

Northern Dalmatia



The Zadar and Šibenik regions make up northern Dalmatia, an area that's ideal for the discerning traveller, and those wanting to discover a part of the coast that's less of a victim to hordes of seasonal tourists. This is also great off-the-beaten-track territory, with the islands of Pag and Dugi Otok remaining tranquil even in the busiest of summer seasons. Check out the beauty of Krka National Park where the dry karstic interior is divided by the Krka River, connecting the coastal bay with the splendid Krka waterfalls, and feel like a true explorer on the remote and unvisited Kornati Islands – aside from excellent swimming, both destinations have fantastic hiking opportunities. Croatia's two major national parks are here, too. Paklenica National Park is the best in the country for hiking and rock climbing, while the waterfalls and lakes of Plitvice Lakes National Park are a watery, verdant heaven.

On the urban side there's the town of Zadar, a fascinating coastal city filled with museums, Roman ruins, good dining and excellent nightlife. Its relative lack of tourism means that this is a coastal town that still lives and breathes for its inhabitants. Nearby, Šibenik is up and coming with a vengeance, flaunting an extraordinary Renaissance centre, interesting new museums and some great gastronomy, and finally shedding its postwar melancholy.

Northern Dalmatia is a great mix of nature, beaches, good cities and tonnes of exploring opportunities that'll satiate the most ravenous of hungers for new parts of Croatia.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Discovering **Zadar** (opposite), one of the coast's loveliest and most underrated towns
- Partying at **the Garden** (p194), a fantastic venue if ever there was one
- Listening to Zadar's haunting **Sea Organ** (p189)
- Diving from **Sali** (p202), on Dugi Otok
- Taking a wet walk through **Plitvice Lakes National Park** (p195) or swimming in a lake in **Krka National Park** (p212)
- Visiting the village and beaches of **Primošten** (see boxed text, p213)



churches? Or could it be because it's recently been dubbed Croatia's 'city of cool' for its clubs, bars and festivals run by international music stars? Perhaps it's the lively street life, one of Dalmatia's best markets, the busy cafés and good food? Or maybe it's the unusual attractions such as the incredible Sea Organ and the Sun Salutation, a pair of sights – and sounds – that need to be seen and heard to be believed.

Zadar is a city to behold on the Dalmatian coast. Its cultural and entertainment offerings are growing by the year, and with one of Europe's biggest budget airlines (Ryanair) starting to fly into its airport, it's safe to say that Zadar is not going to remain off the beaten track for much longer.

History

Zadar was inhabited by the Illyrian Liburnian tribe as early as the 9th century BC. At the end of the 3rd century BC, the Romans began their 200-year-long struggle with the Illyrians and, by the 1st century BC, Zadar had become a Roman colony. It wasn't a particularly important town for the Romans, but when the Empire was divided Zadar became the capital of Byzantine Dalmatia. The Slavs settled in the city in the 6th and 7th centuries, and Zadar eventually fell under the authority of Croatian-Hungarian kings.

The rise of the Venetian empire in the mid-12th century meant that for the next 200 years Zadar was subjected to relentless assault by Venetians seeking to expand their hold on Adriatic trading interests. There were four unsuccessful citizens' uprisings in the 12th century, but in 1202 the Venetians managed to sack the city and expel its citizens with the help of French Crusaders. The people of Zadar continued to rebel throughout the 13th and 14th centuries, with the help of Croatian-Hungarian kings, but the city was finally sold to Venice in 1409 along with the rest of Dalmatia.

Zadar's economic growth declined under Venetian rule because of Turkish attacks and frequent Veneto-Turkish wars, the result of which was the building of the city walls in the 16th century. With the fall of Venice in 1797, the city passed to Austrian rule. The Austrians imported more Italians to co-administer the city with Zadar's Italianised ruling aristocracy. Italian influence endured well into the 20th century, with Zadar being

excluded from the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and remaining an Italian province. When Italy capitulated to the Allies in 1943, the city was occupied by the Germans and then bombed to smithereens by the Allies; almost 60% of the old town was destroyed. The city was rebuilt following the original street plan.

History repeated itself in November 1991 when Yugoslav rockets launched an attack on Zadar, keeping it under siege for three months. The city's residents were virtually imprisoned in their homes with insufficient food and water. Although the Serb gunners were pushed back by the Croatian army in 1993, the city remains receptive to nationalists and flag-wavers.

No war wounds are visible, however, and Zadar's narrow, traffic-free marble streets are again full of life.

Orientation

Zadar occupies a long peninsula (4km long and only 500m wide), which separates Jazine Harbour on the east from the Zadarski Channel on the west. The old town lies on the northwestern part of the peninsula and encompasses the port and Jazine Bay.

Within the old town, you'll find all of the city's museums, churches and monuments. Most travel agencies are along the town's main commercial street, Široka. The Jadrolinija boats are lined up on the northeastern harbour, which is connected by a footbridge across Jazine Harbour to Obala Kneza Branimira. Continuing northeast you'll come to the marina and then the 'tourist zone' of Borik, with the youth hostel and lots of hotels, about 3km from the old town. The train and bus stations are a 15-minute walk southeast of the harbour and old town. From the train and bus stations take either Kralja Dmitra Zvonimira or Zrinsko-Frankopanska to the old town.

Information

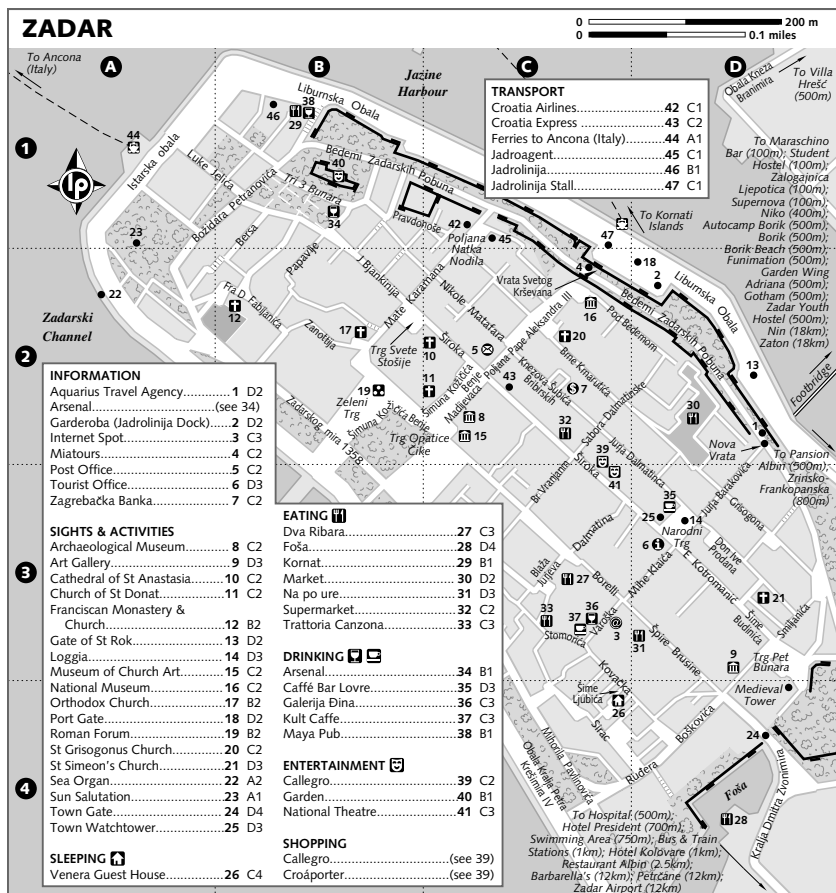
INTERNET ACCESS

Arsenal (☎ 253 833; www.arsenalzadar.com; Trg Tri Bunara 1; per hr 30KN)

Internet Spot (Varoška 3; per hr 30KN)

LEFT LUGGAGE

Garderoba (per day 15KN) bus station (🕒 6am-10pm Mon-Fri); Jadrolinija dock (🕒 7am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat); train station (🕒 24hr)

**MEDICAL SERVICES****Hospital** (☎ 315 677; Bože Peričića 5)**MONEY**

Travel agencies also change money and there's an exchange office and ATM at the bus station. There are plenty of ATMs in town, with one at **Zagrebačka Banka** (Knezova Šubića Bribirskih 4), where you can also change money.

POST

Post office (Poljana Pape Aleksandra III; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) You can make phone calls here.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ 316 166; www.tzzadar.hr; Mihe Klaića 5; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun Jun-Sep,

8am-6pm Mon-Sat Oct-May) The main information centre. Ask for the free *Zadar City Guide*.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Aquarius Travel Agency (☎ /fax 212 919; www.juresko.hr; Nova Vrata bb; ☎ 8am-7pm) Books accommodation and excursions.

Miatours (☎ /fax 212 788; www.miatours.hr; Vrata Svetog Krševana; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat) Arranges accommodation and excursions.

Sights**CITY WALLS**

A tour of the city walls provides a good insight into Zadar's history. Start with the eastern walls near the footbridge, the only remains of the ancient Roman and early medieval

fortifications (most of the walls were built under Venetian rule). Nearby are four old city gates – northwest is the **Gate of St Rok**, then the **Port Gate**. The latter was built in 1573, and still sports the Venetian lion and part of a Roman triumphal arch, and has a memorial inscription of the 1571 Battle of Lepanto in which the Austrians delivered a decisive blow to the Turkish navy. In the southeast is the **Town Gate**, the most elaborate of all and built under the Venetian administration in 1543. Its Renaissance-style decorations include St Krževan on horseback, the Venetian lion, inscriptions and coats of arms. The fourth gate is at Trg Pet Bunara.

TRG PET BUNARA

Trg Pet Bunara or 'Five Wells Sq', behind St Simeon's Church, was built in 1574 on the site of a former moat and contains a cistern with five wells that supplied Zadar with water until 1838. Its smaller cousin, **Trg Tri Bunara** (Three Wells Sq), sits right on the other side of town and sports the excellent Arsenal (p193). This refurbished shipping warehouse lay in ruins for years before being turned into a cultural centre containing a bar, restaurant, several shops (music, food, wine), a tourist office and a stage that hosts theatre, live music and any number of shows. Just off the square is the Garden bar and club (p194), making this area a mini cultural hub.

ST SIMEON'S CHURCH

This **church** (Crkva Svetog Šime; ☎ 211 705; Trg Šime Budinica; ☞ 8am-noon & 6-8pm Jun-Sep) was reconstructed in the 16th and 17th centuries on the site of an earlier church. The sarcophagus of St Simeon is a masterpiece of medieval goldsmith work. Commissioned in 1377, the coffin is made of cedar and covered inside and out with finely executed gold-plated silver reliefs. The middle relief showing Christ's presentation in the Temple is a copy of Giotto's fresco from *Capella dell'Arena* in Padua, Italy. Other reliefs depict scenes from the lives of the saints and King Ludovic's visit to Zadar. The lid shows a reclining St Simeon.

NARODNI TRG

Narodni Trg was traditionally the centre of public life. The western side of the square is dominated by the late-Renaissance **Town Watchtower**, dating from 1562. The clock tower was built under the Austrian administration

in 1798. Public proclamations and judgments were announced from the **loggia** across the square, which is now an exhibition space. Several hundred metres northwest of Narodni Trg is the **Orthodox Church**, behind which is a small Serbian neighbourhood.

CATHEDRAL OF ST ANASTASIA

The Romanesque **Cathedral of St Anastasia** (Katedrala Svete Stošije; ☎ 251 708; Trg Svete Stošije), near the Church of St Donat, was built in the 12th and 13th centuries on the site of an older church. Behind the richly decorated facade is an impressive three-nave interior marked by 13th-century wall paintings in the side apses. Notice the fresco of a gateway in the southern apse, which was used as a model for the door frame of the main portal. On the altar in the left apse is a marble sarcophagus containing the relics of St Anastasia, commissioned by Bishop Donat in the 9th century. The presbytery contains choir stalls lavishly carved by the Venetian artist Matej Morozon in the 15th century. The cathedral was badly bombed during WWII and has since been reconstructed.

CHURCH OF ST DONAT & ROMAN RUINS

The main places of interest are near the circular **Church of St Donat** (Crkva Svetog Donata; ☎ 250 516; Šimuna Kožičića Benje; admission 10KN; ☞ 9.30am-2pm & 4-6pm Mar-Oct), one of the most outstanding monuments in Dalmatia. Dating from the beginning of the 9th century, it was named after Bishop Donat who allegedly had it built following the style of early Byzantine architecture. The unusual circular ground plan is especially visible on the southern side because the southern annex is missing. The church was built over the **Roman forum**, which was constructed between the 1st century BC and the 3rd century AD. A few architectural fragments are preserved and two complete pillars are built into the church. The original floors were removed, and now slabs from the ancient forum are clearly visible. Notice the Latin inscriptions on the remains of the Roman sacrificial altars.

Outside the church on the northwestern side is a pillar from the Roman era that served as a 'shame post' in the Middle Ages, where wrongdoers were chained and publicly humiliated. The western side of the church has more Roman remains, including pillars with reliefs of the mythical figures Jupiter, Amon and Medusa. Underneath, you can see the remains of the altars used in pagan blood

sacrifices. It is believed that this area was a temple dedicated to Jupiter, Juno and Minerva, and dates from the 1st century BC.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL MUSEUM

The **Archaeological Museum** (Arheološki Muzej; ☎ 250 516; Trg Opatice Čike 1; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) was closed for refurbishment at the time of research. It holds pottery fragments dating back to the Neolithic Age; bronze swords, jewellery and pottery from the Liburnian era; a model of Zadar as it existed in Roman times; and statues of emperors Tiberius and Augustus.

