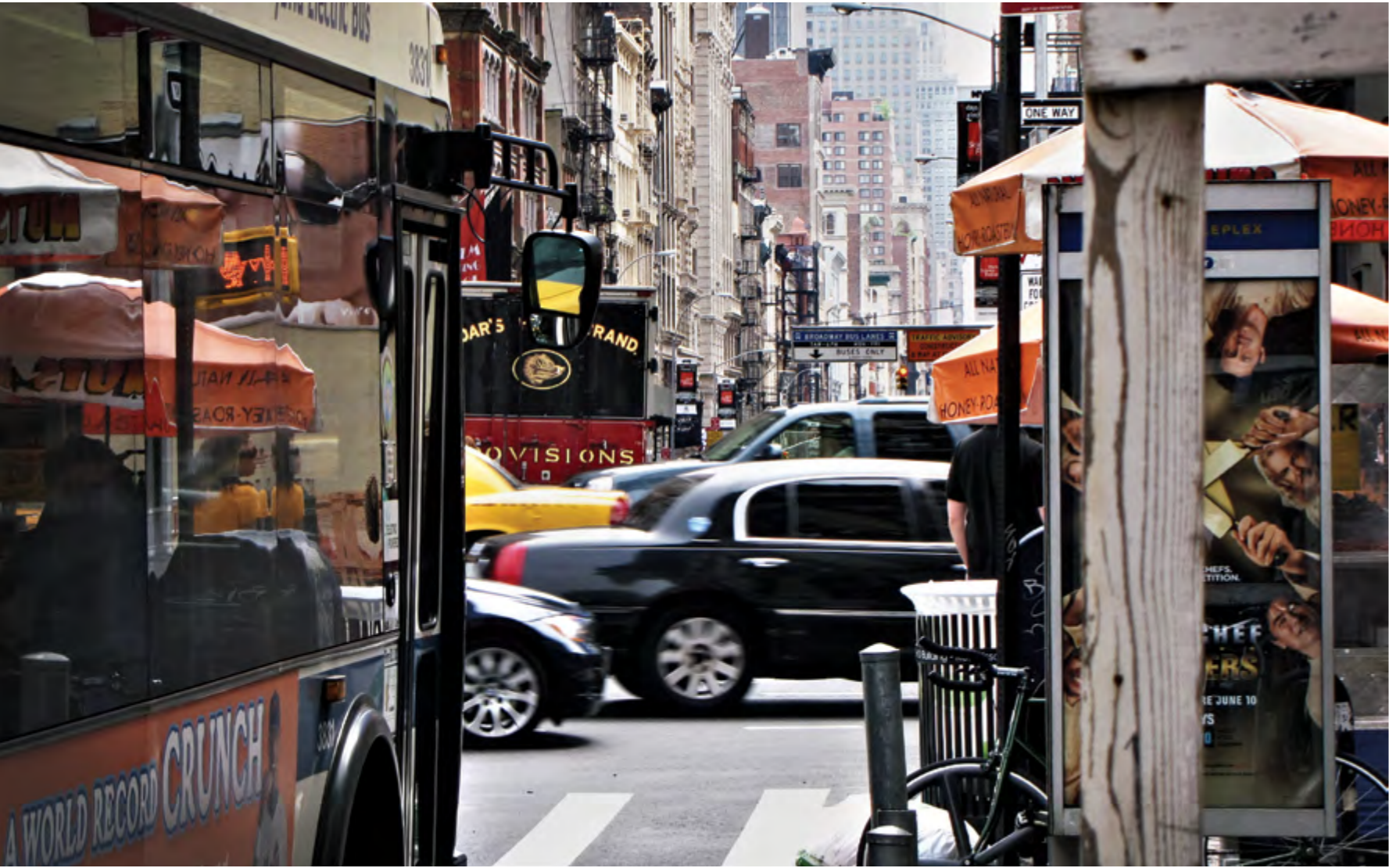
It was a difficult decision because of all the attractions one could see, but in the end we decided to visit Alhambra Palace and Generalife Gardens in Granada.

The Moorish Palaces were very impressive and beautiful. Some of them dated back to the mid-14th century and are on UNSECO's list of World Heritage sites.

Because of the color of its buildings and the surrounding scenery, Moorish poets described Alhambra as "a pearl set in emeralds".



As we didn't manage to see all the tourist attractions that Andalusia has to offer, we hope to go back again for a longer stay so we can enjoy this extraordinary part of the world some more.



New York City

USA 40° 43' N, 74° 00' W



Veselko Pešut
FileMaker and PHP Programmer

First few days in New York City I acted as a complete rookie, and I could swear that everyone in my vicinity noticed that. Why? Because I walked so visibly excited with my surroundings! I couldn't shake off the feeling that I'd been there before because of so many skyscrapers, buildings and places I saw hundreds and hundreds of times before in movies or on TV – it all seemed so familiar to me, and yet so spectacular! These first few days a lot of people on the streets tried to sell me lunch, sightseeing tours, bike rides, rickshaw rides...



This might seem as a cliché, but definitely, the most interesting thing about New York are the People.

I felt as if I walked into a Star Wars movie – “A New Hope”, right into the scene when Luke Skywalker steps into a bar filled with creatures from all those different galaxies! Really, if you compare it to Novi Sad, NYC may truly seem like a place from another planet. You can meet people from every part of the world there, with totally different cultural habits, dresses and lifestyles – living in harmony with each other.

I wouldn't know how life with everyday duties connected to business and family looks like in NYC, but it is more than great for tourists, and I would like to go there again - as soon as tomorrow!

After that short “Wide-Opened-Mouth-and-Eyes” period, I started to feel completely at home; very confident in my ways around NYC streets (Manhattan is so easy for orientation). Like most people from Vojvodina, I am usually a slow pace walker, but this big city almost doubled my pace, which I enjoyed so much. And, suddenly, a different kind of people started stopping me on the streets, with a completely new set of questions, like: “Where can I find...? Where is the nearest subway station to...? Which way to 34th street?”

I put a victorious smile on my face and started to feel like a New Yorker :-)





NorCal

USA 36° 58' N, 122° 1' W & 37° 46' N, 122° 25' W



Strahinja Kešelj
Peer Review Analyst

Northern California

I spent a good part of my early 20s in and around Santa Cruz, traveling up and down California. This place will never let anyone feel old, but being young has helped me keep my adventurous spirit. Celebrities, beaches, surfing, sun, outdoors and just having fun is what comes to mind when thinking about California and the great thing is – it really is like that. A laid back State by all counts.

Santa Cruz

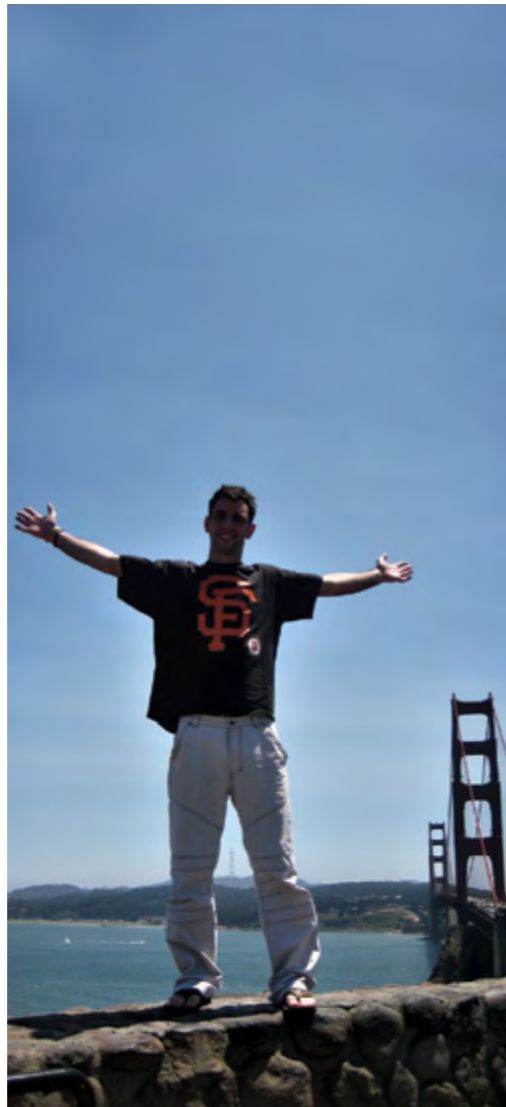
In the heart of the Golden State, on the northern part of the sea-life teeming Monterey bay, the city of Santa Cruz is located with its forever-stretching beaches, cozy lagoons and roaring roller-coasters. Some of them I loved operating, others riding. Nowadays, the Beach Boardwalk is the only remaining Oceanside theme park on the entire US west coast and a place that will always hold a special place in my heart. One of the driving forces of the locally oriented economy and a great place to spend a weekend which starts with a Friday night concert and ends with a Sunday night cotton candy and a bunch of rides and games in between.

