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Spending Two Perfect Days In Zagreb

Posted by [Forbes Travel Guide Correspondent Marcy Gordon](#)

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The compact historic center of Zagreb, the capital of **Croatia**, is easy to explore on foot, and this itinerary will give you a taste of the lively culture and splendid food and wine in 48 hours without feeling rushed.

On your first day, check into the **Esplanade Hotel** for a deluxe home base. It's easy to linger here, but best to get going before you are unable to extract yourself from its luxurious embrace.

Make your way to Ban Jelačić Square — the bustling hub between Upper and Lower Town. Head up through the Dolac Market, wander along pedestrian-only Tkalčićeva Street and over to the Stone Gate, the only remaining gate from the Middle Ages in Zagreb, and then pass through to Upper Town. Just past the entrance, stop in at Caffe Galerija Lav for a coffee break prior to exploring a few of the Gornji Grad (Upper Town) museums.

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Admire the colorful roof tiles of St. Mark's Church on your way to The Zagreb City Museum, which will offer you some historic perspective on the capital. Your next stop should be **The Museum of Broken Relationships** for a unique exhibit of objects — things like a wedding dress, jewelry and stuffed animals — that that symbolize the point when a romance fell apart.

Pick yourself up and head to Lotrscak Tower, where, at exactly noon, things go boom from a cannon above the funicular, followed by church bells. Stop for an elegant lunch of chicken skewers with vegetable risotto or beef steak with truffle oil sauce on the picturesque terrace at **Pod Gričkim Topom**, situated just below the tower. If you haven't had your fill of walking around after the meal, visit the **Museum of Naive Art**, where excellent paintings by self-taught artists depict daily life filled with raw emotion. And speaking of everyday life, around dusk try to catch a glimpse of the city worker with the most interesting job — the lamplighter — who ignites all 217 of the gas lamps in old town.

As night falls, visit **The Basement Wine Bar** at the base of the funicular to unwind before dinner and try many of Croatia's finest wines by the glass, like the Chardonnay Jakovac from the Podunavlje region or the Merlot Meneghetti from Istra along with a plate of local cheese and meats. For dinner, book a table at **Bistro Karlo** for inventive and inspired takes on beef and lamb just a short walk from the base of the cable railway.

Start your second day off with a cup of perfection at **Eli's Café**, where owner and champion barista Nik Orosi brews the best coffee in Zagreb. If it's Sunday, check out the antique market at Britanski Trg (British Square) and peruse the stalls filled with a jumble of treasures and trinkets.

Continue shopping for distinctive souvenirs at **Croata**. Here, you'll find ties (the necktie was invented in Croatia) and scarves made from handcrafted textiles based on traditional designs. The **Crocrodeal Gallery**, located near Trg Petra Preradovića (the Flower Square), is another great place to shop for handcrafted goods by local artists and designers. Revitalize from the morning shopping spree with a leisurely lunch at one of the many cafés, like VIP Café Bistro Pizzeria in the Flower Square.

Drop your purchases at the hotel, then head out for aperitifs at **Cica**, where you can sample a large selection of *rakija*, the locally made brandy, in flavors like fig, cherry, honey, walnut and a few top-secret ingredients.

For dinner, reserve a table at **Bistro Appetit**, the local hot spot with an extensive wine list and tasty dishes like the sea bass fillet with fresh clams or lamb chops. Afterward, enjoy a nightcap back at the hotel's Esplanade Bar, where the bartender will happily introduce you to more exotic *rakija* flavors, like blueberry and mistletoe, or try the *travarica*, a brandy concoction made of herbs. Sweet dreams of Zagreb are made of these, and a good night's sleep is sure to follow.

Photos Courtesy of Marcy Gordon

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