MUSEUM OF CHURCH ART

The outstanding **Museum of Church Art** (☎ 211 545; Trg Opatice Čike bb; adult/student 20/10KN; ☎ 10am-12.30pm & 5-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun) in the Benedictine monastery opposite the Church of St Donat offers an impressive display of reliquaries and religious paintings. Along with the goldsmiths' works in the first hall, notice the 14th-century painting of the Madonna. She features again in the second hall, where the most notable works of her are a marble sculpture and Paolo Veneziani's painting. On the 2nd floor you'll find 15th- and 16th-century sculptures and embroidery, and six pictures by the 15th-century Venetian painter Vittore Carpaccio.

ST GRISOGONUS CHURCH

This **church** (Crkva Svetog Krševana; Brne Krnarićia; ☎ Mass only) is another beautiful structure, formerly part of a 12th-century Benedictine monastery that was destroyed by Allied bombs in 1944. It has a baroque altar constructed in 1701 and Byzantine frescoes on the northern wall and in the northern apse; unfortunately the frescoes in the southern apse are poorly preserved.

NATIONAL MUSEUM & ART GALLERY

The **museum** (Narodni Muzej; ☎ 251 851; Poljana Pape Aleksandra III; admission 10KN; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon, Tue, Thu & Fri, 9am-1pm & 5-7pm Wed), in the Benedictine monastery of St Krževan's Church, is an excellent historical repository. It features scale models of Zadar from different periods, and old paintings and engravings of many coastal cities. The admission ticket will also get you into the local **Art Gallery** (☎ 211 174; Smiljanica; ☎ 9am-noon & 5-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat), which has a changing series of exhibitions highlighting local artists.

FRANCISCAN MONASTERY & CHURCH

The **Franciscan Monastery & Church** (Samostan Svetog Frane; ☎ 250 468; Zadarskog mira 1358; admission free; ☎ 7.30am-noon & 4.30-6pm) is the oldest Gothic church in Dalmatia. It was consecrated in 1280 and the interior has a number of Renaissance features such as the lovely Chapel of St Anthony, which contains a 15th-century wooden crucifix. In the sacristy a memorial tablet commemorates a seminal event in Zadar's history: the 1358 treaty under which Venice relinquished its rights to Dalmatia in favour of the Croatian-Hungarian king, Ludovic. The large Romanesque painted crucifix in the treasury behind the sacristy is worth seeing.

SEA ORGAN & SUN SALUTATION

Zadar's incredible (and the world's only) **Sea Organ** (Morske Orgulje), designed by local architect Nikola Bašić, is bound to be one of the more memorable sights you'll see in Croatia. Set within the perforated stone stairs that descend into the sea is a system of pipes and whistles that exudes wistful sighs when the movement of the sea pushes air through it. The effect is utterly unique and hypnotic and the 'music' is the loudest when a boat or ferry passes by. You can swim from the steps off the promenade and listen to the sound of the Sea Organ.

Right next to it is the **Sun Salutation** (Pozdrav Suncu), another wacky and wonderful Bašić creation. It's a 22m circle cut into the pavement, filled with 300 multilayered glass plates that collect the sun's energy during the day and, together with the wave energy that makes the Sea Organ's sound, produce a trippy light show from sunset to sunrise that's meant to simulate the solar system. Thanks to Croatia's many sunny days, the Sun Salutation is now collecting enough energy to power the entire seafront lighting system.

Activities

A great way to cross from the old town peninsula onto the mainland is to take the small wooden boats across the water, experiencing an ancient Zadar tradition, the *barkarioli* (see boxed text, p190) in the process.

There's a **swimming area** with diving boards, a small park and a café on the coastal promenade off Kralja Dmitra Zvonimira. Bordered by pine trees and small parks, the promenade takes you to a beach in front of Hotel Kolovare and then winds on for about a kilometre along the coast.

A BOAT TRIP DOWN MEMORY LANE *Vesna Marić*

The transporting of people on small wooden boats between Zadar's two ports is an 850-year-old tradition that's become somewhat redundant since the completion of the footbridge, but the boatmen, or *barkarioli* as they are locally known, aren't giving up their profession easily. And they don't have to: it is still the locals' favourite form of public transport. It's a short ride – some 80m in length, lasting only a few minutes – and cheap (4KN), and it beats the smelly bus. More than anything, it's romantic.

Seventy-year-old Karlo Sindičić has been a *barkariolo* all his life. He is tanned and sports aviator sunglasses and a little black sailor hat. I ask if he would tell me about his job and he nods an affirmative, helping me onto the rocking boat. I place my 4KN onto a little heap of coins and we sit, waiting for more passengers to get on so that Karlo can start rowing and, hopefully, talking. He looks a little like a rock star, aloof beneath the green-tinted shades. Then he says, 'I've been interviewed by all the big global media houses. CNN talked to me all the way back in Yugoslav times. It was their first ever program about Zadar and I was on it. Me and a nun.' I am impressed. I ask him if he thinks there's a future for the *barkarioli*. 'Oh yes,' he says, 'there are two young men lined up to start this summer.' What does it take to be a *barkariolo*? 'You've got to have at least one foreign language,' he says. 'I speak four myself. Foreigners take the boat sometimes and you've got to know how to chat to them.' Is the demand for crossing on a boat big? 'People still like it though it's not as popular as it was when I was younger. Now everyone drives around.' We get to the other side.

As I step off the boat, I notice the wind is up and I ask if they cross in all kinds of weather. He says that if it's too windy or rainy they stay put. 'It's too much risk; you don't want people tumbling into the water. Plus we'd get too wet on the boat all day. But we do work until midnight in the summer; it's lovely under the stars. We stop at six in the evening on winter days, though. But no matter what the season is, if the sea is calm, we're here at 6am every day!' he says, sitting down again and grabbing the oars. I thank Karlo and watch him row back to the other side of the harbour, feeling as though I've just tasted a slice of history.

You can rent a bike from **Supernova** (☎ 311 010; Obala Kneza Branimira 2a; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 4.30-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) and see Zadar or any of the islands and surrounding national parks while pedalling.

Tours

Any of the many travel agencies around town can supply information on the tourist cruises to Telašćica Bay (p203) and the beautiful Kornati Islands (p214), which include lunch and a swim in the sea or a salt lake. As this is about the only way to see these 101 barren, uninhabited islands, islets and cliffs, it's worthwhile if you can spare the cash. Check with **Aquarius Travel Agency** (☎/fax 212 919; www.juresko.hr; Nova Vrata bb; ☎ 8am-7pm) or **Miatours** (☎/fax 212 788; www.miatours.hr; Vrata Svetog Kriševana; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat), or go down to Liburnska Obala from where the excursion boats leave.

From Zadar you can also take an excursion to Paklenica National Park (p198), Krka National Park (p212) or Plitvice Lakes National Park (p195).

Festivals & Events

July to mid-August is a good time to be in Zadar. The **Zadar Dreams** (Zadar Snova; www.zadar.snova.hr) theatrical festival takes over Zadar's parks and squares with offbeat theatrical happenings between 7 and 14 August.

The **Garden Festival** (www.thegardenzadar.com) has been running since 2006 in nearby Petřčane, and it's fast becoming one of the most beloved dance-music festivals in Croatia. According to the website, it focuses on 'quality rather than big names' and takes place in Barbarella's nightclub (p194), where you can swim, sunbathe or sit in the pine shade when you're not dancing to thumping music. It's held from 4 to 6 July.

Try to catch the **Full Moon Festival** on the night of the full moon in August. The quays are lit with torches and candlelight, while stalls sell local delicacies and the boats lining the quays become floating fish markets. It's something to see.

Other events include **Musical Evenings** (July) in the Church of St Donat and the **Choral Festival** (October).

Sleeping

There is one small guest house in town and a few private rooms available, but most visitors are dispatched to the 'tourist settlement' at Borik on the Puntamika bus (every 40 minutes from the bus station); here there are hotels, a hostel, a camping ground and many *sobe* (rooms available) signs. Most Borik hotels cater to package tourists, particularly families who flock to the all-inclusive family resort, Funimation (right), complete with an aqua park, tennis courts and more. Most are managed by the Austria-based **Falkensteiner group** (www.falkensteiner.com).

The travel agencies listed on p187 find private accommodation. Expect to pay about 150/200KN per person for a room with a shared/private bathroom. Very little is available in the old town, but you can find some decent deals in Borik.

Do not expect women advertising *sobe* to approach you as you disembark the bus, train or ferry.

BUDGET

Autocamp Borik (☎ 332 074; per adult low-high 36-53KN, per site 90-135KN; ☽ May-Oct) Steps away from Borik Beach, this camping ground is shaded by tall pines and has decent facilities. It's a better option than Zaton if you want to savour city pleasures.

Zaton (☎ 280 280; www.zaton.hr; Nin; per adult low-high 36-68KN; ☽ May-Sep) This is a huge campsite development on a sandy beach 16km northwest of Zadar in Nin, with a 5000-person capacity. It's not attractively landscaped – the terrain is flat and uninteresting – but the facilities are top notch and there are also apartments and mobile homes to rent. There are eight daily buses marked 'Zaton' from the bus station (fewer on weekends), which drop you off in Zaton village, about 1km from the grounds.

Zadar Youth Hostel (☎ 331 145; zadar@hfhhs.hr; Obala Kneza Trpimira 76; per person €13; 📺) A great option for backpackers, with plain but clean rooms. Some have wooden floors that creak comfortably. Many were renovated in 2006 and are quite modern. The service is friendly and multilingual and Borik Beach is just minutes away. There's internet access at 5KN for 15 minutes.

Student Hostel (☎ 224 840; Obala Kneza Branimira bb; dm 103KN; ☽ Jul & Aug) This student dormitory turns into a hostel in July and August. Its location is good – right across the footbridge and an easy trudge to the ferries and old town –

but do note its limited opening times for travellers. The three-bed rooms are clean, though a little cheerless.

MIDRANGE

Venera Guest House (☎ 214 098; www.hotel-venera-zd.hr; Šime Ljubičić 4a; d low-high 300-450KN) Venera – also known as the Jović Guest House – is the centre's only option. Although the rooms are minuscule, have oversized wardrobes and no numbers on the doors, all have en suite bathrooms, the beds are good and the atmosphere is pretty relaxed. The price does not include breakfast. If you can't reach Gojko, the owner, you can book through Aquarius Travel Agency (p187).

Pansion Albin (☎ 331 137; www.albin.hr; Put Dikla 47; s low-high 324-390KN, d 432-580KN; 📺 📺 📺) You'll find plenty of warmth and hospitality in this friendly, family-run *pension* (guest house). All the rooms are different and some have balconies. There's a gorgeous little pool surrounded by greenery and the in-house restaurant is decent. The beach is just a 15-minute walk away. It's great value.

ourpick Villa Hrešč (☎ 337 570; www.villa-hresc.hr; Obala Kneza Trpimira 28; s low-high 550-650KN, d 750-850KN; 📺 📺 📺) Zadar's loveliest midrange choice is in a cheery pink building on a bay. The stylish rooms are in pastel colours, the beds are luxurious dreaming spots, and as you lounge by the swimming pool you can admire views of the old town. The suites are excellent value, some with massive terraces. It's within walking distance of Zadar's restaurants, sights and nightlife.

Funimation (☎ 206 100; www.falkensteiner.com; Majstora Radovana 7; s low-high €77-177, d €112-234; 📺 📺 📺) With so many spa offerings at this large hotel, your skin will start to resemble a sea creature after you've tried all the steam rooms, saunas and pools – let alone the wonders of the 16 different thalassotherapy treatment rooms. The hotel is open year-round for spa lovers, but it really comes into its own in the summer months when the 'Falky Land' complex opens and kids' activities start up – there's tennis, volleyball, windsurfing and pool madness. So if you're after a family resort that caters to both kids and their (exhausted) parents, Funimation may just be the place for you.

TOP END

Hotel Kolovare (☎ 203 200; www.hotel-kolovare-zadar.t-com.hr; Bože Peričića 14; s low-high 550-750KN,

d 760-1200KN; (P) (🚿) A renovated old-socialist mammoth, the Kolovare has 230 unexciting but comfortable rooms, a swimming pool and a gym. It's near the beach, a 20-minute walk from town and close to the train and bus stations.

Hotel President (☎ 333 464; www.hotel-president.hr; Vladana Desnice 16; r per person low-high €125-400; (P) (🚿) (🚿)) The plushest place in town is also the classiest in the traditional sense, with cherry wood furniture, gilded details and grown-up sophistication all round. The hotel restaurant, Vivaldi, is adorned with music scores from the 'Four Seasons'. It's very close to the beach and all the rooms have balconies.

our pick Garden Wing Adriana (☎ 206 637; www.falkensteiner.com; Majstora Radovana 7; s low-high €144-204, d €216-312; ☞ mid-May–Oct; (P) (🚿) (🚿)) All the rooms in this gorgeously restored 19th-century villa, which was formerly known as Hotel Adriana Select, are termed 'junior suites' and they deliver on their promise of luxury. It's a super-relaxing place in Borik, with white furniture, rattan details, aromatic candles and tonnes of spa treatments. Oh, and there's a pool, four tennis courts and a wonderful beach at the end of the verdant garden. The staff are friendly and discreet.

Eating

Zalogajnica Ljepotica (☎ 311 288; Obala Kneza Branimira 4b; mains from 35KN) The cheapest place in town prepares three to four dishes a day at knock-out prices in a setting that would fit well in a Kaurismäki movie – you know, a rugged, lonesome diner with a pot-bellied chef/waiter who brings you a steaming dish with a somnolent look on his face. The food is great and home cooked, and the dishes are usually squid-ink risotto, tomato and seafood pasta, plus something meaty.