San Francisco

Separated from Santa Cruz by the Silicon Valley is one of the most amazing cities in the world – San Francisco! The world capital of free thinking, the Mecca for post-Woodstock hippies who made their pilgrimage from all over the States and made it a place with the restless spirit it still is to this day, making it a small wonder that the notorious Silicon Valley is just next door. I would personally recommend driving to San Francisco on Highway 1, which stretches all the way to Mexico, overwhelming you with the beauty of California's coastline, which is truly something else. A sight after sight to behold.



Even after such breathtaking landscapes there's more, the peak of the journey is San Francisco: the east coast city on the west coast, the place where everyone is welcome, where the culture blend is like none other, the New York City of the west. The city daily hosts as many tourists as it counts its residents. Most of us would converge at the piers, for a snack at Bubba-Gump restaurant, where the waitresses would quiz us about Forrest Gump's adventures while we waited for food (I suggest the Jumbo Shrimp dish). After a fulfilling meal, we always used to go to and bark at seals while they try to rest, just to give them a taste of what they did to us every single night back in Santa Cruz. Those creatures are a great deal of fun to watch fighting for a precious little real-estate available on Pier 39. Though their bodies are riddled with scars, it's more play-fighting. Looking at those scars, you get the idea that the bay is an unforgiving place with its shark infested waters.



Then it's off to downtown! The Coit Tower is the highpoint on the way overlooking the entire city perfectly, just at the right spot to see Little Italy, Russian Hill, Chinatown, Alcatraz, Golden Gate and Bay Bridge. Transamerica pyramid's towering presence will be your best focal point to reach the downtown financial district, although I would recommend getting lost among Little Italy's flag painted streetlights, or buying an over the odds cheap T-shirt in Chinatown, before catching a tram to Market St. or Union Sq. I was never a coffee person, but apparently it's what you do once you get to San Francisco's Union Square. You simply don't say "No" to anything this city offers. There aren't that many coffee shops under the open skies in the States, probably because all of them moved to the heart of San Francisco. Other favorite hipsters' hangouts nearby are Borders bookstore and Apple Store 1.



Californians didn't build tall, because the State lies on the Pacific Rim and San Francisco is right on the San Andreas Fault. Just reflecting on the architecture you realize they are well aware "the big one" is coming and with that in mind, they kept the city scattered over a vast area instead of packing it full with skyscrapers. There are open roof buildings across Union Sq. where I was able to find relaxation even though it wasn't nature's peace and quiet I was looking for. I suppose a place close to your heart can offer serenity in many ways. There are also many bars around where you can "wait" for women to be done shopping at Forever 21 or any of number of the shops they will not resist checking out. I hope next time I visit, there will be some man-chairs for us guys.

Alcatraz

The most famous prison of them all. No eerie feeling once you step in, probably the only prison that can be said of. Everything about it is romantic in my opinion. The celebrity inmates it housed were as infamous as you could imagine. The ultimate star was probably Al Capone, the prohibition era gangster shipped as far from the Windy city as it was possible to a prison that matched his crime sheet. A wartime fort turned prison was closed after a jailbreak that made it even more famous. They told us that the prison didn't need any walls at all, because the freezing water of the bay with its treacherous currents wouldn't allow any danger fall to the people on the mainland from would-be escapees. Our tour guide explained that many of the prisoners claimed that the biggest punishment was seeing the city and hearing the music from the jazz packed joints just off shore. Talk about being so close and yet so far.

All the places I have seen over the years in California can't compare to the people I met there. Some of the greatest adventures, some of the best friends, those are the things that kept me coming back for so long. I never liked leaving the States and, in a way, I am glad that the last time I left, it was from San Francisco Intl Airport. Even as we were taking off, my eyes were glued to the ground as I tried to catch the last glimpse of some landmark before we entered the foggy clouds.





Novi Sad

Serbia 45° 15' N, 19° 51' E



Dean Bedford
President & CEO

If Prague in the 1990's was what Paris was to the 1920's, then Novi Sad is it for the 2010's.

Nestled on the banks of the Danube River only sixty miles north of Belgrade, Novi Sad is a world away from the Serbian capital city to the south. Think Novi Sad, think San Francisco! Think Belgrade, think New York City. Relaxed compared to fast paced, a cafe society compared to that of trendy restaurants and night clubs, a technology center compared to a business center.

Novi Sad is a capital city in its own right, the capital of the northern region of Serbia known as Vojvodina. The Vojvodina region, along with the Southern Transdanubia and Southern Great Plain of Hungary, are known as the bread basket of Europe with it famously rich soil. The richness of the soil was created when the Pliocene era Pannonian Sea dried up, leaving the sediment rich land known as the Pannonian Basin. To visit Vojvodina and Novi Sad during the summer months is to walk into one of the world largest farmer's market, with fresh fruits and vegetables abound.

From its head waters in the Black Forest mountains of Germany to its end at the Black Sea on the Romanian coast, the Danube runs for 2,872 km (1,785 miles) through the length of South Eastern Europe. Novi Sad sits near the middle of the Danube's 2,872 km run to the sea. Due to its position between East and West, Novi Sad is culturally rich as it has always acted as a hub of agriculture, trade, commerce and transportation in the region.

Due to its static position along and above the Danube, the Petrovaradin Fortress was built in 1692, as an Austrian (Habsburg) strategic military post against the continued advances and incursions of the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. It was in the shadows of this new fortress that Serbian merchants formed a colony across the Danube that would later become Novi Sad.

In August 1716, the Petrovaradin Fortress acted as the last high water mark for Turkish advances to the north as an Austrian army victory over Turkish forces there signaled the end of the Turkish threat to Central Europe.

Today the only invasion that the famed Fortress experiences is the annual summer EXIT music festival held in early July. Held initially in 2000 as a protest concert against the lack of free elections in the country at the time, EXIT has grown in stature and reputation around Europe and the World as one of the best music festivals. Multiple stages populate the Fortress grounds with a wide variety of music while the main stage provides the space for bigger internationally known bands. In 2007, the EXIT festival was awarded as the Best European Festival. For four days each summer, more than 150,000 revelers visit Novi Sad and the Fortress for this wonderful summertime event.





Since much of my time spent in Novi Sad is focused on work and the continued growth of Novi Sad as a technology center of Europe, relaxation comes after many hours spent at the office in one of the many wonderful cafes and restaurants.

When I visit Novi Sad or we have visitors from out of town, there are four must 'To Do's' on our Food and Drinks list:

For a quick take-away, delivery to the office or a late night snack, Novi Sad has two establishments that provide the good good goodies, Bubi Grill and Index Sandwiches.

Bubi Grill serves a wide range of traditional Serbian and Bosnian foods, though the main attraction is that of a Bubi Grill sandwich. Think of it as a big Slavic hamburger with lots of fresh vegetables on top, especially onions. To top it off, the hot red pepper sauce is to die for. No really, I mean to die for because it is hot!



When it comes to the Index sandwich, first think of a small closet. Then think of a small closet that produces great sandwiches that must be accompanied by at least five to ten napkins. Located in a small hut just off the city center, Index has no seating nor waiting area. After ordering, you move off to the sidewalk to wait for your sandwich to be prepared.

As with either Bubi Grill or Index, once your order is ready, you are called to the counter window to direct the final touches to sandwich. Wealth bowls filled with fresh vegetables and sauces are available for you to mix and match to make the perfect sandwich. Both places are true fresh fast food treasures and I only wish we had both available to us up in Prague.

For a drink or two after work, there are two establishments that assist in taking one's mind off work and back to relaxing. During the summer time, Gusan (The Gander) is a favorite for sitting outside under a canopy of trees, while Grafiti is a favorite for the colder months. Grafiti is a small out of the way bar that, though small, accommodates a large group of folks enjoying the evening. The best thing in Grafiti is the old school music that they play throughout the night. Many a time while enjoying the company of friends at Grafiti, I have stopped to say, 'now this is a great old band'; example: the Fleshtones or the Lyres.

