

Photo Gallery: Europe's Best Small Ports

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Europe's Best Small Ports | Traveler February/March 2013 Issue



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Adriatic Classic

Photograph by Aaron Huey

Above: For nearly 3,000 years, Zadar—a Croatian port on the northern Dalmatian coast—has absorbed the legacies of foreign powers, visible today in the Old Town Peninsula's varied architecture.

Zadar, Croatia: Design Within Beach

Anchor of a sprawling Adriatic archipelago. Architecture that spans millennia. Public art installations. Zadar is the laid-back little sister to Dubrovnik.

The Scene Flanked by dozens of idyllic Adriatic islands and within an hour's drive of five national parks, the peninsula city's natural beauty is matched only by its epic history. For nearly 3,000 years, this port on the northern Dalmatian coast has tried to fend off foreign powers with varying success. Architectural legacies of these interlopers are visible today in the city's Roman forum and in various Venetian ramparts around town. While the city center is on the Old Town Peninsula, most of Zadar is on the mainland. Modern public art and a lively café scene keep all parts of the city very 21st century.

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City Gem With its signature cylindrical shape and distinctive dome, the ninth-century Church of St. Donat has become synonymous with Zadar. No longer used as a church, the monument welcomes visitors and hosts a series of summer concerts—ranging from Brazilian guitarist Daniel Wolff to the Zadar Chamber Orchestra—made all the more resonant by the building's acoustics.

Insider's Tip The "Sea Organ," an art installation of pipes below the new pier, harnesses the energy of the ocean waves to produce an otherworldly soundscape. "The sound is so soothing, and sitting by the water is just a great way to unwind after a day walking around the city," says Marijana Gucunski, a Croatian expat who spends part of every summer at her family beach home nearby. "Of course, grab a delicious Croatian *sladoled* (ice cream) on the way."

Local Flavor This is the Adriatic, land of grilled seafood; you can't go wrong ordering fish, calamari, and mussels *na gradele* (grilled). Wash it all down with a glass of rakija (brandy) or *travarica* (an herbal spirit). For a late-night snack or breakfast, try *burek*, a savory cheese-filled phyllo pastry, with a cup of the Turkish-style coffee favored by Croats at the myriad of bakeries in Varoš—the historic heart of town—that are open into the wee hours.

Nightlife After dark, any hip Zadrani walks to the Garden, a minimalist-chic boîte atop the city walls opened by UB40 drummer James Brown and music producer Nick Colgan, for live jazz, Latin grooves, or electronica. Sip a local Karlovačko beer and play a game of chess or just soak up the seductive loungey, relaxed atmosphere that seems distinctly European.

By Sea The marina is full of boats vying to ferry you to the Zadar archipelago, where beaches, medieval villages, and snorkeling excursions await. Take a half-day trip to Dugi Otok, the largest island, to spend an idyllic afternoon on the sandy, uncrowded Saharun beach.

Ship Shape 100 annual cruise calls stop in Zadar, including ships from Crystal Cruises, Silversea Cruises, and Voyages to Antiquity.

Read "Ports of Call" in the February/March 2013 issue of *National Geographic Traveler*.



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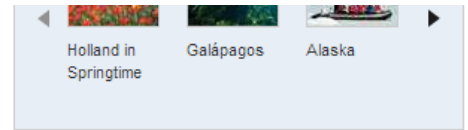
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Island Hopper

Photograph by Hans Madej, laif/Redux

Take a side trip to Dugi Otok, the largest island in the Zadar archipelago, to kick back on the coast—with views of the Veli Rat lighthouse.

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