Trattoria Canzona (☎ 212 081; Stomorića 8; mains 40KN) A great little trattoria in the old town, with red-and-white chequered table cloths, friendly waiters and tonnes of locals who love the menu of daily specials. Try the delicious *pašticada* (beef stewed in wine and spices), which comes with juicy gnocchi, and accompany it with a crunchy green salad.

Na po ure (☎ 312 004; Špire Brusine 8; mains from 40KN) From shark to sardines, if it swims this unpretentious *konoba* (simple family-run restaurant) will grill it and serve it up with potatoes and fresh vegetables. You can also get a mean *pašticada*.

Dva Ribara (☎ 213 445; Blaža Jurjeva 1; mains from 40KN) Though it's been refurbished in a minimalist, cool style, away from its former 'fisherman's diner' look, the Two Fishermen still remains an old-school eatery when it comes to the menu. There's a wood-fired pizza oven – much appreciated by the locals – and meaty options dominate, though there are some fish and pasta dishes. There's a decent wine list, too.

Restaurant Albin (☎ 331 137; www.albin.hr; Put Dikla 47; mains 40-100KN) Local people usually head out to Borik when they want to eat out, and this fish restaurant, on the road to Borik at Pansion Albin, is one of the most popular establishments, with a spacious outdoor terrace.

Niko (☎ 337 888; www.hotel-niko.hr; Obala Kneza Domagoja 9; mains from 60KN) A real Zadar institution, Niko is loved for its daily fresh fish (grilled and sprinkled with smooth, aromatic olive oil), the long wine list, and its pasta and seafood dishes. A large terrace overlooks the shimmering Adriatic. Niko is in Puntamika, on the Borik peninsula.

our pick Kornat (☎ 254 501; Liburnska Obala 6; mains from 70KN) This is without a doubt Zadar's best restaurant. It's elegant and spiffy, with wooden floors and modern furnishings, and the service is excellent, but it's the food that's the real knockout. There's the smooth Istrian truffle monkfish, a creamy squid and salmon risotto, and fresh fish (around 350KN per kilo) that's prepared with simple ingredients to maximum deliciousness. The house wine, Babić, is fantastic, and do leave room for a dessert – try the pistachio and caramel cheesecake.

our pick Foša (☎ 314 421; Kralja Dmitra Zvonimira 2; mains from 80KN) Foša looks out on the narrow channel that runs alongside the city walls and takes its name from it. The restaurant also pays tribute to the Foša channel by serving fantastic fish caught in its waters, and the small stone terrace is one of Zadar's most gorgeous places to eat. The interior is slick and elegant and the service attentive and discreet. A great find.

SELF-CATERING

It's safe to say that Zadar's **market** (☞ 6am-3pm) is one of Croatia's best. If you're staying somewhere you can cook, you're in for a real treat of seasonal, local produce at cheap prices. Spring and early summer see gorgeous bunches of wild asparagus, while summers are cooled with juicy watermelons, cucumbers and bursting tomatoes. There's also mountains of peppery rocket, and the women who

WHAT'S THIS MARASCHINO, THEN?

You'll see its name so often around Zadar and there's no way you'll miss the beautiful distillery – a major city landmark – so you'll be forgiven for asking this question. Maraschino, you'll be glad to hear, is a very delicious drink, and something all locals will no doubt prompt you to try.

Maraschino's story started with the birth of the Dalmatian sour cherry – otherwise known as *maraska* – brought, some say, from the areas surrounding the Caspian Sea. The *maraska* is said to be sweeter, fleshier and more nutritious than any other cherry around, and it took keenly to growing by the Adriatic. It was originally used as a medicinal liquor and was first bottled by Dominican monks in the 16th century, but it soon caught on as a proper tippie and commercial distillation developed over the following two centuries.

But the real revolution happened in the 18th century, with the collapse of the Venetian republic. Zara (Zadar) became the capital of Dalmatia, and the Austrians, who took over, brought consuls and representatives from all over Europe. The consular representative for Sardinia, Girolamo Luxardo, arrived in Zadar and, with his wife, tasted the *maraska* liquor for the first time. Captivated by its taste, Luxardo's wife decided to try and perfect it, and her recipe was so successful that the couple established the first Luxardo distillery in 1821 – the famous Maraschino building. The third generation of Luxardos built a modern distillery, while the original old building, which is opposite the old town, was converted into office space.

During Yugoslav times, the Maraschino business was incorporated into the state, while the only surviving Luxardo family member moved his business to Veneto, in Italy. Today, Maraschino is privatised again, reaffirming its role as a major source of local employment. Despite the battering the production received during the recent war, there are once again hundreds of thousands of cherry trees blossoming in Zemunik, near Zadar airport, and the Maraschino tastes better than ever.

sell the stuff are keen to bargain. You'll find Pag cheese here, too (at around 80KN per half kilo), and inside the fish market you'll get the day's catch and more. Even if you're not self-catering, check it out just to store some delicious food memories.

There's also a **supermarket** (cnr Široka & Sabora Dalmatinske) that keeps long hours.

Drinking

There are plenty of places to drink in Zadar, from pavement cafés to cool bars, and most are full at all times in the summer. Don't miss tasting the local Maraschino cherry liquor (see boxed text, above).

ourpick Arsenal (☎ 253 833; www.arsenalzadar.com; Trg Tri Bunara 1) A renovated shipping warehouse now hosts this brilliant cultural centre, with a large lounge-bar/restaurant/concert hall in the centre that has a small stage for live music and shows. Shops surround the central space, and people come in and out all day long, with young Zadrans frequenting the bar in the evenings. It's a great place for breakfast, too.

Galerija Dina (Varoška 2) Just off the main square, Dina's is an arty hang-out that serves good cocktails to a trendy crowd. It's electro music all the way, and a great place to start the night.

Kult Caffe (Stomorića 4) The Kult Caffe draws a young hip hop, heavy metal, rock'n'roll, hippy, punk – you name it – crowd, that hangs out on the shady terrace outside.

Maya Pub (☎ 251 716; Liburnska Obala 6) This is a real chill-out bar, with a hippie-ish decor and quiet electro music in the background. There's an imposing sculpture of Shiva that keeps an eye on the live concerts or the DJ, depending on who's got the stage for the night. It serves Guinness and Kilkenny beer, too.

Maraschino Bar (☎ 211 250; Obala Kneza Branimira 6) Sitting by the sport harbour, 100m east of the old town–mainland footbridge, and overlooking the sea, this is a relatively new bar with a spanking retro interior, cheerful clientele and friendly service. It serves croissants for breakfast, and the terrace is a great place to enjoy a coffee in the sun.

Caffé Bar Lovre (☎ 212 678; Narodni Trg 1) A gorgeous little café with a huge terrace on Narodni Trg (which mingles with some of the neighbouring cafés' terraces), Lovre has the advantage of having the remains of the 12th-century Church of St Lovre at the back. You can enter and wander around it, before or after your coffee. Croissants and other pastries make it perfect for a central breakfast or break from sightseeing.

Entertainment

NIGHTCLUBS

our pick Garden (☎ 450 907; www.thegardenzadar.com; Bedemi Zadarskih Pobuna; ☹ late May-Oct) One of the reasons many of Croatia's youngsters rate Zadar as 'a really cool place' is because it offers nightlife options unlike anywhere else – basically, it has the Garden. It's owned and run by UB40's producer Nick Colgan and drummer James Brown, who came to Zadar and liked it so much they decided to buy this traditional walled garden, install a superior sound system and invite their DJ friends to enliven the city's nightlife. They've never looked back. In fact, they've only looked forward and opened Barbarella's, the Garden's more isolated and therefore more rowdy sister. Daytimes here are relaxed, with board games and lots of lounging on the outdoor beds, while night time is when the fun really begins. Don't miss it if you're in town.

our pick Barbarella's (☎ 450 907; www.thegardenzadar.com; Punta Radman Put 8, Petričane) Opened in May 2008, this is a more ambitious and spacious project for the Garden's owners, serving as the setting for the Garden Festival (p190) in July and lots of beach clubbing all through the summer. It's basically a 1970s retro structure that has been carefully refurbished and fitted with sound systems, beach bars and plenty of party space. The festival's Argonaut boat parties sell out sooner than you can say Barbarella's. There's also a hotel adjacent, in case you want to stay awhile.

Gotham (☎ 200 289; Marka Oreškovića 1; ☹ closed Mon) A 20-something crowd comes here for the go-go dancers, tropical fantasy and '70s nights.

THEATRE & CINEMA

National Theatre (☎ 314 552; Široka; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) The box office sells tickets to the cultural programs advertised on posters outside.

Callegro (☎ 204 900; www.callegro.com; Široka 18; tickets 20-25KN) A brand new miniplex consisting of three cinema screens, Callegro is a favourite of Zadar's film lovers. You can see art-house films as well as Hollywood blockbusters at fantastically cheap prices in a sleek modern cinema. Films are in the original language, with Croatian subtitles.

Shopping

Callegro (above) is also a shopping centre, housing outlets for Lacoste, Calvin Klein and Ralph Lauren, as well as a **Croáporter** (www.cro-a-porter.hr) boutique, which promotes young

Croatian designers. There's a café downstairs, too, with tables on Široka.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Zadar's airport is about 12km east of the town centre. The Croatia Airlines bus (20KN) meets all arrivals. A taxi costs about 175KN.

Croatia Airlines (☎ 250 101; www.croatiaairlines.hr; Poljana Natka Nodila 7; ☹ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) has daily flights to Zagreb, and services internationally.

Ryanair (www.ryanair.com) flies to Zadar from London Stansted and Dublin airport.

BOAT

On the harbour, **Jadrolinija** (☎ 254 800; Liburnska Obala 7) has tickets for all local ferries, or you can buy ferry tickets from the Jadrolinija stall on the Jadrolinija dock. Buy international tickets from **Jadroagent** (☎ 211 447; jadroagent-zadar@zd.t-com.hr; Poljana Natka Nodila 4), just inside the city walls.

For information on boat connections to Italy, see p310.

BUS

Croatia Express (☎ 250 502; croatie@zd.t-com.hr; Široka 14) sells tickets to Zagreb, Split and Trieste (Italy), plus many German cities.

The **bus station** (☎ 211 035; www.liburnija-zadar.hr, in Croatian) is a 10-minute walk from the centre and has buses to Zagreb (100KN to 140KN, 3½ to seven hours, 20 daily), Rijeka (145KN, five hours, six daily), Split (around 100KN, three hours, eight daily) and Dubrovnik (170KN to 210KN, eight hours, seven daily).

TRAIN

The **train station** (☎ 212 555; www.hznet.hr; Ante Starčevića 3) is adjacent to the bus station. There are five daily trains to Zagreb – two fast trains (150KN, seven hours) and three slower ones (134KN, 9¾ hours) that change at Knin – but the fast bus to Zagreb is quicker.

Getting Around

Buses run frequently from the bus station to the harbour and Borik. Buses marked 'Poluotok' run to the harbour and those marked 'Puntamika' (5) run to Borik. Tickets are 6KN and you can buy them at any newsstand or from the driver.

AROUND ZADAR

Ugljan

 023

The island of Ugljan is easily accessible by boat from Zadar, making it a popular getaway for the locals and a kind of residential suburb for people who work in the city. The 50-sq-km island is densely populated, housing about 7500 people, and it can get crowded on summer weekends. There are few forests but many *macchia* (shrubs), some pines and a good deal of farmland with vegetable gardens, olive groves and vineyards. The eastern coast is the most indented and most developed part of the island, while the west is relatively deserted.

The port of entry is **Preko**, directly across from Zadar, with two small harbours and a ferry port. Although there's a town beach, the best beach is on the little island of **Galovac**, only 80m from the town centre. Small, pretty and wooded, Galovac has a Franciscan monastery dating from the 15th century. If you have your own car, you could visit **Ugljan village**, positioned on an indented bay with a sandy beach, the fishing village of **Kali** and the nearby islet of **Osiljak**, which is covered with pine and cypress trees.

Jadrolinija (www.jadrolinija.hr) runs hourly ferries between 5.30am and 11pm from Zadar to Preko (17KN, 25 minutes) year-round.

PLITVICE LAKES NATIONAL PARK

 053

Plitvice Lakes National Park lies midway between Zagreb and Zadar. The 19.5 hectares of wooded hills enclose 16 turquoise lakes, which are linked by a series of waterfalls and cascades. Wooden footbridges follow the lakes and streams over, under and across the rumbling water for an exhilaratingly damp 18km. In 1979, Unesco proclaimed the Plitvice Lakes a World Heritage site, and the lakes and forests are carefully regulated to ensure their continued preservation.

The extraordinary natural beauty of the site merits at least a three-day visit, but you can experience a lot simply on a day trip from Zadar or Zagreb. There's no bad time to visit: in the spring the falls are flush with water, in summer the surrounding hills are greener, and in autumn there are fewer visitors and you'll be treated to the changing colours of leaves.

The lake system is divided into the upper and lower lakes. The upper lakes lying in a dolomite valley are the most impressive,

surrounded by dense forests and interlinked by several gushing waterfalls. The lower lakes are smaller and shallower, surrounded only by sparse underbrush. Most of the water comes from the Bijela and Crna (White and Black) Rivers, which join south of Prošćansko Lake, but the lakes are also fed by underground springs. In turn, water disappears into the porous limestone at some points only to re-emerge in other places. All the water empties into the Korana River near Sastavci Falls.