No visit to Novi Sad would be complete without a visit to my favorite restaurant, Restoran Kafanica. Just a few blocks off the city downtown, Kafanica offers traditional Vojvodinian dishes in their preparation and presentation. All foods are prepared over an open grill in the kitchen and served in a traditional 'zemljana posuda', a clay dish similar to a crock pot. To have a full and true Vojvodinian experience, one should begin the dinner with a traditional shot of "Dunja" (Quince Rakija), and enjoy the meal with a local red or white wine from nearby Sremski Karlovci. When I sit down at Kafanica and our table is received by one of the wonderful staff members there, I know that I am simply in the right place.





Ohrid Lake

FYR Macedonia 41° 07'N, 20°48' E



Dragan Predojević
Creative Director

Macedonia, or formally: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, is a small country in Southeast Europe with a rich history, well preserved tradition, warm climate and delicate cuisine. Its history and tradition were influenced by ancient Greeks, Romans, Slavonic tribes and Ottoman conquerors. Its long name serves as a reminder of its coexistence within the former socialist Yugoslavia, since the neighboring Greece is too proud of its history to allow for any other state to be named after its famous region.

Today Macedonia is a romantic landscape, populated by ethnically mixed population with complex interrelationships.

My destination is Ohrid, a town near the lake bearing the same name, with around 300 sacral buildings, most of them built in the thirteenth century. It is said that there were 365 churches in total – one for each day of the year. The old part of town is interwoven with narrow and steep streets with stone houses built in the distinctive style of the Byzantine period.

Numerous surface and underground springs constantly fill the Ohrid Lake with water, making it rich in trout and black eel, from which unique culinary specialties are prepared in local restaurants. However, I was most impressed by the meal called "sirenje" – Served in a shallow clay pot, brimming with delicious melted cheese with pieces of smoked meat. Even though my stomach ached for two days after trying it, it did not stop me from ordering it again.





Ohrid is a simple, small town. In addition to sightseeing or swimming in the lake on one of the beautiful beaches, one should go to the city market – which will usually provide you with a true picture of the environment you found yourself in. I watched with utter disbelief the wrinkled and inquisitive faces of farmers behind stands offering us their products for free.

Of course, we were most interested in “rakija”; a spirit traditionally made by a large number of households that grow their own fruit. Unfortunately, the sale of such home-made moonshine is prohibited, and it can only be purchased “under the counter”.



Ohrid is especially beautiful at night when people go on promenade by the lake. After sunset the lake gets a peculiar look from the mixture of the city lights reflected on water and dark colors coming from the depths of the lake.



If you ever get a chance to visit Ohrid do not miss the opportunity to visit the Church of St. Sophia, one of the greatest monuments of the Macedonian medieval church architecture, or the renovated Plaosnik Church with an archaeological site located within its complex. Also, not to be missed is the Church of the Holy Virgin Perivlepta, I grew very fond of when I studied it as an art student.



Palace of Versailles

France 48° 48' N, 2° 7' E



Duško Dobranić
Mobile Applications Developer

Located 20km south-west from Paris, but easy to get there by train. There is a lot to see, learn and feel, but be prepared to wait in line for tickets. It is a huge complex, and it will take a whole day to see (almost) everything. Best time for a visit is a sunny Spring or Summer day.

The Palace

The Palace of Versailles began as a Louis XIII's hunting lodge. Each of its royal inhabitants who lived there until the French Revolution added improvements to make it



more grandiose. Louis XIV made the most significant changes by moving the court and government of France to Versailles in 1682. The status of the center of legal and political power was lost in 1789 but in the 19th century, some of the glory reestablished as Versailles became the Museum of the History of France.

The Garden

Constructing of the magnificent gardens of Versailles started in 1661 under the reign of Louis XIV. Louis the Great or the Sun King, considered the gardens as important as the Château. The earth and trees were gathered from all the provinces of France by thousands of men. It took 40 years of human effort to complete. Still, it needs enormous care to keep its shine through centuries and persist the wheel of time (in December of 1999 the gardens were hit by a devastating storm).

Peace Treaties

Versailles is also known as the place where two peace treaties were signed to end the World War I. The Treaty of Versailles, signed on 28 June 1919, exactly five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, ended the state of war between Germany and the Allied Powers. The Treaty of Trianon was signed in 1920 between the Allies and Hungary (Austria-Hungary successor state). Hungary lost 72 percent of its territory, 64 percent of the population and five of ten largest cities.

At the end of the day, you will likely be impressed by the architecture, the amazing nature, beautiful skies, sculptures, paintings ... spirit of the past times, still so vivid in the magnificent Versailles.



Paličko Jezero

Serbia 46° 4' N, 19° 45' E



Aleksandar Crnjanski
Customer Support Manager

The Tales of Sand and Water

You can feel the sand beneath your feet. The gentle breeze playing with your hair. The rich flavor of domestic wine, and the sound of small waves breaking on the shore. The lush scent of the forest, and the quiet song of nature. In Palić, you feel at home.

The Lake

The lake itself is not large - 2 sq miles with an average depth of around 7 feet. However, it became one of the landmarks of the city of Subotica, one of the oldest Serbian settlements in the Austro Hungarian Empire. The lake is only about 5 miles away from the center of Subotica and is accessible by bus and bikes. The park around the lake is one of the most beautiful in Serbia, and has been known as a place of great natural beauty since the 18th century.



The coast of the Lake has been continuously modified, but always in the attempt to accommodate and blend with the surroundings. Two famed Hungarian architects, Komor and Jakab left their mark on Palić with the Hungarian art nouveau style. Even today's buildings are attempting to mimic the same style, so the cohesion of nature and classical architecture remains intact.

The mud from the lake is considered to have therapeutic properties, and is often used in the nearby spa. The lake is primarily attractive because of its long sandy beaches and it's undisturbed nature, but other means of entertainment are available to visitors, such as various spots activities, biking, bird watching, hiking tours and photo-safaris.

The Legend

The origin of the lake is shrouded in mystery. Legend goes that the lake is a remnant of the once vast Pannonian Sea. But one other legend says that it was created by the tears shed by shepherd Paul. Once upon a time, a pasture occupied the space where the lake is today. Many shepherds took their herds there, and among them was young Paul (Pavle/Pal/Paulos), famous for he had a ram with a golden fleece in his herd, given to him by Poseidon. But one day, the ram disappeared. Desperate, Paul started crying and his tears formed the Palić lake. The legend goes on. It is also said that the Argonauts, while searching for the fleece came near Palić, hearing of the legend.

The Wines

The resort is rich in small luxury hotels with excellent service and marvelous food. The region is also famed by its wines, named "The Wines of the Sand". The winery tradition here is over 2000 years old. A must try for all wine connoisseurs are the Pearl Island wines from the nearby city of Choka (Čoka) which have been brewed continuously since 1896. Due to the specific climate and the muscat croquant wine sort planted by count Lipot Rohocz, the wines have a very rich and dry taste, which made them famous across Europe. The Palić Wine Festival is a good place to visit for all wine lovers.

The Food

The cuisine represents a mixture of various ethnic cuisines of the people who inhabited or still inhabit the region. Hungarian, German and Romanian dishes all blend into an astonishing gastronomic experience along with dishes of the Serbians and Bunjevci. Do not miss out to try the Ludaš Soup, Poppy Seed Delight or the Fish Soup (Riblja Čorba) in many taverns spread across the region.

Palić also hosts the annual European Film festival, which present the best accomplishments of the European independent film.





Paris

France 48° 51' N, 2° 21' E



Dolores Hasoon
Peer Review Analyst,
Professional Editorial Office Support

As they say "The City of Lights", is a well-deserved name, if you ask me. As the sun sets, this city is transformed into a mesmerising and stunning place, where you feel the elegance and sophistication of this truly beautiful city. During the day, every alley way, little bakery, cafe and boutique is as charming as the next.

River Seine

Day or night, taking a stroll down this historic river is wonderful. We also chose a night river cruise. Starting point of the cruise was just below the Eiffel tower. As the boat departed around 9pm the commentary began, majority of Paris' most famous monuments could be seen, starting with the Eiffel tower, Place de la Concorde, Louvre Museum, Notre Dame, along with many of the beautiful bridges, including Pont Neuf, the oldest bridge in Paris. Each monument illuminated in the night air; a beauty in its own right.