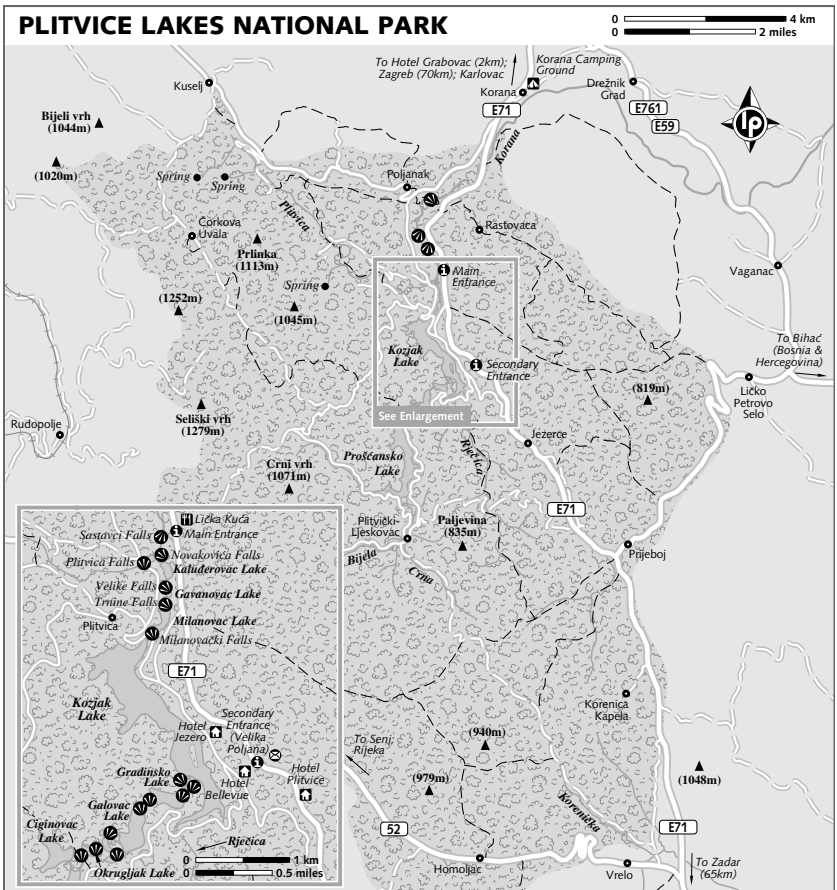
The upper lakes are separated by dolomite barriers, which expand with the mosses and algae that absorb calcium carbonate as river water rushes through the karst. The encrusted plants grow on top of each other, forming travertine barriers and creating waterfalls. The lower lakes were formed by cavities created by the water of the upper lakes. They undergo a similar process, as travertine is constantly forming and reforming itself into new combinations so that the landscape is ever changing. This unique interaction of water, rock and plant life has continued more or less undisturbed since the last Ice Age.

The colours of the lakes also change constantly. From azure to bright green, deep blue or grey, the colours depend upon the quantity of minerals or organisms in the water, whether rain has deposited mud, and the angle of sunlight.

The luxuriant vegetation of the national park is another delight. The northeastern section of the park is covered with beech forests while the rest of it is covered with beech, fir, spruce and white pine dotted with patches of whitebeam, hornbeam and flowering ash, which change colour in autumn.

History

After prehistoric settlements, the first recorded inhabitants in the region were the Thracians who arrived in the 1st millennium BC, followed by the Illyrians and then the ubiquitous Romans who visited in 59 BC and stayed for 600 years. Slavs migrated to the area in the 7th century and were eventually organised into the feudal system that dominated the early Middle Ages. The Turks seized power in 1528 and when they were driven out 150 years later, the Austrians tried to attract new settlers by making it a feudal-free zone. The area became part of the Military Frontier (Vojna Krajina) and was settled by Vlachs and Morlachs who followed the Serbian Orthodox faith.



The tourism potential of the lakes was apparent even as early as 1896, when the first hotel was built. A preservation society founded in 1893 ensured the protection of the lake environment well into the 20th century. The boundaries of the national park were set in 1951 with a view towards minimising degradation and maximising tourism. Before the recent 1991 war, the lakes were a major tourist attraction, but their presence within the Serb-dominated Krajina region meant trouble was inevitable when former Yugoslavia began to crack up.

The civil war in former Yugoslavia actually began in Plitvice on 31 March 1991, when rebel Serbs from the Krajina region took control of the park headquarters. The

murdered Croatian police officer Josip Jović became the first casualty of the ruthless war that Easter Sunday. Rebel Serbs held the area for the war's duration, turning hotels into barracks and plundering park property. When the Croatian army finally retook the park in August 1995, they found the natural beauty intact but the hotels and facilities completely gutted. All has since been repaired and tourists are flocking to one of Croatia's most wondrous sights.

Wildlife

Animal life flourishes in the unspoiled conditions. The stars of the park are bears and wolves, but there are also deer, boar, rabbits, foxes and badgers. There are more than 120

different species of bird such as hawks, owls, cuckoos, thrushes, starlings, kingfishers, wild ducks and herons. You might occasionally see black storks and ospreys, and flocks of butterflies flutter throughout the park.

Orientation & Information

The **tourist office** (☎ 751 015; www.np-plitvicka-jezera.hr; adult/student Apr-Oct 110/50KN, Nov-Mar 70/35KN; ☎ 7am-8pm) has its main entrance on Plitvička Jezera, and a secondary entrance at Velika Poljana, near the hotels. At either entrance you can buy tickets and pick up brochures and a map to walk you around the lakes. The admission ticket includes the boats and buses you need to see the lakes. An easy way to see them is to take a bus to Okrugljak Lake at the top and then walk down. There are well-marked trails throughout the park and a system of wooden walkways that allows you to appreciate the beauty of the landscape without disturbing the environment.

Try to get to the lakes before 8am, especially in summer, to avoid the hordes.

The post office is near the hotels and there's an ATM near Hotel Bellevue. Luggage can be left at the tourist information centre at the park's main entrance or at one of the hotels.

Sights

The lower lakes string out from the main entrance and are rich in forests, grottoes and steep cliffs. **Novakovića Falls** is nearest the entrance and is followed by **Kaluđerovac Lake**, near two caves – the Blue Cave and Šupljara. Next is **Gavanovac Lake** with towering waterfalls and last is **Milanovac Lake**, notable for colours that are variously sky-blue, azure or emerald green.

Kozjak Lake is the largest lake and forms a boundary between the upper and lower lakes. Three kilometres long, the lake is surrounded by steep, forested slopes and contains a small oval island, composed of travertine. Past the hotels, you'll see **Gradinsko Lake** bordered by reeds that often harbour nesting wild ducks. A series of cascades links Gradinsko to **Galovac Lake**, considered the most beautiful lake of all. An abundance of water has formed a series of ponds and falls. A set of concrete stairs over the falls, constructed long ago, has eventually been covered by travertine, forming even more falls in a spectacular panorama. Several smaller lakes are topped by the larger **Okrugljak Lake**, supplied by two powerful waterfalls.

Continuing upwards you'll come to **Ciginovac Lake** and finally **Prošćansko Lake**, surrounded by thick forests.

Sleeping

The Zagreb buses drop you off just outside the camping ground while the hotels are clustered on Velika Poljana overlooking Kozjak Lake. There are many *sobe* signs along the road from Korana village to the national park. The tourist office in the park or its branch in Zagreb can refer you to rooms in nearby villages, including Rastovača, about 400m from the entrance. Expect to pay 200KN to 225KN for a double room.

All of the following hotels are in the old Yugo-style (think largeish, with lots of browns and beiges, and retro wood and glass), though a couple have been renovated and are of a pretty good standard. You can book all of them at www.np-plitvicka-jezera.hr.

Korana Camping Ground (☎ 751 015; per adult all incl €9; ☎ May-Oct) This large, well-equipped autocamp is about 6km north of the main entrance on the main road to Zagreb.

Hotel Grabovac (☎ 751 999; s low-high €40-52, d €54-70) About 10km north of the entrance on the road to Zagreb, this is a large, modern hotel with bland but functional rooms.

Hotel Bellevue (☎ 751 700; Velika Poljana; s low-high €40-55, d €54-74) The rooms are small and a bit sad at this large hotel; you get little in the way of decoration, and the quilts and curtains are faded, but rooms do have en suites and the beds are firm. It's fine if everywhere else is full.

Hotel Plitvice (☎ 751 100; Velika Poljana; s low-high €50-72, d €65-96; (P)) A comfortable modern hotel with spacious, well-equipped rooms, each with TV, phone and minibar. There are more expensive rooms that are larger and have views.

Hotel Jezero (☎ 751 400; jezero@np-plitvicka-jezera.hr; Velika Poljana; s low-high €61-83, d €86-118; (P) (☎)) This is by far the most comfortable and best-appointed hotel in the park, though it's by no means a boutique delight. There's a sauna and swimming pool.

Eating

There's an inexpensive self-service cafeteria next to the tourist office, at the second entrance, as well as a café that sells sandwiches, pastries and roast chicken, and a minimarket for picnic supplies.

Lička Kuća (☎ 751 024; mains from 55KN) Just across from the main entrance, this sprawling place is usually crowded with tourists who come for the local sausages and roast-meat dishes. Vegetarians will appreciate the *duveč* (stew of rice, carrots, tomatoes, peppers and onions), as well as the fine local cheese.

Getting There & Away

The Zagreb–Zadar buses that don't use the new motorway road (ie the ones that drive between Zagreb and Zadar in over three hours) stop at Plitvice (check www.akz.hr for more details). The journey takes three hours from Zadar (80KN) and 2½ hours from Zagreb (60KN).

PAKLENICA NATIONAL PARK

☎ 023

Rising high above the Adriatic, the stark peaks of the Velebit Massif stretch for 145km in a dramatic landscape of rock and sea. Paklenica National Park covers 36 sq km of the Velebit Range, extending in a rough circle from the park entrance in the village of Marasovići. For everyone from Sunday strollers to rock climbers and hikers, the park offers a wealth of opportunities to trek across steep gorges, crawl up slabs of stone, or meander along shady paths next to a rushing stream. The panorama inside the park is ever changing and much greener than you would think when looking at the chalky mountains from the sea.

The national park circles around two deep gorges, Velika Paklenica (Great Paklenica) and Mala Paklenica (Small Paklenica), which scar the mountain range like hatchet marks, with cliffs over 400m high. The dry limestone karst that forms the Velebit Range is highly absorbent, but several springs in the park's upper reaches provide a continuous source of water, which explains the unusually lush vegetation. About half the park is covered with forests, mostly beech and pine followed by white oak and varieties of hornbeam. The vegetation changes as you ascend, as does the climate, which progresses from Mediterranean to continental to subalpine. The lower regions, especially those with a southern exposure, can be fiercely hot in the summer, while the *bura* (cold northeasterly wind) that whips through the range in winter brings rain and sudden storms.

Animal life is scarce but you may see Egyptian vultures, golden eagles, striped eagles

and peregrine falcons, which nest on the cliffs of the two gorges. If you've forgotten what they look like, there's an illustrated sign at the park's entrance. Rumour has it that bears and wolves live in the park's upper regions, but your chances of seeing any are minuscule.

The best time to visit the park is in May, June or September. In late spring the park is greenest, the streams become torrents and there are few other visitors. In July and August you'll still find the trails uncrowded, since most people come to the region for the sun and sea, but it might be too hot to hike comfortably. In September the weather is mild during the day and cool at night, making it perfect hiking weather, plus you can still finish off a day on the trails with a refreshing swim.

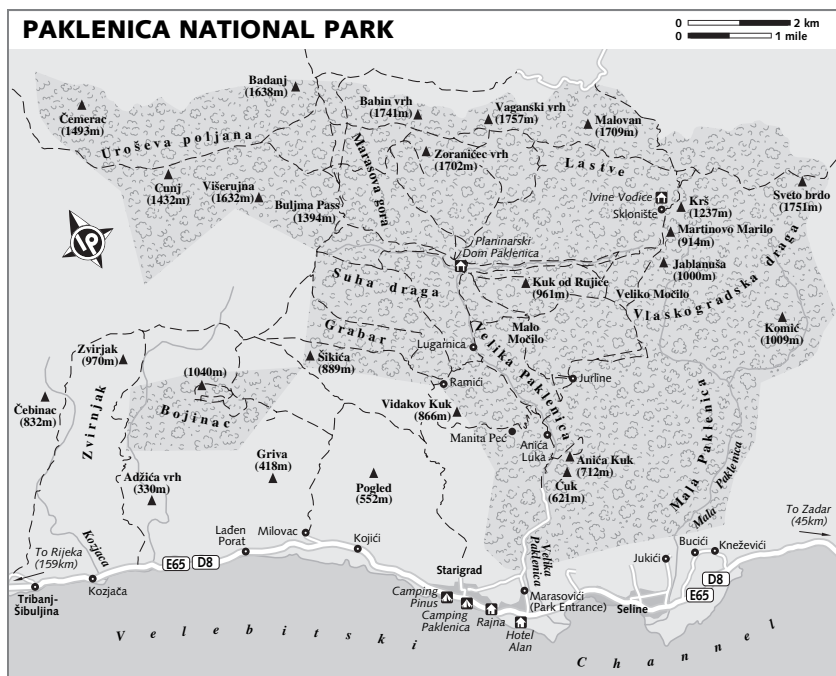
Orientation

The best base for exploring the park is Starigrad (p200). It is the site of the national park office and has the most possibilities for restaurants and accommodation. It's also near the entrance to Velika Paklenica, which offers the most varied walks and climbs. The entrance to the national park is in the village of Marasovići, which is about 2km southeast of Starigrad. The road to the entrance is not particularly interesting, so a lot of people drive to the car park past the reception area. The entrance to Mala Paklenica is on the far side of Seline village, about 2.5km southeast of Starigrad on the road to Zadar. Follow the road opposite St Mark's (Sveti Marko) church towards the canyon. Trails throughout the park are marked by small white and red waymarkers.

Information

The **Paklenica National Park office** (☎ /fax 369 202; www.paklenica.hr; Starigrad; adult/student 40/20KN Apr–Oct, 30/20KN Nov–Mar; ☒ office 8am–3pm Mon–Fri Apr–Oct, park daily 6am–8.30pm year-round) sells booklets and maps, and is in charge of maintaining the park. The *Paklenica National Park* guide gives an excellent overview of the park and suggests various walks. Rock climbers should talk to one of the guides employed by the park administration who can provide detailed advice on climbing routes and their difficulty.

The **Croatian Mountaineering Association** (☎ 01-48 24 142; www.plsavez.hr; Kozaričeva 22, 10000 Zagreb) also has up-to-date information and publishes a useful map of the park with clearly marked routes. It's on sale at larger bookstores in Zagreb.



Activities

HIKING

Most hikes in the park are one-day affairs from 'base camp' at Starigrad or Seline, or from one of the mountain huts.

Mala Paklenica to Velika Paklenica

Mala Paklenica is smaller and less visited than Velika Paklenica. The karst formations are outstanding in Mala Paklenica, but the trail can get slippery in spring and autumn, and you may have to cross Mala Paklenica stream a few times. You follow the stream through rocks and boulders for the first four hours or so and then zigzag uphill to about 680m. Take the left-hand path marked Starigrad and Jurline. You'll pass through fields and pastures before descending to a rocky gully that leads to the valley floor. You'll arrive at Velika Paklenica, enjoy a marvellous view and then follow the path through the gorge with **Anića Kuk** (712m) on your left down to the valley floor.

Starigrad to Planinarski Dom

Immediately after the park's entrance you'll reach the floor of Velika Paklenica gorge, with

grey-stone massifs looming on either side. In July and August, you're sure to find rock climbers making their way up the cliffs. About 200m up from the car park on the left you'll enter **tunnels** (admission free; ☞ Sun Jul & Aug) that contain well-lit, neat halls and rooms carved out of the rock by the federal Yugoslav army before the 1990s war.

When you pass a rock fall with a stream on your right you'll be at **Anića Luka**, a green, semicircular plateau. In another kilometre or so there's a turn-off to the cave of **Manita Peć** (admission 10KN; ☞ 10am-1pm Jul & Aug, 10am-1pm Wed & Sat Jun & Sep). Take the steps down from the antehall to the centre of the cave, which has a wealth of stalagmites and stalactites enhanced by strategically placed lighting. The area is 40m long and reaches a height of 32m. It's about a two-hour walk from the car park and must be visited with a guide.

From the cave you can follow the trail to **Vidakov Kuk**, which takes 1½ hours. The ascent up the 866m peak is fairly rugged, but on a clear day you'll be rewarded with an unforgettable view over the sea to Pag. You can continue on an easy trail to **Ramić** and then

head east to the main trail up to the shelter, Planinarski Dom Paklenica (right).

You can also bypass the Manita Peć detour and continue up to the game warden's hut in the **Lugarnica** area (about two hours' walk from the car park), which is open daily from June to September. You can buy snacks and drinks in the hut before continuing on up to Planinarski Dom Paklenica. You'll pass beech and pine forests before coming to the shelter.

In another route to the hut, take the right path after Anića Luka past the little farmhouse at Jurline. The left fork leads to the black-pine forests of **Malo Močilo**, but you can also continue straight ahead to **Veliko Močilo** and rest beside a spring of drinkable water (three hours from the car park). From here you can take the right fork to the Ivine Vodice hut (right), or at **Martinovo Marilo** (914m) you can take the left path along the southern slope of the upper Velika Paklenica valley, following the Velika Paklenica River to Planinarski Dom Paklenica (about 1½ hours from Veliko Močilo).

Upper Velebit

From Planinarski Dom Paklenica you'll easily reach any of the Velebit peaks in a day, but you'd need about a week to explore all of them. The highest point in the Velebit Range is **Vaganski vrh** (1757m). From the flat, grassy top you have a view of up to 150km inland over the Velebit peaks on a clear day. It may be a long, hard day (depending on your fitness level), but it can be reached with enough time to return to the shelter by nightfall.

Another popular destination is **Babin vrh** (Grandmother's Peak; 1741m). Follow the trail with the Brezimenjača stream on the left to the pass of Buljma (1394m) and then continue to Marasova gora through deciduous forest. There's a small lake at the foot of Babin vrh that never dries up (but the water has been polluted by sheep).

It's also possible to reach all the peaks along the Velebit ridge from Mala Paklenica, but make sure you have survival equipment, a map and the assurance that both huts are open. Past **Sveti Jakov** in Mala Paklenica take the right path to the Ivine Vodice hut. Marked trails lead past **Sveto brdo** (1751m), **Malovan** (1709m), Vaganski vrh and Babin vrh before descending to the Planinarski Dom Paklenica shelter.

ROCK CLIMBING

The national park offers a tremendous variety of rock-climbing routes from beginners' level to borderline suicidal. The firm, occasionally sharp limestone offers graded climbs, including 72 short sports routes and 250 longer routes. You'll see the beginners' routes at the beginning of the park with cliffs reaching about 40m, but the best and most advanced climbing is on Anića Kuk, which offers over 100 routes up to a maximum of 350m. Nearly all routes are well equipped with spits and pitons, except for the appropriately named **Psycho Killer** route.

The most popular climbs here are **Mosoraški** (350m), **Velebitaški** (350m) and **Klin** (300m). Spring is the best climbing season as summers can be quite warm and winters too windy. A rescue service is also available.

Sleeping

Ivine Vodice (Sklonište; ☞ daily Jun-Sep, Sat & Sun Oct-May) East of Planinarski Dom Paklenica, this hut has no beds or running water, but can host 10 people with sleeping bags. It's free and it's not necessary to reserve in advance.

Planinarski Dom Paklenica (Mountain Lodge Paklenica; ☞ 213 792; dm 65KN; ☞ daily Jun-Sep, Sat & Sun Oct-May) This is the most convenient mountain hut. There's no hot water or electricity, but you can reach the highest peaks of Velebit from here. It has 45 beds in four rooms; a sleeping bag is advisable since the lodge provides blankets but no sheets. Reservations are recommended for weekends from June to September.

Getting There & Away

The best way to get to Paklenica (unless you're driving, that is) is to get on one of the Rijeka-Zadar buses (see www.autotrans.hr, in Croatian), all of which stop at Starigrad (28KN, 45 minutes from Zadar, around four daily). The best place to get off the bus is at Hotel Alan.

STARIGRAD

☞ 023 / pop 1160

Starigrad is on either side of the main coastal road from Rijeka to Zadar, and is the best base for exploring Paklenica National Park (p198). It's also referred to as Starigrad-Paklenica, to differentiate it from another Starigrad near Senj (which has nothing to do with the national park). All buses from Rijeka or Zadar stop in front of Hotel Alan and in the centre of town.

The **tourist office** (☎ /fax 369 255; www.rivijera-paklenica.hr; ☎ 8am-9pm Jul & Aug, to 2pm Mon-Sat Sep-Jun) is in the town centre on the main road across from the small harbour. HVB Splitska Banka is between the tourist office and Hotel Alan. It has an ATM.

Sleeping & Eating

Although camping is not permitted in the national park, there are numerous camping grounds in and around Starigrad. In addition to the larger camping grounds listed here, there are small, private camping grounds stationed along the main road leading into and out of town. The tourist office can put you in touch with them. Starigrad also offers a few hotels.

Private accommodation is abundant in and around Starigrad. Although no agency 'officially' finds accommodation, the tourist office makes it its business to connect people looking for rooms or apartments with the many residents offering them. Prices range from 150KN to 250KN for a double and 275KN to 400KN for a studio. Breakfast is another 18KN to 30KN. Full board and larger apartments are also available. You can find accommodation for yourself by walking along the main road and checking out the many *sobe* signs.

Camping Pinus (☎ 658 652; www.camping-pinus.com; Dr Franje Tuđmana bb; per adult low-high €2.80-4.50; ☎ Apr-Oct) Around 3km out of town on the road to Rijeka, this is a great place for relaxing in between hikes and expeditions into Paklenica. Swimming is off rocky coves. It's signposted, so if you're using public transport, try asking the driver to drop you off at the entrance.

Camping Paklenica (☎ 209 062; www.paklenica.hr; Dr Franje Tuđmana bb; per adult low-high 30-40KN; ☎ Apr-Oct) Next to Hotel Alan, this is one of the largest camping grounds. It overlooks a pebble beach only 50m from the road leading to the national park's entrance. Reservations are highly recommended during the summer season.

Rajna (☎ 369 130; www.hotel-rajna.com; Dr Franje Tuđmana 105; s low-high 277-297KN, d 307-347KN; ☎ ☑) The closest hotel to the park entrance is a favourite meeting spot for climbers and hikers (and those needing a much-deserved break). It's warm, homely and well maintained; the food is good as well.

Hotel Vicko (☎ /fax 369 304; www.hotel-vicko.hr; Jose Dokoze bb; s low-high €42-75, d €56-100; ☎ ☎ ☑) A

nice, comfortable hotel with bright rooms, some of which have balconies. It's only 50m from the beach and it's family friendly (with a kiddies' playground).

Hotel Alan (☎ 209 050; www.bluesunhotels.com; Dr Franje Tuđmana 14; s low-high €82-103, d €128-166; ☎ mid-Mar-mid-Nov; ☎ ☎ ☑) Part of the Croatia-wide chain Bluesun Hotels, Hotel Alan sports modern rooms with views over the sea or the mountains. There's also an outdoor pool, tennis courts, a wellness centre and many other comforts to relax you after you've walked around Paklenica all day. Full board is available in the high season.

Getting There & Away

Starigrad is about 51km from Zadar and 165km from Rijeka. All buses between these cities stop in town (www.autotrans.hr, in Croatian; 28KN, 45 minutes from Zadar, around four daily). Buses stop outside Hotel Alan and in the centre of town.

DUGI OTOK

☎ 023 / pop 1800

Dugi Otok is all about natural, unspoilt beauty, so if you're seeking a peaceful, relaxing holiday, you'll find your paradise here. Do note that there is a brief high season in the first three weeks of August, when Italian vacationers come over on the ferry from Ancona or on private vessels, but before and after that, all is quiet for another year. The cluster of small islands on Telašćica Bay nature park is a must-see, while the nearby saltwater Lake Mir (Peace), sandy Sakarun Bay and a panoramic drive along the rocky, indented coast are real delights. All you'll be able to do here is swim, dive and enjoy the spectacular scenery – it's a bit like Mljet Island (p277).

The name Dugi Otok means 'long island'. Stretching northwest to southeast, the island is 43km long and 4km wide. The southeastern coast is marked by steep hills and cliffs, while the northern half is cultivated with vineyards, orchards and sheep pastures. In between is a series of karstic hills rising to 338m at Vela Straža, the island's highest point.

Most people base themselves in either Sali on the southeastern coast or Božava on the northeastern coast. Sali has more opportunities for private accommodation, while Božava offers more of a resort experience.

Roughly in the middle is Brbinj, the main ferry stop.

History

Ruins on the island reveal early settlement by Illyrians, Romans and then early Christians, but the island was first documented in the mid-10th century. It later became the property of the monasteries of Zadar. Settlement expanded with the 16th-century Turkish invasions, which prompted residents of Zadar and neighbouring towns to flee to the island.

Dugi Otok's fortunes have largely been linked with Zadar as it changed hands between Venetians, Austrians and the French, but when northern Dalmatia was handed over to Mussolini the island stayed within Croatia. Old-timers still recall the hardships they endured when the nearest medical and administrative centre was in Šibenik, a long, hard boat ride along the coast.

Economic development of the island has always been hampered by the lack of any freshwater supply – drinking water must be collected from rainwater or, in the dry summers, brought over by boat from Zadar. As on many Dalmatian islands, the population has drifted away over the last few decades, leaving a few hardy souls to brave the dry summers and *bura*-chilled winters.

Getting There & Away

Jadrolinija (www.jadrolinija.hr) has daily ferries all year from Zadar to Brbinj (24KN, 1½ hours, 9am, 12.30pm, 4.30pm and 8pm), Zaglav and Sali (18KN, 45 minutes to 1½ hours, 5.30am, 10am, 3.30pm and 8pm).

Getting Around

There is little public bus transport throughout the island, only a weekly bus taking Božava villagers to Sali and back.

If you're entering the island at Brbinj without your own transport, you may have little choice but to head to Božava. There are no buses between Brbinj and Sali, but buses to Božava from Brbinj (14km) meet all ferries except the one from Ancona that docks at 6am on Sunday.

SALI

pop 1190

As the island's largest town and port, Sali is a positive metropolis when compared with the rest of the towns and villages scattered around Dugi Otok. Named after the salt

works that employed villagers during the medieval period, the town has a rumpled, lived-in look that is comfortable and low-key. Sali maintains its relaxed appeal despite the yachts and small passenger boats that dock in town during summer on their way to and from Telašćica Bay and the Kornati Islands. Although the town is tantalisingly close to these natural wonders, you'll need to join a tour or rent your own boat to visit them.