Moulin Rouge

Right after the night cruise we were off to the Moulin Rouge. The line to get in, even though we already pre-booked our tickets, was about 50 meters long. Right at the door we were told that cameras were not allowed and had to be left in the cloak room, so with that, the saying "You had to be there to see it", was true in every sense. The name of the particular show we saw was called "Féerie", meaning Fairy, it comprised of 5 main acts, all dazzling and spectacular in their own right. As expected the show was full of singing and dancing, but a pleasant surprise was when the music went down and an enormous glass tank filled with water, started rising above the stage: with all kinds of snakes, from pythons to little water snakes inside. A woman then proceeded to jump into the tank and began winding her body as if dancing with these snakes, an absolutely amazing sight. Another highlight of the show was a hilarious ventriloquist who was accompanied by an adorable little white dog and a pony.

Musee du Louvre

Prior to the trip we were told that in order to truly appreciate The Louvre and see everything, you needed 2 days. We unfortunately didn't have the time, so we crammed our visit of the museum into 3 hours. The map of the Louvre which we received with our tickets was extremely helpful. Along with a plan of each floor, it contained a list of around 5 most famous works on the particular floor, which we decided to focus on and use as a guide. The whole establishment is a piece of art in its own right; from the illuminated white ceilings on the first floor; the extravagant lobby underneath the pyramid, the stunning medieval exhibit to the lavish representation of the Napoleon III Grand Salon.



View of the Eiffel Tower from Trocadéro (Palais de Chaillot)

After spending the whole first day walking around the streets of Paris, Trocadéro was the last thing on our list to see for the day. We weren't really sure what to expect, it was just one of those recommended monuments on the map. As we slowly trotted up the Chaillot Hill, after a whole day of walking, we emerged onto the square with the most spectacular view of the Trocadéro gardens and the Eiffel Tower. Instantly our faces gleamed as we admired the view. The square was filled with street performers and tourists, so we dropped our bags of the goodies we bought along the way, and sat on the steps to enjoy a comedy act. I must say that it was one of my favourite moments in Paris, as we sat there having a great time, laughing, being entertained by street performers, I looked at the background as the sun was setting. The spectacular view of the Eiffel tower was truly surreal and one of those moments that I will always remember.



Plitvička Jezera

Croatia 44° 52' N, 15° 36' E



Ana Obradović
Peer Review Analyst

I'm always saying that I have two homes, one in Serbia and one in Croatia. Nearby my house in Croatia, in the region called Lika is a magical place called National Park Plitvice Lakes (Nacionalni Park Plitvička Jezera).

As a child I often visited Plitvice with my family and admired the incredible beauty of nature. Years passed and I have forgotten about it, but recently I visited the lakes again and was swept away by amazing sights.

Plitvice Lakes is Croatia's most popular inland tourist attraction, and was named UNESCO World Heritage site in 1979.

Plitvice Lakes consist of sixteen lakes of various sizes, which are inter-connected by waterfalls and water cascades.

Approximate size of Plitvice is 300 square kilometers; every lake is surrounded by dense forest, which is populated with wolves, deer, birds and bears. Distinctive colors of the lakes range from grey to blue, azure or green. The Lakes are divided into the two groups: Upper (twelve) and Lower (four) lakes.



Every tourist can choose to follow either a shorter or longer route while sightseeing Plitvice. Taking the shorter path takes 2-3 hours, while the longer route takes 3-4 hours. I took the longer track and loved every minute of it! I even found this longer track to be too short to see everything that Plitvice has to offer. One part of the sightseeing tour consists of transport by boats, which are electric, low-noise and ecologically-friendly.

There is a story behind the name of every lake. The name of the biggest lake "Prošćansko jezero" stems from the legend of the Black Queen. The legend says that the peasants from the villages surrounding the lake were praying to the Black Queen for water (parying – "prošnja"). The black Queen granted their wishes and that is the reason why Prošćansko jezero and the other lakes emerged.



Accommodation in this area is extensive and affordable. There are plenty of hotels, villas and other types of tourist facilities. Especially interesting is the local cuisine mostly based on grilled potatoes (so-called "police"), lamb and a specific kind of sour cream called "basa", something my grandparents used to make. It has a truly amazing and exquisite taste. There is a restaurant called Lička Kuća, in which all those incredible dishes can be tasted. There is an open kitchen in the middle of that restaurant, where visitors can see the whole process of preparing meals.



Visit Prague

Czech Republic 50° 05' N 14° 25' E



Sonja Stojanović
Peer Review Analyst,
Professional Editorial Office Support

Prague is one of those cities in Europe you must see. Beautiful crowded streets, coffee shops, boutiques and interesting architecture sure prove that. No wonder why it has become one of the most popular tourist spots.

If you go to Prague for three or four days, that should be just enough time to get familiar with this city in case you plan to walk a lot.

If you've ever pictured a city from a fairy tale – that's definitely Prague!

Where to Go, What to See

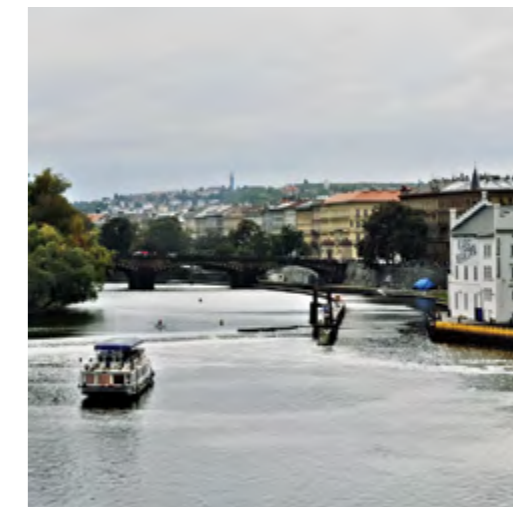
Three things you don't ever have to worry about when you're in Prague are – where to go, what to drink and what to eat!

Prague is crowded with old taverns and pubs that serve the tastiest beer I have ever tried. And the good thing is you don't have to wander around much to find those places. There are so many of them all around. We didn't count on the fact that they have so many kinds of beer, but we got pretty familiar with 13 kinds of beer and 8 taverns.



The food is also great. The dishes we enjoyed most during our five-day visit were goulash with bread dumplings and all kinds of sausages. You can eat so much of goulash, for example, and burn all the calories by enormously long walks. If you don't plan to walk too much, please take my advice and do not drink more than 2 beers per day!

The interesting thing about names of the pubs is that they mostly start with "U" which means "At".





Amazing attractions that can literally take your breath away are :

Astronomical Clock (in Old Town Square) – interesting, especially the performance of little dolls and witches that come out of the clock while the music is playing. This happens every full hour.

Charles Bridge - 30 statues that line that bridge, the view of Prague Caste and the river makes the walk on the bridge unforgettable experience.

A city on a river - The River Vltava flows through Prague for 31km which makes Prague look like a fairy tale city.

Waldstein Palace and Dripping Wall - at the entrance of the palace you find yourself in a fascinating green maze

Dancing House – an amazing building in terms of architecture (one of the rare urban attractions of Prague); the building looks like it's dancing and it's not a discotheque!

Here are several suggestions of the best taverns where you can have lots of fun:

U Kalicha – a tavern serving Kozel beer.

U Medvidku – Old Gott beer (also with plumb taste).

Bredovský Dvůr - Pilsner Urquell (it goes great with sausages in dark beer sauce).

U Pinkasu – you must try onion soup and goulash with bread dumplings.

U Kocoura – the interior is not so fancy, but the food rocks! Recommendation: Bernard beer with bacon noodles and goulash (of course) as well as smoked chicken.

U Sedmi Švábů (or: At the Seven Swabians) – was the cherry on top with Krušovice beer.





Rome - The Eternal City

Italy 41° 54' N 12° 30' E



Slađana Matić
Peer Review Analyst,
Professional Editorial Office Support

Ancient Rome

My tour of Rome started with the symbol of the city - the Colosseum.

The Colosseum was built by Emperor Vespasian and his son Titus in the first century AD. It could accommodate over 50 thousand spectators, who watched gladiator contests, simulated naval battles, executions, animal hunts etc. The entrance was free for all, but the seats were allocated according to the social standing. After the last gladiator games played in the 5th century, it gradually fell into disuse and deteriorated. During the Renaissance it was used as a quarry for building materials until Pope Benedict XIV consecrated it in the 18th century.