Orientation & Information

The town centres on the port on Porat Bay, where you'll find restaurants, cafés and offices. West of the town centre is sparkling Šašćica Bay, tucked between two hills with swimming coves. From the foot of the port, a path and stairs lead to the Upper Town, surrounded by small vineyards and fields.

The **tourist office** (☎ /fax 377 094; www.dugiotok.hr; Obala Kralja Tomislava; ☎ 8am–10pm Jul & Aug, to noon Mon–Fri Sep–Jun) is the source of all information about Sali. It finds private accommodation, books excursions and distributes the few brochures and maps available.

There is no bank but there is an ATM on the harbour and you can change money or get cash on your MasterCard or Diners Club card at the **post office** (Obala Petra Lorinija; ☎ 8am–2pm & 5–8pm Mon–Sat).

Sights & Activities

Sightseeing within the town is limited, but there is the interesting **St Mary's Church** (Crkva Svete Marije; ☎ 377 041; Svete Marije; ☎ Mass only), built in the 15th century on the site of an earlier church. It is especially notable for the wooden altar and several Renaissance paintings.

The town's proximity to the underwater marine park at the Kornati Islands makes it an excellent base for diving. Hotel Sali has a **dive shop** (☎ 377 079; www.dive-kroatien.de) that runs courses and dive trips around Dugi Otok and to the Kornati Islands.

Diving in the Kornati Islands is marked by steep drop-offs and numerous caves because of the islands' position facing the open sea. There are also possibilities for **cave diving** on the northern side of Dugi Otok; the caves are relatively shallow and large, making them suitable for beginners.

The tourist office can book you on **boat trips** that include a leisurely tour of Telašćica Bay and a stop on one of the Kornati Islands for about 350KN.

Festivals & Events

The weekend before the Assumption (15 August), the island hosts the **Saljske Užance Festival**, which draws visitors from the entire region. Highlights are the donkey races and the candlelight procession of boats around the harbour. Men and women don traditional costumes, play instruments devised from cow horns and perform traditional village dances.

Sleeping

There are no camping grounds on the island. Private accommodation is reasonable in Sali, especially out of the high season, and the tourist office can connect you with some wonderful, out-of-the-way places, including a house on its own little island. In the high season you can expect to find a room for 180KN to 220KN, usually with a shared bathroom. The price is based on double occupancy, so if you're travelling solo you may have to pay the price of a double. In the off season you have a lot more bargaining power and may be able to push the price down by 20% to 30%. Check out www.sali-dugiotok.com (in Croatian) for apartment referrals.

A fully equipped studio runs from 280KN to 300KN and a two-room apartment is priced at 385KN. All prices are based on a three-night minimum stay with a 30% surcharge for fewer nights. The surcharge is usually waived in the off-season.

If you're visiting in summer, it would be a wise idea to ask the proprietor if there are any restrictions placed on the use of water. There also might be an 'excess water' charge. But even if nothing is spelled out, the chances are that long, luxurious showers will not be appreciated.

Hotel Sali (☎ 377 049; www.hotel-sali.hr; s low-high €31-45, d €46-74; ☹ Apr-Nov; ♿) This hotel is well located, in excellent condition and offers good value for money. It overlooks swimming coves and is painted in white and marine blue. All rooms have modern bathrooms, satellite TV and balconies, many with views over the sea. The hotel restaurant is also very good.

Eating

There are a few restaurants along Obala Kralja Tomislava. There's also a supermarket located near the Jadrolinija dock.

Grill Tamaris (☎ 377 377; mains from 35KN; ☹ Apr-Oct) This is the best restaurant on the street. It

offers spaghetti with mixed seafood and freshly grilled shrimp and fish at reasonable prices.

Bife Bočac (☎ 377 322; mains from 35KN) Offering a similar menu to Grill Tamaris, the food here is not bad and you can eat outdoors on a shaded terrace.

TELAŠĆICA BAY

The southeastern tip of Dugi Otok is split in two by the deeply indented Telašćica Bay, dotted with five small islands and five even tinier islets. In fact, the 8200m-long bay contains five smaller bays, which form an indented coastline of 28km and one of the largest and most beautiful natural harbours in the Adriatic.

The Kornati Islands (p214) extend nearly to the edge of Telašćica Bay and the topography of the two island groups is identical – stark white limestone with patches of brush. The tip of the western side of the island faces the sea where the wind and waves have carved out sheer cliffs dropping 166m. There are no towns, settlements or roads on this part of Dugi Otok, only a couple of restaurants on **Mir Bay** catering to the boaters who spend days or even weeks cruising the islands.

Next to Mir Bay is the saltwater **Mir Lake**, fed by underground channels that run through the limestone to the sea. The lake, which is clear but with a muddy bottom, is surrounded by pine forests and the water is much warmer than the sea. Like most mud in unusual places it's supposed to be very good for you, curing ailments and keeping you young.

BOŽAVA

pop 115

Božava is an old town on a harbour that has sprouted a number of comfortable hotels and guest houses. The town is overgrown with lush, flowering trees and there are lovely shady paths along the coast. The harbour has many opportunities for swimming and strolling on pine-shaded paths.

If you arrive by bus, walk downhill from the bus stop to the tiny town centre where you'll find the **tourist office** (☎ /fax 377 607; turisticko-drustvo-bozava@zd.t-com.hr; ☹ 8am-noon & 6-8pm Jun-Sep). It can arrange bike, scooter and car rental and can find you private accommodation (150/100KN with/without private facilities).

Veli Rat is a village on the northwestern point of the island on scenic Čuna Bay, about 6km northwest of Božava. Although the area is

lovely, there's no transport. Unless you come with your own wheels, you'll be relegated to hitching, walking or paying a resident to drive you out there.

The **Božava Hotel complex** (☎ 291 291; www.hoteli-bozava.hr) includes the three-star Hotel Lavanda (low-high season room per person €31 to €85) and Hotel Agava (€35 to €108), and the luxurious four-star Hotel Maxim (€45 to €82). All rooms are modern with satellite TV, refrigerators, telephones and balconies overlooking the sea, though the Maxim, most recently done up, boasts a more swanky feeling. You'll have access to a sauna, a gym and massage services, along with easy access to the sea.

PAG ISLAND

Pag is like something you'd find in a 1950s Italian film, perfect for a broody B&W Antonioni set – it's barren, rocky, sepia coloured, with vast empty landscapes stretching across the horizon. The Adriatic is steel-coloured around it, and when the sky is stormy it's the most dramatic-looking place in the whole of Croatia. Basically, it's gorgeous. Pag Town has unique architecture that's as stern and basic as the island's appearance. The great 15th-century architect, Juraj Dalmatinac, designed neat streets and a stunning, blindingly white marble town square.

The island has been known for its distinct produce and culture for centuries. Islanders farm the miserly soil and produce the decent domestic white wine, *Šutica*. The tough local sheep graze on herbs and salty grass, lending their milk a distinctive flavour and producing *paški sir* (Pag cheese – soaked in olive oil and aged in stone; see p206), a prized speciality of Croatian cuisine. Intricate Pag lace is famed and framed on many a Croat's wall. But modernity is reaching Pag too: as is often the case with isolated spots, it's become known as a great party location, and Zrće beach, a few kilometres from Novalja, is getting a reputation as the 'Croatian Ibiza', which, depending on your taste, is either a good or bad thing.

History

The island was inhabited by the Illyrians before falling to the Romans in the 1st century BC. The Romans constructed forts and

aqueducts. The Slavs settled around Novalja in the 7th century AD and began building churches and basilicas. In the 11th century a new settlement called Stari Grad emerged in the south of the island, 2km south of today's Pag, near the salt works that became the foundation of the island's economy. The next centuries were turbulent for the island as it competed with Zadar and Rab over the salt trade. Zadar launched brutal attacks on the island in the 13th and 14th centuries, but in 1409 it was sold to Venice along with Zadar and the rest of Dalmatia.

Orientation

The 63km karstic island is a strange moon-scape defined by two mountain ridges, patches of shrubs and a dozen or so villages and hamlets. There are peaceful coves and bays for swimming in around the main towns of Pag and Novalja, as well as the smaller settlements of Šimuni, Mandre and Straško on the southwestern coast, but the island is never overrun by tourists. Pag Town is roughly in the centre of the island on the southeastern coast of the large Pag Bay (Paški Zaljev), while Novalja is 20km northwest on a small cove. The island is linked to the mainland by Pag Bridge in the southeast.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

There's a catamaran service running from Rijeka to Novalja (40KN, two hours) that passes through Rab (35KN, 50 minutes); it operates daily in summer and three times weekly from October to May. If you're travelling up the coast by car, note that there are regular car ferries (12KN) from Žigljen on the northeast coast to Prizna on the mainland, which run roughly hourly in winter and nonstop from June to September.

BUS

There are three buses a day between Pag and Zadar with **Antonio Tours** (www.antoniotours.hr). Buses leave Zadar for Pag (39KN, one hour) at 10.15am, 2pm and 8pm, and go back to Zadar from Pag Town at 6.20am, 12.20pm and 6.20pm. They leave Novalja at 5.50am, 11.50am and 5.50pm. From Pag Town two buses a day go to Rijeka (100KN, three hours, 5am and noon) from Monday to Saturday and one on Sunday, passing Novalja on the way; one bus a day goes to Split (100KN, two hours,

2pm); and there are two daily buses to Zagreb (100KN, three hours, 5am and 8am).

Getting Around

There are six buses a day that make the 30-minute trip between Pag Town and Novalja (20KN, 5am, 11.15am, noon, 3pm, 6pm and 9pm).

Pag's flat landscape makes bike riding a breeze. Rent bikes from **Jadranka** (☎ 098 306 602) in Pag Town or at the travel agencies listed on p26 for about 30/120KN per hour/day. There are about 115km of bike paths taking you all around the island.

PAG TOWN

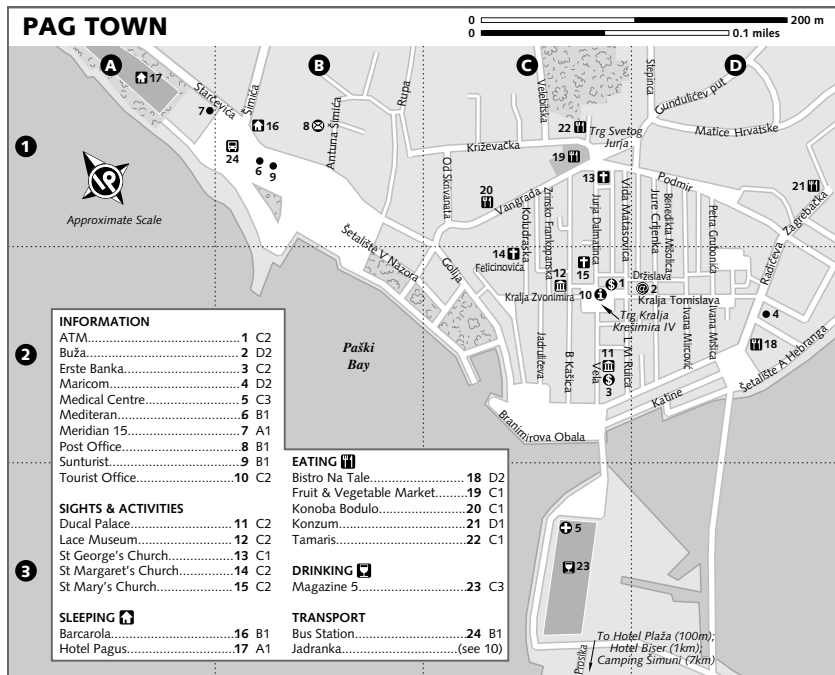
☎ 023 / pop 2420

Pag Town is a tiny collection of narrow streets and low stone houses. Life spills out onto the streets from spring to autumn – locals repair appliances and make lace on stools outside their houses, and the lovely white marble square is a socialising hot spot. The small-town ambience is captivating and intimate. There are pebble beaches to relax upon after a morning of lace shopping.

In the early 15th century, the prosperous salt business prompted the construction of Pag Town when nearby Stari Grad could no longer meet the demands of its burgeoning population. The Venetians engaged the finest builder of the time, Juraj Dalmatinac, to design a new city and the first cornerstone was laid in 1443. In accordance with what were then the latest ideas in town planning, the main streets and the cross streets intersect at right angles and lead to four city gates. In the centre, there's a square with a cathedral, St Mary's Church (Crkva Svete Marije), a ducal palace and a bishop's palace, which remained unfinished because Pag never succeeded in having its own bishop. In 1499, Dalmatinac began working on the city walls but only the northern corner, with parts of a castle, remains.

Orientation

The old town, bordered by Vangrada and Podmir, is a pedestrian zone that retains the original simplicity of its architecture. Everyone congregates around the cafés and benches on the main square, Trg Kralja Krešimira IV. Outside the old town there's



PAG CHEESE

There's no other cheese quite like the distinctive *paški sir* – Pag cheese. Salty and sharp, its flavour easily recalls the island that makes it. As sea winds whip through the low slopes of Pag Island, a thin deposit of salt permeates the ground and the flora it sprouts. The free-range sheep of Pag Island graze freely on the salty herbs and plants, transmitting the flavour to their meat and milk.