Today, Colosseum is a major tourist attraction visited by thousands of people each year. I recommend that you see it with a competent guide whose story will bring its old glory back into life.

When I was done admiring the Colosseum, I took a walk through the forums. Not much is left of them now and as every guide bitterly mentions, Mussolini built a road straight through it. The next step was to climb the Palatine hill, (this is where the word "palace" came from), sit in the shade of the picturesque "umbrella trees" and take some pictures of the Circo Massimo and the Arco di Costantino (Arch of Constantine).

From the ancient till the modern times, Rome has been a city that gave so much to the world. Art, law, fashion, food are just few of the many areas where its influence is felt.

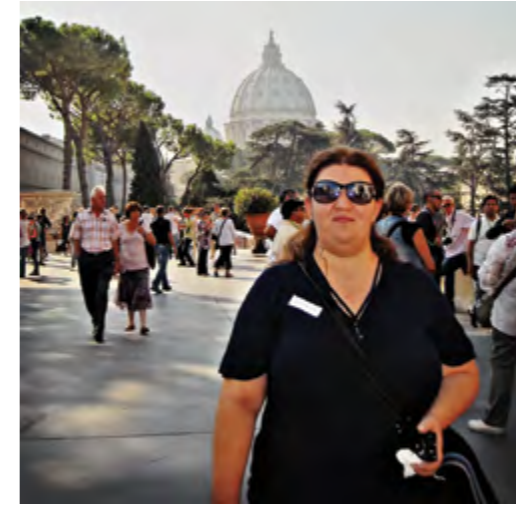
Roman streets are a mixture of antic, medieval and modern. In a small area one can see wide boulevards, ancient ruins, medieval palaces and narrow streets, piazzas and baroque fountains. The sites of Rome are too numerous to be described here or even to be seen all in the four days that I spent in this fantastic city, so I am going to limit myself only to few.





Christian Rome

There are more than 900 churches in Rome, built in various periods through the history. Note that they enforce the “Knees and shoulders covered” dress code and you might be refused entrance if you do not follow it. Except for the Vatican and the St. Peter’s basilica I stumbled on most of them by accident. Vatican has been a surprise. We all know of the wondrous Sistine chapel, but there are other precious works of art in the Vatican collections, like their collection of old tapestries for example.



Trips Outside of Rome

If you have some time left and you wish to make a short trip outside of the city, I suggest Tivoli, a little town located 30km east from Rome. Tivoli has been a major source of the “travertine” stone, a construction material, since the ancient times, but it has been better known as a popular resort area. Two of its villas have been put on the UNESCO’s World Heritage list. Villa Adriana was built by Emperor Hadrian in the 2nd century AD. It was meant to be his summer retreat but in later years it became his primary seat of power. Villa d’Este was built by Cardinal Ippolito II d’Este in the 16th century. The interior of the villa is lavishly decorated with frescos. Its famous renaissance gardens with its magnificent water features have had a great influence on the European landscape design. Taking a stroll through these gardens was a magical experience for me. I hope it will be for you as well.

Art

The entire city of Rome is one big open-air museum and there are many museums and galleries that you will wish to visit. Make time to visit the Galleria Borghese. Although they allow visitors to spend two hours there, for me it just was not enough. I think I could have spent all this time viewing only one of the Bernini’s breathtaking sculptures. Watching it from each angle, examining every detail, just contemplating the feelings it invokes in me...

Tips

My tips for you are simple. Buy a Roma Pass, always carry a water bottle, try Italian gelato and if you want to taste the real, authentic Italian cuisine, ask a local for a restaurant recommendation – do not eat at a place where the menu is translated into six languages.





Summer Vacation in San Nicola Arcella

Italy 39° 51' N, 15° 48' E



Dušica Žegarac Dougherty
Customer Support Manager

Places to Stay and Eat

The village itself has several hotels which offer beach transportation and sun-umbrellas; however we found renting a vacation house to be the better option. For less than the price of a hotel room we rented a three bedroom, two bathroom villa with a rooftop terrace and breathtaking views of the sea.

Unlike many destinations in Italy, San Nicola is primarily visited by Italian tourists. Thus, unless you speak Italian this can make ordering food and drink a bit of an adventure, requiring a lot of hand gestures and a lot more guessing. In the end you may not have any idea what you've ordered but will surely leave with some funny stories. We found pizza to be fairly universal, and this being Italy, most restaurants served it.

San Nicola Arcella is a small fishing village located on the west coast of the Italian province of Calabria. Set on the Tyrrhenian Sea, 200 kilometers south of the well known Amalfi Coast and Naples. San Nicola boasts crystal clear beaches and authentic Italian charm.

The Town

In the mountainous region of Calabria, the village of San Nicola Arcella sits perched high above the sea below. Its narrow stone streets twist and turn between houses and shops, while aged steps open to busy piazzas. The oldest part of the village is only accessible by foot or motorbike. During summer afternoons the village is quiet as its residents enjoy siestas on one of the nearby beaches. In the evenings the village bustles with activity as both residents and tourists enjoy the distinctly Italian atmosphere.





Beaches

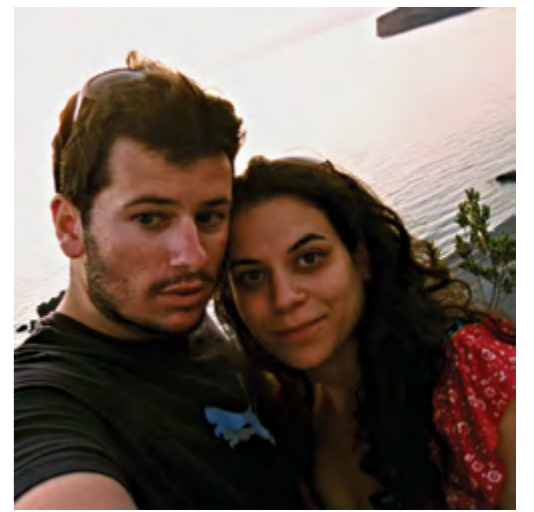
The main beach in San Nicola can be reached by bus, car, or by foot if you are a mountaineer. The water is an immaculately clear shade of blue and is cool enough to be refreshing but not too cold. Since the sea is so clear there are no scary things pulling at your legs. Portions of the main beach are reserved for hotel guests and cafes; however there are several public spots free of charge. The house we stayed in provided us with a beach umbrella and towels, so we did not have to pay to use them. While the main beach is nice, by far the best beaches are accessible via a coastal path. Those brave enough to tackle the harrowingly steep stairs are rewarded with several beautiful, secluded beaches set between incredible rock formations. These are a must see for anyone capable of a fifteen minute hike.



Things to Do Nearby San Nicola Arcella

Several minutes by car north of San Nicolla is the resort town of Praia a Mare. Although more crowded, it offers a number of water activities. Here we kayaked around Dino island (off of Praia a Mare) and tried scuba diving. Although the instructors did not speak much English they were extremely helpful and patient with two first-time divers. For those looking to spend the night dancing at a club, Praia a Mare is worth the short trip from San Nicola.

A few hours north of San Nicola Arcella is the world famous Amalfi coast. Known for its stunning seaside cliffs, the road along this coast teems with tourists. Also nearby are the cities of Naples and Pompeii which both offer a trip to the past.





Splendor in the Sea: A day on Santorini Island

Greece 36° 25' N, 25° 26' E



Isidora Rajšić
Implementation Project Manager

Trying to describe the Greek Island of Santorini (officially called Thira) is not an easily achievable feat.

In fact, words almost fail to do it.

Breathtaking, awe-inspiring and utterly fascinating are a good start.

I had the pleasure of experiencing this stunning and vibrant spot of unparalleled beauty for several hours – and, believe me – the spectacular views and energy of this place will remain etched in my mind for as long as I breathe.

Myth of the Lost Atlantis

The island, located in the southern Aegean Sea, is the site of one of the largest volcanic eruptions in recorded history – the Minoan eruption.

Santorini is essentially what remains of this enormous volcanic explosion which occurred some 3600 years ago, at the height of the Minoan civilization.

Today, it is a remnant of a volcanic cone whose top has blown off.

The connection of Santorini with Atlantis, the legendary continent that plunged to the bottom of the sea, has long been a preoccupation for the international scientific community, as they try to discover the depths of this mystery.