The milk for Pag cheese is gathered in May when the flavour is at its peak. It is left unpasteurised, which allows a stronger flavour to emerge during the fermentation process. When the cheese finally ferments, it's rubbed with sea salt, coated with olive oil and left to age for anywhere from six months to a year. The result is a tangy, firm cheese that ripens into an aromatic, dry, crumbly cheese as it ages. As a starter, it's served in thin slices with black olives but it can also be grated and used as a topping instead of Parmesan cheese.

a newer section with a couple of hotels, narrow beaches on the bay, travel agencies and restaurants. The bus station (no left-luggage) is next to Hotel Jadran, just outside the old town – it's really just an area where you wait for the bus, and you buy tickets on the bus itself. A bridge across the bay to the southwest leads to a residential quarter, with the large hotels, bigger beaches and most private accommodation.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Buža (☎ 600 384; Kralja Tomislava 5; per hr 20KN; ☹ 8am–9pm) A bar with one terminal; the only internet spot in town.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Medical centre (☎ 611 001; Gradska Plaža bb)

MONEY

ATM (Trg Kralja Krešimira IV)

Erste Banka (Vela 18) Changes money.

POST

Post office (Antuna Šimića; ☹ 8am–9pm Mon–Sat)

Change money and access cash using MasterCard or Diners Club card.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ /fax 611 286; www.pag-tourism.hr; Trg Kralja Krešimira IV 1; ☹ 7am–midnight mid-Jun–mid-Sep, 7am–noon & 6pm–midnight May–mid-Jun & mid-Sep–Oct) Friendly and reasonably equipped.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Travel agencies are open daily May to September, and Monday to Saturday only for the rest of the year (hours vary).

Maricom (☎ /fax 611 331; www.pag-tourist-service.hr; Stjepana Radića 8)

Mediteran (☎ /fax 611 238; www.mediteran-pag.com; Vladimira Nazora 12)

Meridian 15 (☎ 612 162; www.meridian15.hr; Ante Starčevića 1) Near the Hotel Pagus.

Sunturist (☎ 612 040; www.sunturist-pago.hr; Vladimira Nazora bb)

Sights & Activities

The simple, Gothic **St Mary's Church** (Crkva Svete Marije; ☎ 611 576; Trg Kralja Krešimira IV; ☹ 9am–noon & 5–7pm May–Sep, Mass only Oct–Apr), built by Juraj Dalmatinac, is in perfect harmony with the modest structures surrounding it. The lunette over the portal shows the Virgin with women of Pag in medieval blouses and headdresses, and there are two rows of unfinished sculptures of saints. Completed in the 16th century, the interior was renovated with baroque ceiling decorations in the 18th century. The wooden crucifix on the altar dates from the 12th century and there is a variety of gold and silver liturgical objects in the church's treasury.

Other notable churches include **St Margaret's Church** (Crkva Svete Margarite; ☎ 611 069; Felicinovića 1; ☹ Mass only), with a Renaissance-baroque facade and a treasury with paintings and reliquaries, and **St George's Church** (Crkva Svetog Jurja; Trg Svetog Jurja; ☹ exhibits 8–10pm), which houses changing art exhibits. Notice also the elaborate portal over the **Ducal Palace** (Kneževa Palača), attributed to a disciple of Dalmatinac.

No visit to Pag would be complete without a look at the small **Lace Museum** (Kralja Dmitra Zvonimira; admission 5KN; ☹ 8am–11pm mid-Jun–mid-Sep) off the main square, which gives a good overview of the island's most famous craft.

Festivals & Events

The last day of July is the **Pag Carnival**, a good opportunity to see the traditional *kolo* (a lively Slavic circle dance) and appreciate the elaborate traditional dresses of Pag. The main square is filled with dancers and musicians, and a theatre troupe presents the traditional folk play *Paška robinja* (The Slave Girl of Pag).

Sleeping

Hotels in Pag have a wide price range, but generally provide good value for money. Most close between October and May.

If there are no women waiting at the bus station to offer *sobe*, you'll find a lot of signs advertising *sobe* on Prosika across the bridge. Any of the travel agencies on opposite will find you private accommodation for about 150/250KN for a single/double and 340KN for a studio.

Camping Šimuni (☎ 697 441; www.camping-simuni.hr; Šimuni; per adult low-high €2.90-7.80; ☺ Apr-Sep) This is on a gorgeous cove with a gravel beach on the southwestern coast, about halfway between Pag Town and Novalja, near the port of Šimuni. All buses from Pag to Novalja stop here.

Barcarola (☎ 611 239, 091 585 4076; Vladimira Nazora 12; d low-high €30-40; ☺ Apr-Nov; ☹) Three double rooms above a *konoba*, this new place is perfect for couples on a budget who want to be close to the old town. All rooms have balconies and en suite bathrooms, along with basic decor (think 1980s technicolour linen).

Hotel Biser (☎ 611 333; www.hotel-biser.com; Matoša 8; s low-high €35-58, d €48-73; ☎ ☹ ☹) This 24-room hotel has comfortable enough rooms with satellite TV and balconies, although the outside has a boxy look that is all too prevalent in Croatia. It's around 1km from the old town (across the water), but close to the beach.

Hotel Pagus (☎ 611 310; www.coning-turizam.hr; Starčevića 1; s low-high €38-74, d €72-144; ☎ ☹ ☹) A four-star beauty, the Pagus was fully renovated in 2007 and now drips with comfort. The classically furnished rooms are elegant and stylish, the balconies overlook the sea, and the wellness centre is a real treat. The hotel is on a narrow beach in the bay, a few minutes' walk from the old town.

Hotel Plaža (☎ 600 855; www.plaza-croatia.com; Marka Marulića 14; s low-high €40-57, d €80-114; ☎ ☹ ☹ ☹) Another four-star place, though further from the old town, the Plaža has lovely rooms

with balconies and an excellent restaurant. It's on the beach, so it's perfect for comfort and relaxation.

Eating

Most restaurants offer a little bit of everything – pizza, pasta, fish, meat and salads. Curiously, the price of a starter of Pag cheese isn't much cheaper than anywhere else on the coast, but the quality is bound to be better.

Bistro Na Tale (☎ 611 194; Radićeva 2; mains from 30KN) Immensely popular, it has meat (try the Pag lamb) and seafood dishes, though you can get pizza and pasta, too. Ask what the fresh fish of the day is – it's prepared simply but deliciously.

Tamaris (☎ 612 277; Križevačka bb; mains from 30KN) Pizza, fresh pasta and fried calamari are prepared for a local crowd at a reasonable price. The green pasta with scampi is a particularly good dish.

Konoba Bodulo (☎ 611 989; Vangrada 19; mains from 30KN) At this family-run spot you can dine on country-fresh ingredients under a grapevine.

Self-caterers can pick up fruit, vegetables and local cheese at the daily morning fruit and vegetable market; head to the Konzum supermarket for more elaborate supplies.

Drinking & Entertainment

Magazine 5 (☎ from 11pm Jul & Aug, from 11pm Sat & Sun Sep-Jun) In a former salt warehouse just over the bridge, this is the only disco in town and a good place to research Pagian party habits.

Shopping

Pag offers the most distinctive products in all Croatia. It would be a shame to leave the island without buying lace, since the prices are relatively cheap and buying a piece helps keep the tradition alive. A small circle or star about 10cm in diameter costs about 120KN, but it takes a good 24 hours to make. Larger pieces cost from 200KN to 300KN. The best way to buy lace is to walk down Kralja Tomislava or Kralja Dmitra Zvonimira in the morning while the women are lace-making and buy from them directly. Prices are marked on a card and bargaining is usually futile.

Pag cheese is not as easy to find, although you should be able to get it at the morning market. Otherwise, look out for homemade 'Paški Sir' signs posted outside a house on a remote road somewhere. The asking price for a kilogram is usually 100KN, but you

THE CROATIAN IBIZA

Despite the overwhelming sense of calm on Pag Island, there's a pocket of wild partying on its beaches every year. Zrće, Caska, Straško and Trinčel beaches are on lovely, wide shallow coves, and, while families bring their kids to play and swim in the day, the big kids hit the same spots at night for Croatia's biggest summer club scene. The most popular is **Zrće beach**, just before the entrance to Novalja. Awarded Blue Flag status, this is where three big clubs, **Aquarius**, **Kalypto** and **Papaya**, start their 24-hour parties from June to September (for details on events see <http://novaljapag.com>). Numerous YouTube videos attest to the vigorous arse-shaking, prolific beer and cocktail drinking, and hundreds of nearly naked gyrating bodies clustered together at these clubs. Locals complain about all the sex and drugs and rock'n'roll (well, in this case, techno), but the clubbers are having the time of their lives.

can often bargain down to 70KN or 80KN a kilogram.

NOVALJA

☎ 023 / pop 1900

Although Novalja lacks the unique charm of Pag Town, its beaches, especially Zrće beach, have sparked a thriving tourist business through huge summer nightclubs (see boxed text, above). On the northwestern coast of the island, the town, port and bay are protected from the winds that can buffet Pag Town.

Orientation & Information

The town centre is compact with the tourist office, post office and all shops and services within a few blocks of each other. The bus stop is on the eastern edge of town. Follow the harbour road straight ahead to find travel agencies and shops.

Chery (☎ 662 174; B Radić) Finds private accommodation and has boat information.

Novalja Tourist Board (☎ 663 570; www.tz-novalja.hr; Šetalšte Hrvatskih Mornara 1; ☎ 8am-8pm Jul & Aug, to 3pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun) Will find private accommodation.

Sleeping & Eating

The tourist office or any travel agency can help find private accommodation. You'll pay from 75KN to 100KN per person.

Hotel Loža (☎ 663 381; www.turno.hr; Trg Loža; s low-high 203-356KN, d 406-712KN; (P)) The rooms and design here are pretty much standard issue, but you won't be uncomfortable. Some rooms have balconies and views over the sea, and the hotel is in the town centre.

Hotel Liburnija (☎ 661 328; www.turno.hr; Šetalšte Hrvatskih Mornara bb; s low-high 137-316KN, d 274-632KN; (P)) A few hundred metres southeast of the town centre, this hotel is right next to a beach.

Staraci More (☎ 662 423; Braće Radić; mains from 40KN) On the quay, this seafood restaurant serves up the right stuff without fuss or pretension.

ŠIBENIK-KNIN REGION

Spreading over several hills at the centre of a 10km bay, Šibenik makes an excellent base to explore this region. The Kornati Islands are a Mediterranean heaven, and Krka National Park is brimming with swimming and hiking opportunities.

ŠIBENIK

☎ 022 / pop 41,012

Despite the fact that Šibenik often gets overlooked by visitors to northern Dalmatia, the city has really been coming into its own in the last few years. There are exciting new sights, restaurants and bars opening every year and the town is abuzz with new energy. Find a place to stay in town (avoiding the restaurants and hotels scattered among the coastal tourist complexes) and stroll along the harbour and through the steep back streets and alleys. Šibenik has one of the most remarkable cathedrals in Croatia and a network of curving streets and sunny squares from the 15th and 16th centuries. This is a true 'rough diamond'.

The city also makes an excellent base for exploring two beautiful national parks (especially the waterfalls at Krka National Park), which can both be visited without booking an organised tour.

History

Unlike many other Dalmatian coastal communities, Šibenik was settled first by Croat tribes, not Illyrians or Romans.

First mentioned in the 11th century by the Croatian king Krešimir IV, the city was conquered by Venice in 1116 but was tossed around between Venice, Hungary, Byzantium and the Kingdom of Bosnia until Venice seized control in 1412 after a three-year fight. At the end of the 15th century, the Ottomans burst into the region as part of their struggle against Venice.

Over the course of the succeeding two centuries, they periodically attacked the town, disrupting trade and agriculture. The fortresses that were built by the Venetians in defence of the town are still visible, most notably the fortress of St Nikola at the entrance to the Šibenski Channel. The Ottoman threat receded with the 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz, but the city continued to suffer from Venetian rule until it passed into the hands of Austria in 1797, where it remained until 1918.

Šibenik fell under attack in 1991 from the Yugoslav federal army, and was subject to shelling until its liberation as part of 'Operation Storm' by the Croatian army in 1995. Little physical damage is visible, but the city's aluminium industry, which was an important part of the regional economy, was shattered. Šibenik has started to make a serious comeback in the past few years.

Orientation

The city spreads like an amphitheatre from the harbour uphill to the surrounding hills. The main road is Kralja Zvonimira and the old town lies between it and the harbour, which is in a large bay. The entire old town is a pedestrian area and contains the cathedral and several notable churches.

The oldest part of the town is on Zagrebačka and the streets running north. The bus station is in a modern jumble of concrete blocks in the city's southern corner. The main commercial street is Ante Starčevića (then Ante Šupuka) east of the old town, with the train station lying southeast.

Information

The post office, travel agencies and Croatia Express exchange money. There's an ATM on Kralja Zvonimira and a Zagrebačka Banka with an ATM on Ante Šupuka, among other places.

Atlas Travel Agency (☎ 330 232; Trg Republike Hrvatske 2; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) Changes money and books excursions.

Hospital (☎ 334 421; Stjepana Radića 83)

NIK Travel Agency (☎/fax 338 540; www.nik.hr; Ante Šupuka 5; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) The largest travel agency in town. It finds private accommodation and sells international bus and air tickets.

Post office (Vladimira Nazora 51; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat) You can make calls and change money here.

Tourist information centre (☎ 214 441; www.sibenik-tourism.hr; Obala Franje Tuđmana 5; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 8am-2pm Sun mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 8am-3pm Mon-Fri mid-Sep-mid-Jun)

Sights

CATHEDRAL OF ST JAMES

The **Cathedral of St James** (Katedrala Svetog Jakova; Trg Republike Hrvatske; ☎ 8am-noon & 6-8pm May-Oct, Mass only Nov-Apr) is Juraj Dalmatinac's masterpiece. The crowning glory of the Dalmatian coast, the cathedral, a World Heritage site, is worth a considerable detour to see. Its most unusual feature is the frieze of 71 heads on the exterior walls of the apses. These portraits in stone are vivid character studies of ordinary 15th-century citizens. Placid, annoyed, proud or fearful, their expressions convey the timelessness of human emotion through the centuries.