As soon as I stepped onto the island, following a two-hour speedboat ride from the island of Crete, I was overcome with a majestic sense of wonder.

I was inside a volcano, surrounded by enormous layers of solidified lava. Following a turbulent 30 minute bus ride up a steep and intensely narrow winding road, we reached the main town of Fira.





A Symphony of White and Blue

This is where I literally lost my breath.

The towns and villages of Santorini, including Fira, sit densely atop the massive cliffs of the Caldera (volcano cauldron), painting a stunning visual of the only such inhabited spot on the globe.

I gasped at the colors before me, ranging from deep chocolate browns to ivory white. Contrasted by the deepest and most seductive shades of the blue Aegean sea and the densely stacked chalk white houses, I found myself instantly mesmerized. My greatest wish at that moment was that my camera would do justice to the images before me, so that I could relive them for years to come.

However nothing could prepare me for what I was about to experience in Oia, a village located at the northern tip of the island.

With a rightfully-earned reputation as the most picturesque village on the island, Oia (pronounced "Ia") is situated on top of an impressive cliff and offers a view of the volcano of Palia and Nea Kameni and the island of Thirassia.

We found a perfect spot for a break at a cliffside café and, as I took in the opulence before me, I could not believe just how lucky I was to have the opportunity to, if only for a brief moment, treat my senses to something so entrancingly inspiring.



A Bite of Heaven

To accompany this moment of visual bliss, I ordered a local delicacy, which only added to the already phenomenal time I was having.

A homemade pastry with an olive spread tickled my taste buds and with each bite, the feeling of serenity filled me to the core.

Soon enough, my brief, yet eternally memorable love affair with Santorini had to come to an end.

As we rode back down to the port, my friend and I, both speechless by what we've just experienced, glanced at each other and nodded in blissful disbelief.

That's Santorini for you, I thought.



Srebrno Jezero

Serbia 44° 76' N, 21° 45' E



Branimir Radovanov
Peer Review Analyst

Rest and relaxation are guaranteed at this beautiful lake also known as The Serbian Sea. It is located in Eastern Serbia, 3 km from Veliko Gradište and near the Romanian border. It is 14 km long and with the average width of about 300 m. Silver Lake, as its name translates into English, was made by closing one of the Danube's backwaters. It has many beautiful beaches with crystal clear water due to its natural filtration through sandy dunes.

Accommodation

We stayed in a rented house at a five-minute hiking distance from the public beach and the "Silver Lake" resort. Renting a house was a great idea, since it had its own direct access to the lake and there was also a little boat perfect for morning fishing.

The Public Beach and Silver Lake Resort

On the public beach you can find bars with refreshing drinks and a hotel with a discotheque for night-life. There are also many water activities available, such as aqua park and pedal boats, kayaks and rowing boats that can be rented (motor boats are not allowed on the lake).

Natural Surroundings

The surrounding black locust forest provides refreshing coolness during hot summer days. Within the forest there are also great hiking routes.

Fishing

For those who like fishing it is good to know that Silver Lake is rich with all kinds of freshwater fish: catfish, perch, carp and white amur, just to name a few.

Cultural and Historic Sights

In the vicinity of the Silver Lake there are numerous places with cultural and historic values: Golubac and Ram fortresses, Viminacium, the springs of "Hajduk's water" and many more.

Golubac Fortress is my favorite because it is one of the best preserved medieval fortresses in Serbia despite the fact that it has been the scene of many battles in its long history. It still offers wonderful views from the fortress towers. It was built on high cliffs overlooking the Danube in the 14th century to guard the entrance to the Iron Gate gorge. Throughout the history, the fortress was occupied by Turks, Hungarians, Serbs and Austrians.





Sremski Karlovci

Serbia, 45° 12' N, 19° 56' E



Vladimir Čulum
Database Administrator

The central square is a museum in itself. Surrounded by an old hotel, Patriarch's Palace, the oldest high school in Serbia (gymnasium), the Orthodox church of Saint Nicholas, and, in the center of the square, a fountain with four lions' heads, generally known as The Four Lions.

A little further from the center is the Chapel of Peace. This Chapel was symbolically raised at the spot where the peace agreement that ended the war between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy League was signed, in 1699.

Sremski Karlovci is also famous for a large number of wine cellars and, with that, a highly developed wine tourism.

An absolute must is trying Bermet.

This is the indigenous wine of this region, with a very specific taste, which cannot be forgotten (during fermentation, special herbs are added to the wine, including cinnamon and a few other ingredients that have been kept secret for over 100 years).

Not far from the center (about 4km) is Stražilovo resort. A beautiful place where you can relax, dine and enjoy the outdoors.

An organized tour of the local monasteries is another not-to-be-missed experience.

At the moment, there are about 15 monasteries that are open for visits, some of which date as far back as the 12th century BC.

I proudly drank water from The Four Lions and gladly stayed in Sremski Karlovci.



The Four Lions

There is a legendary story that says: whoever drinks water from The Four Lions fountain will remain in Sremski Karlovci (Karlowitz).

This small town, (about 7 km away from Novi Sad) is surrounded by beautiful nature and represents a historical, cultural and tourist center in southern of Vojvodina.

The picturesque place was first mentioned in the writings in 1308.

The river Danube passes through it and the slopes of the Fruška Gora mountain, full of a various vegetation and glorious vineyards, complete the landscape.

Skt. Peter Ording - A Different Seaside Experience

Germany, 54° 18' N, 8° 39' E



Jadranka Bokan
Peer Review Analyst - CSR - German Language

The beach in Skt. Peter Ording is approximately 12 km long and 2 km wide. The normal range of the tides is up to three meters. After consulting the tidal forecast and waiting for the wind to calm and for the rain to stop, we went to the beach a couple of times, but couldn't really get into the water because it was very cold, even in August. So we amused ourselves mostly by sun bathing and playing beach volleyball.

The seaside area in Skt. Peter Ording is distinctive for its salt meadows. In contrast to other salt meadows along the North Sea they contain numerous ponds and puddles, where we took mudflat walks. It was very fun for the children because they could see fauna they never saw before.

Since the wind is very strong in this area, kitesurfing (or kiteboarding, an extreme surface water sport that is a combination of wakeboarding, windsurfing, surfing, paragliding, and gymnastics) and sail-racing (a sport similar to wind-surfing but on wheels) are very popular. Every year in August the "Kitesurf World Cup" takes place in Skt. Peter Ording. We went there one night and enjoyed the music and dancing.

We also spent some time in "The Dünen-Therme" spa, with its various swimming-pools, jacuzzis and a magnificent sauna-area, with different types of saunas, a solarium and a steam bath. I liked the swimming pool with artificial waves the most.

Every year Goethe Institute organizes summer language camps for students from all over the world. St. Peter Ording (Skt. Peter Ording) is one of the places that are on offer for students in order for them to get to know Germany, while learning the German language. St. Peter Ording is one of the ten most popular holiday destinations in Germany. It is situated on the North Sea coast of Schleswig-Holstein (the northernmost state in Germany), at the end of the Eiderstedt peninsula.

I was part of the Goethe Institute staff and chose to work in this city on the North Sea because I am a huge fan of Thomas Mann and wanted to visit his home town Lübeck and bathe in the North Sea, where he spent holidays with his family and described it in his first novel "Buddenbrooks". I knew this will be a onetime experience for me. And it was.

I had a really good time in Skt. Peter Ording. I became friends with some wonderful children from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey, Africa, Mongolia and Sri Lanka and saw the region that I had always dreamt about seeing. However, when I was leaving Skt. Peter Ording, I knew I will never come back and was very happy when I arrived to Munich. At that point I still did not know that except the presents that I received from the children I also took a bladder inflammation home. Next time I will know better and chose the Adriatic Sea as a vacation destination.





Timișoara – “Little Vienna”

Romania, 45° 45’ N, 21° 13’ E



Aleksandar Zorić
Java Developer

Timisoara (Timișoara) is a city located on the southeast edge of the Banat plain in Romania. It is sometimes called “Little Vienna” due to similarity to Vienna’s architecture. It is the fourth largest city in Romania with over 300,000 inhabitants.

Timisoara was built on the Timis River Plain, and is also crossed by the river Bega, which passes very close to the city center, giving it a special charm. However, it is not advisable to drink tap water even though this area is abundant with rivers, streams and canals.

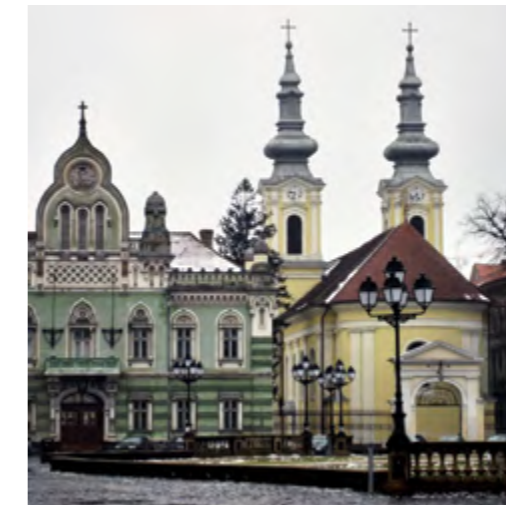
History and Places

As implied by its nickname, this city has many things to offer. The city center is comprised of many Habsburg Empire era type buildings, reminiscent of Vienna’s Old Town. If you take a stroll from the very center to any of the old squares, you will feel as if you have time-travelled to the 18th century. The old city consists of several historic areas, some of them being: Cetate (Innere Stadt in German), Iosefin (Josephstadt), Elisabetin (Elisabethstadt), and Fabric (Fabrikstadt). For those looking for fun, I would recommend numerous bars, clubs and restaurants that can be found at the old Baroque square (Unirii Square).

City Map

Transportation and traffic in Timisoara look very well organized on the city map, just the way it should be. The traffic runs in concentric circles and all parts of the city should be easily accessed – or so it seems. In reality, when you find yourself out in the streets, it is quite different. Traffic signs are a bit confusing: some parts have too many one-way streets, making driving a car through the city, in my own experience, at least, harder than expected. Many tram rails are spread across the city, but we haven’t tried to ride one, although it did seem like a useful mean of transportation.

Hotels in Timisoara are very decent. At first, it may be a bit hard to locate them, but once you find your way around all those one-way streets, everything seems easily accessible.



People and Environment

Timisoara is a twin city of Novi Sad, my hometown. The well-known West University of Timisoara is said to be the best university in Romania. It is also very popular with young people from this region; therefore, many go to Timisoara to study, making it a very dynamic city.

There are plenty of places to go to – from cafés and restaurants on the bank of the Bega canal to those in the old historical squares, each with a very special atmosphere and charm. For those looking for night life there are plenty of interesting places as well, however, they tend to be a bit scattered across the entire city, and it might take a while to drive from one place to another.

People of Timisoara are friendly and helpful in general. Due to closeness to the Serbian border, we found many people that could speak or understand Serbian.

Overall, Timisoara is a nice town to visit and spend a relaxing weekend or two there.



Θάσος

Greece 40° 41' N, 24° 39' E



Adela Tot
Peer Review Analyst - CSR

Thassos (Greek: Θάσος) is one of many Greek Islands, mountainous, with rich vegetation. The forests cover about 70 percent of the surface of the island. It is a small island with many different, awesome beaches and characteristic places. One side of the island is always wild and windy, while the other is always peaceful.

The island is reached by a ferry, accompanied by a flock of seagulls looking for food. If you're not careful enough, they might snatch a snack right out of your hand.



Once there, you can rent a car or a bicycle and explore its many rocky or long, sandy beaches.

Interesting Things to See

In Thassos town you can visit the remains of an ancient theatre. There is also a fishing harbor, with many fish restaurants and taverns serving traditional Greek specialties.

The village Theologos, the old capital of the island, is located in the mountains of Thassos. The village lived through the Byzantine Era during which it was given its name but it also contains remnants of the island's past far before that. Many old houses built in a traditional way can be seen there, along with picturesque squares and the Church of Agios Dimitrios with a marvelously carved wooden altar. Once in Theologos, you simply must treat yourself to a meal at one of the local taverns that serve only delicious food, wine and spices grown in the area.

Archangel Michael's Monastery

This monastery is built on the edge of a cliff and the view of the Aegean Sea from its terrace is stunning. The most valuable part of its collection of religious articles is the Holy Nail from the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.

Be sure that you are not wearing shorts or a shirt with uncovered shoulders when you visit this monastery. Otherwise, you will have to dress into some of the monastery's clothes for tourists which are very funny - long skirts, baggy trousers and big shirts.

All in all this unique island will provide a tranquil setting for a vacation you've been yearning for.



Four Hours in Venice

Italy 45°26' N 12°20' E



Branimir Bojić
Implementation Manager

Palace of the Doge (Palazzo Ducale) and the Bridge of Sighs

Venice is traditionally approached from the sea. Taking a ferry from the Port of Jesolo takes you through the old route of the merchant ships that brought wealth and fame to Venice for almost a thousand years, between the 17 islands Venice was built upon. We docked a couple of hundred feet away from the Piazza itself, near the old prison and the Palace of the Doge. The first sight of Venice can leave you breathless – the entire city looks as if it's floating on water. And that's not too far away from the truth. Taking the same path as Marco Polo, Giacomo Casanova, Thomas Mann, and of course, Napoleon once did, makes one feel the

burden of history upon one's shoulders. Approaching the Doge's Palace, the story of the miraculous escape of Giacomo Casanova, and the Bridge of Sighs comes to mind. So many stories, so little time! The Palace itself is an imposing building, built mostly in the 14th century, in the late-gothic style. In the 16th century, the palace was linked to the prison via the Bridge of Sighs (Ponte dei Sospiri). The view from the bridge was the last view of Venice the convicts saw before their imprisonment. The bridge itself was named by Lord Byron in the 19th century, thinking that the prisoners sighed at the sight of Venice for the last time. In truth though, not much can be seen from the bridge itself.

Seeing Venice is seeing the world, I heard someone say once. But honestly, there aren't that many cities that have shaped the course of human history in such a way. Lifetimes are required to tell the tale of Venice the way it should be told. What can you possibly do in 4 hours?



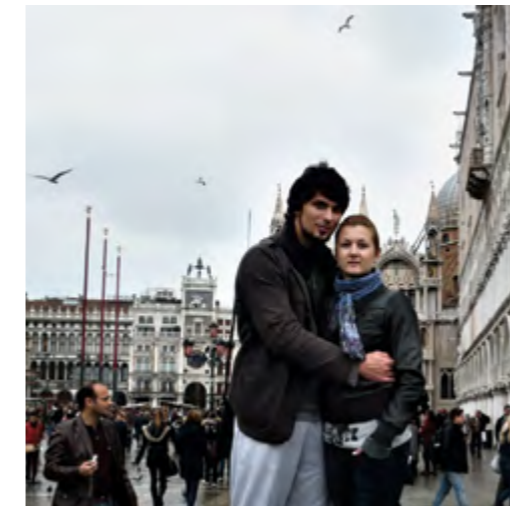


San Marco Square (Piazza di San Marco)

My first impression of the Piazza was – pigeons! Thousands of them. Excluding the tourist, the pigeons are the second most significant presence in Venice. However, you soon become taken by the beauty of the Piazza itself. You almost start expecting people in renaissance costumes all around you and start wondering why they aren't there. The most prominent buildings there are the Basilica of St Marco, San Marco Campanile and the Piazzareta (Little square). The first patron saint of Venice was not St Mark, but St Theodore. However, in the 9th century, the Venetian merchants smuggled the remains of St Mark from North Africa, and for those remains, a new church was built – the Basilica. The symbol of St Mark, the winged lion, also became the symbol of Venice. The basilica itself is one of the finest examples of Byzantine architecture in northern Italy. Due to its beauty, it soon became the symbol of Venetian wealth and power, earning the nickname Chiesa d'Oro (the church of gold). It is said that every Venetian coming back from a voyage had to bring something to the church to make it more beautiful. That is how the famed horses of St Mark ended up there after the sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The Campanile is a replica of the original bell tower that fell down in 1902. It is over 300 feet tall and is the place from which Galileo Galilei famously demonstrated his telescope to the Doge of Venice in 1609. The replica itself is largely composed of the remains of the original tower.

The Grand Canal and the Rialto Bridge

One of the first things you note in Venice is the absolute absence of all transportation means – no cars, no busses, no bikes, no skateboards. The old core of Venice still honors the traditional way of travel – by water. And the highway of Venice for ships is the Grand Canal. It's over 2 miles long and curves through the center of the city like a snake. It is said that the canal follows the course of an ancient river flowing into a lagoon. The sight of a water highway is somewhat surreal, but beautiful nonetheless, with hundreds of small ships and gondolas going back and forth. And, there is no place better to gaze at Venice than the Rialto Bridge. Rialto is one of the 4 bridges over the Grand Canal, but is by far the most important one.



The first bridge, that connected the adjacent districts of San Marco and San Polo collapsed several times as it was made from wood. In the late 16th century, a stone bridge was built. The task of the rebuilt was given to some of the most prominent architects of the era, and even Michelangelo was considered as the designer. The bridge was so unusual in its design that many thought it would collapse. But, it turned out to be one of the most famed landmarks of Venice.

The Boy with the Frog

To attest to the continuation of the Venetian spirit, an American artist, Charles Ray, inspired by the historical Dogana place next to the church of Santa Maria della Salute, created a new landmark for the city. An 8 foot tall figure of a boy holding a frog by one leg soon became the most recent incarnation of the Venetian culture. The whole thing is a big wacky – the figure is constantly guarded by the police and must never be touched. At my question – why – the police officer shrugged and said – “perché questa sarà la nostra storia uno giorno” (for this will be a part of our history). And that is why you must see Venice – because history is what happens there every day. And every hour.





Vienna for Four

Austria 48° 12' N 16° 22' E



Marina Medić
Marketing Manager

We chose Vienna as the destination for our 2011 Easter Holiday mainly because both my husband and I have already been there several times before and were fairly familiar with this magnificent city. We thought we would not regret missing the visits to any of its famous galleries or museums that our boys would most probably define as “b-b-b-oring!” Well... mommy does have to admit that her heart did skip a beat, or two, when she had to pass by “Monet to Picasso” from the Batliner Collection at the Albertina, only slightly comforted by the fact that it is a permanent exhibition and that she’ll simply have to come back soon.

Apart from our family summer holidays at the sea, this was our first ‘official’ adventure abroad with our boys, and we wanted to take them somewhere fun, diverse enough to keep the two little busy-bees well entertained. With the week spent “On the Beautiful Blue Danube” – we hit the jackpot!

We rented a cozy flat at a walking distance from the *Innere Stadt*, the old town of Vienna, today known as the 1st municipal District of Vienna. To describe the city center, I simply have to quote a passage from the inclusion criteria for the UNESCO World Heritage List: “The urban and architectural qualities of the Historic Centre of Vienna bear outstanding witness to a continuing interchange of values throughout the 2nd millennium AD” - or, as my kids would put it: “Mommy, Vienna is awesome!”



Innere Stadt

Our walk around the center started from the monumental Vienna State Opera (*Wiener Staatsoper*), through the Albertina terrace [sigh] and down to the Burggarten (the gardens of the Imperial Palace Hofburg), home of the famous Mozart statue, where we made our first stop at the *Schmetterlinghaus* - The Imperial Butterfly House, home of hundreds of colorful tropical, free-flying butterflies that flutter around you while you walk under waterfalls and inside hollow trees that imitate their natural rain forest environment.

We continued our exploration by having a quick photo session at the square in front of the Austrian National Library, amazed by the size and beauty of the Hofburg Palace it is located in and the liveliness of the square itself, even on a rainy day. Many carriages were lined up waiting for tourists to embark on nostalgic rides around the streets of Vienna. Spanish Riding School is also located nearby, offering daily performances of snow white Lipizzaner horses, known as “The Ballet of the White Stallions” – an event not to be missed.



Exhausted from our walk, we made a break at one of the oldest cafes in the city, Café Diglas, and treated ourselves with their delicious cakes and coffee.

Schönbrunn Palace Grounds

Planning a tour of Schönbrunn Palace and its gardens with the help of the official website is recommended since many options are offered along with downloadable audio guides. The ticket tours of the palace itself are timed and well-coordinated, while the surrounding vast park is open to all and loved by tourists and locals as well. We opted for the Classic Pass that includes the Grand Tour of the Palace (40 imperial rooms), access to the Crown Prince Garden, Maze and Labyrinth (packed with fun and games for children and adults) and the elegant Gloriette with a magnificent panoramic view of Vienna.



The Labyrinth and mazes were the highlight of our kids' day, along with the very original playground, packed with so many fun activities, gadgets and gizmos and a huge metallic eagle a child can climb in and experience gliding, while the exhausted parent pulls the heavy ropes to swing its wide wings.

Schönbrunn ZOO

A day at the Schönbrunn ZOO was another highlight of our trip. Voted the best European ZOO in 2010, it truly serves its mission to protect and preserve animal species in their natural habitats.

Feeding times are an additional attraction – their schedule can be picked up at the ticket office, and don't forget to grab a map of the ZOO since it is a whole-day visit if you want to take a peek at every corner.



Prater and Minopolis

The main attraction at the Prater fairground is the Viennese Riesenrad, originally built in 1897, as the only Giant Ferris Wheel of its time which is still in use. Half of its original 30 carriages take the visitors for a spin to admire the terrific view over Vienna from 200 feet altitude year-round, while the other half have been restored and house an exhibition of maquettes depicting important events in Viennese history.

The very last day of our fun-packed stay in the Austrian capital was marked by the visit to Minopolis, "The City of Children", Europe's first and only permanent theme park with an entire city reduced to children's size on 6,000 square meters. Streets, parks, cars, houses - it all looks just like the world of adults, only smaller.



Our boys took turns through at least 15 of 25 different themed stations, slipping into roles of adults through play, trying to discover their dream jobs. Policemen, crane operators, bakers, builders, salesmen, recycling plant workers... all so fun and inspiring, but when I ask them what will they become when they grow up, they are unanimous – firefighters!

Vienna is a perfect destination for an entire family. Who knows, perhaps you would be as inspired by it just like my kids, who expressed a wonderful wish – to learn to speak "Viennese!"



Wiesbaden in Autumn

Germany 50° 4' N, 8° 14' E



Robert Bartoš
Peer Review Analyst - CSR

Traveling to Wiesbaden, Germany in October to visit our nephew attending master studies there seemed as a perfect idea to make a nice autumn break. Once there, not only being happy to see our nephew, my wife and I were amazed to see how enchanting the town of Wiesbaden is and we immediately fell in love with it.

Besides being the capital of the German state Hesse, Wiesbaden is also a historic spa city, which can be witnessed all over town – there are many steaming hot water fountains and hot steam can even be seen escaping from below the streets through pavement gratings.



We were really lucky to be situated in the very centre of the town, which has been converted into a pedestrian area making it convenient to stroll the charming streets and admire the beautiful architecture. For those who like to go shopping, virtually every major brand can be found in the area and you can easily get yourself lost in numerous malls, markets and small souvenir shops.

Wiesbaden is well known for not being damaged during the WWII and the architecture is perfectly preserved. One of the most attractive buildings in Wiesbaden is the Spa (Kurhaus) situated in the city center. It was built around 1900 for emperor Wilhelm and it serves as a wellness and leisure complex. Nearby is a nicely kept garden where you can take a walk and relax. The famous casino and the theatre are right next to it.



Wiesbaden is also home to EBS University, one of the highest ranked business schools in the world. Frankfurt, the business and financial center of Germany, being nearby, makes Wiesbaden a highly desirable place to live and one of the most prosperous communities in Germany.

Surrounding Wiesbaden is a wine growing area, so landscapes painted with vineyards and the river Rhine in the background are breathtaking. I warmly recommend visiting one of the neighboring villages for a bottle of quality wine or a delicious meal.



If food is your passion, you are in for a treat – you can choose from a variety of upscale restaurants and five star castle-like hotels where you can splurge or you can pick a snack on the street in many of the pastry shops or kebab parlours. Whichever you pick, you won't regret it, as the food is exceptional.

A word of advice to a future traveler - if you have a chance, when visiting Wiesbaden, take at least a part of the trip by autobahn, a perfect place for those that enjoy the fast lane. Take joy in the experience of no speed limit - German autobahns are famous for being some of the few public roads in the world without road speed limitation for cars and motorcycles.



Cuckoo clocks have a long tradition in Germany. Clock makers and clock shops are a characteristic in many towns. It is believed that Wiesbaden is also proud to be the home of the biggest cuckoo clock in the world, so we absolutely made sure to take a snapshot of it.

Colophon

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