Dalmatinac was not the first (and nor the last) sculptor to work on the cathedral. Construction began in 1431, but after 10 years of toying around with various Venetian builders, the city appointed the Zadar native Dalmatinac, who increased the size and transformed the conception of the church into a transitional Gothic-Renaissance style.

In addition to the exterior frieze, other examples of Dalmatinac's style include the two aisle staircases descending into the sacristy on one side and the exquisite baptistery on the other, in which three angels support the baptismal font. The latter was carved by Andrija Aleši after Dalmatinac's designs. Other interior artworks worth noting are the crypt of Bishop Šizigorić (by Dalmatinac), who supported the building of the cathedral; the altar painting of St Fabijan and St Sebastijan (by Zaniberti); the painting *The Gift of the Wise Men* (by Ricciardi); and, next to it, two marble reliefs of angels (by Firentinac). Note also the *Lion's Portal* on the northern side, created by Dalmatinac and Bonino da Milano, in which two lions support columns containing the figures of Adam and Eve, who appear to be excruciatingly embarrassed by their nakedness.

ŠIBENIK

INFORMATION		SLEEPING		EATING	
Atlas Travel Agency.....	1 B2	Church of St Barbara.....	11 B2	Fruit & Vegetable Market.....	19 E2
ATM.....	2 D1	Church of St Ivan.....	12 B2	Pelegrini.....	(see 9)
Croatia Express.....	3 F2	Franciscan Church & Monastery.....	13 C2	Restoran Tinel.....	20 B1
Hospital.....	4 D1	Medieval Garden of St Lawrence's Monastery.....	14 A2	Supermarket.....	21 C1
NIK Travel Agency.....	5 F2	Museum of Church Art.....	(see 11)	Vijećnica.....	(see 16)
Post Office.....	6 D2	St Ana Fortress.....	15 A1	DRINKING	
Tourist Information Centre.....	7 C2	Town Hall.....	16 B2	No 4 Club/Cetvorka.....	22 C1
Zagrebačka Banka.....	8 F2	Town Museum.....	17 B2	TRANSPORT	
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		DRINKING		Bus Station.....	23 D3
Bunari Museum.....	9 B2	TRANSPORT		Jadrolinija.....	24 C2
Cathedral of St James.....	10 B2	DRINKING			

The cathedral was constructed entirely of stone quarried from the islands of Brač, Korčula, Rab and Krk, and is reputed to be the world's largest church built completely of stone without brick or wood supports. The unusual domed-roof complex was completed after Dalmatinac's death by Nikola Firentinac, who continued the facade in a pure Renaissance style. The church was completed in 1536.

TOWN HALL

Across the square from the cathedral is the town hall, a harmonious Renaissance arrangement of columns and a balustrade, which was constructed between 1533 and 1546. Destroyed during an Allied air attack in 1943, the building was completely rebuilt to its original form.

MEDIEVAL GARDEN OF ST LAWRENCE'S MONASTERY

This is the hottest new attraction in town. The **medieval garden** (Vrt Svetog Lovre; ☎ 212 515; www.cromovens.hr; Trg Republike Hrvatske 4; adult/student 15/10KN) has been fully restored after

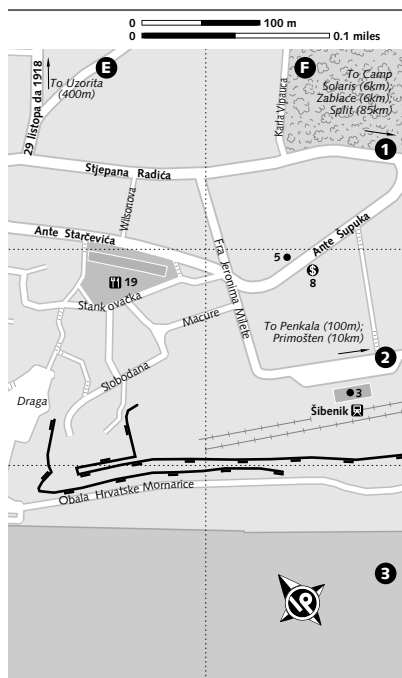
an entire century, and opened in late 2007. Designed and completed by Dragutin Kiš (an award-winning landscape artist), the garden has patches of medicinal plants, water fountains and some pretty pathways. There's also a café and a good restaurant, plus music events during the summer months. Opening hours vary, so it's best to phone ahead.

BUNARI MUSEUM

Another excellent addition to Šibenik's sights is the **Bunari Museum** (☎ 485 055; Obala Palih Omladinaca 2; adult/student 15/10KN; ☎ 8am-midnight). It's an interactive affair set inside the old water reservoir complex, with children having most of the fun (there are many games to be played), while adults get to learn about Šibenik's past from text boards and videos. The museum hosts the restaurant Pelegrini (p212) on its roof terrace.

TOWN MUSEUM

On the eastern side of the cathedral is the **Town Museum** (Gradski Muzej; ☎ 213 880; www.muzej-sibenik.hr; Gradska Vrata 3; admission free; ☎ 10am-1pm & 7-10pm



Apr-Sep, 10am-1pm Oct-Mar), which was closed for refurbishment at the time of research, but is looking to re-open in 2009.

OTHER CHURCHES

The town has a wealth of beautiful churches but many are only open for Mass. The **Church of St Ivan** (Crkva Svetog Ivana; Trg Ivana Paula II) is a fine example of Gothic-Renaissance architecture dating from the end of the 15th century. The **Franciscan Church & Monastery** (Franjevački Samostan; Ćulinovića), which dates from the end of the 14th century, has 14th- and 15th-century frescoes and an array of Venetian baroque paintings.

The Church of St Barbara (Crkva Svete Barbare) houses the **Museum of Church Art** (Kralja Tomislava; admission 10KN; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri). The museum exhibits paintings, engravings and sculptures from the 14th to the 18th centuries.

ST ANA FORTRESS

You can climb to the top of St Ana Fortress in the northwest for a magnificent view over Šibenik and the surrounding region.

Festivals & Events

Šibenik hosts a renowned **International Children's Festival** during the last week of June and the first week of July. There are craft workshops, along with music, dance, children's film and theatre, puppets and parades.

Sleeping

Most private accommodation is in neighbouring villages such as Primošten, Tribunj and Vodice along the coast, which are easily reached by bus from Šibenik. In July and August, you may be met by women at the bus or train station offering *sobe* at much lower prices. NIK Travel Agency (p209) has private rooms from about 250KN and studios from about 425KN.

Commercial accommodation possibilities are largely confined to the resort centre **Solaris** (☎ 363 951; www.solaris.hr), 6km southwest of town. It's an enormous complex on the beach with six hotels, two highly populous camping grounds and a few self-contained apartments.

Zablaće (☎/fax 354 015; Solaris; per adult/site 39/65KN) A smaller and cheaper camping option than Camp Solaris.

Camp Solaris (☎ 364 450; www.solaris.hr; Solaris; per adult/site 42/75KN; ☎ mid-Mar-Oct; ☎) This elaborate camping ground comes complete with a sea-water pool, sports facilities and restaurants.

Hotel Jadran (☎ 212 644; www.rivijera.hr; Obala Oslobođenja 52; s low-high 380-470KN, d 760-940KN) This modern hotel conveniently located along the harbour is the only one in town. It's somewhat impersonal but in excellent condition and rooms are equipped with satellite TV. The hotel can be warm in summer, so try to get a room overlooking the harbour to get some breezes.

Eating

Like the rest of the Dalmatian coast, the menus in Šibenik restaurants lean heavily towards fish and are influenced by the pastas and risottos of Italy.

Penkala (☎ 219 869; Fra Jeronima Milete 17; mains from 25KN; ☎ closed Sun) Popular with the locals and very good, this neighbourhood spot serves up homespun cooking with a focus on hearty meat stews.

Uzorita (☎ 213 660; Bana Josipa Jelačića 50; mains from 60KN) This is the oldest restaurant in Šibenik, dating from 1899. It has a shady terrace and

a menu featuring fish and meat dishes with a nod to bean-eaters.

ourpick Pelegrini (☎ 485 055; Obala Palih Omladinaca 2; mains from 60KN) Sitting on the top of the Bunari Museum (p210) and opened in 2007, this is the suavest new restaurant in Šibenik. The interior is stylish and Mediterranean minimalist, while the menu is full of creamy risottos (try the summer risotto of courgettes, mint and bacon), fresh fish and perfectly prepared pasta. The wine list has the best of Croatia.

Vijećnica (☎ 213 605; Trg Republike Hrvatske; mains from 70KN) On the ground floor of the town hall, across from the cathedral, the terrace and stunning interior offer a fine setting and there are many cosmopolitan dishes on the menu.

Restoran Tinel (☎ 331 815; Trg Puckih Kapetana 1; mains from 75KN) This two-floor restaurant offers some of the finest dining in town with an excellent wine list. Try the wonderful *brodet* (mixed stewed fish with polenta) accompanied by an Istrian *malvazija* (type of white wine).

Self-caterers can stock up at the **supermarket** (Kralja Zvonimira) or the **fruit & vegetable market** (btwn Ante Starčevića & Stankovačka).

Drinking

The seafront area along Obala Prvoboraca is full of bars and youngsters congregating in the summer months.

No 4 Club/Četvorka (☎ 217 517; Trg Dinka Zavorovića 4) Young trendies down cocktails on the ground floor and snack upstairs.

Getting There & Away

Jadrolinija (☎ 213 468; Obala Franje Tuđmana 8; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri) has tickets for ferry sailings.

Šibenik is well connected by bus to local and international destinations:

Destination	Fare (KN)	Duration (hr)	Daily services
Dubrovnik	217	6	8
Murter	24	¾	9
Osijek	325	8½	1
Primošten	16	½	6
Pula	220	8	3
Rijeka	176	6	13
Split	80	1¾	24
Zadar	60	1½	48
Zagreb	160	6½	15

There's one overnight train (149KN, seven hours, 10.55pm) and two daily trains (6½ hours, 7.40am and 3.15pm) between Zagreb

and Šibenik, plus six trains a day between Šibenik and Split (43KN, two hours), dropping to four on Sunday. Book your ticket in advance, as they can sell out fast on weekends.

KRKA NATIONAL PARK

☎ 022

From the western foot of the Dinaric Range into the sea near Šibenik, the 72.5km Krka River and its wonderful waterfalls define the landscape of the Šibenik-Knin region and are the focus of the Krka National Park. Like Plitvice Lakes (p195), the Krka waterfalls are a karstic phenomenon. The river water formed a deep canyon (up to 200m) through the limestone and brought calcium carbonate with it. Mosses and algae retain the calcium carbonate and encrust it in their roots. The material is called tufa and is formed by billions of plants growing on top of one another. The growths create barriers in the river that produce waterfalls. Unlike Plitvice Lakes, the volume of water rushing through the canyon is much greater, averaging 55 cu metres of water per second at the last cascade, Skradinski Buk, making the spectacle even more dramatic.

Orientation

The main entries to the park are located at the Skradin and Lozovac entrances, which lie on the western and eastern banks respectively.

Park Entry

Park **entry fees** (adult/concession Jul-Aug 80/65KN, Apr-Jun, Sep & Oct 65/50KN, Nov-Mar 25/15KN) is paid at Skradin. The ticket includes a boat or bus ride to Skradinski Buk.

Information

The Skradin **tourist office** (☎ 771 306; www.skradin.hr, in Croatian; Trg Male Gospe 3; ☎ 8am-9pm Jul & Aug, 9am-1pm & 5-8pm Sep-Jun) is along the harbour and will put you in touch with owners of private accommodation. The **Krka National Park office** (☎ 217 720; www.npkrka.hr; Trg Ivana Pavla II, Skradin; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) has information and can arrange excursions.

Sights & Activities

The landscape of rocks, cliffs, caves and chasms is a remarkable sight, but the national park also contains several important cultural landmarks. Near its northernmost point there is an Orthodox monastery; it's sometimes called Arandelovac (Holy Archangel), or

EXCURSIONS FROM ŠIBENIK

Šibenik is easily connected by ferry to several small islands that can be explored in a day trip (or overnight, if you so desire). There's also **Primošten**, on the mainland, by far the most attractive town within reach of Šibenik; it's about 20km south of the town centre. This small village of medieval streets is dominated by a large belfry and neatly contained within a peninsula, making it resemble the Istrian town of Rovinj. Across the bay is another peninsula thickly wooded with pines and bordered by pebbly beaches. The hotels are discrete enough not to spoil the landscape.

Zlarin is only 30 minutes by boat from Šibenik and is known for the coral that used to be abundant before it was torn from the sea and sold for jewellery. Because there are no cars allowed on the island, it makes a tranquil retreat from Šibenik and boasts a sand beach, pine woods and a spacious port.

Only 15 minutes further on from Zlarin, **Prvić** contains two villages, Prvić Luka and Šepurine (another 10 minutes on the ferry), which retain the flavour of simple fishing settlements.

Murter is 29km northwest of Šibenik, separated from the mainland by a narrow channel. The steep southwestern coast is indented by small coves, most notably the cove of **Slanica**, which is the best for swimming. Murter village is in the northwest and has a good harbour and not-so-good beach. The **tourist office** (☎/fax 434 995; www.murter.com; Rudina 2; 🕒 7.30am-9.30pm mid-Jun-mid-Sep, 8am-noon mid-Sep-mid-Jun) can provide further information on the island.

Although Murter village is unremarkable, it is an excellent base from which to explore the Kornati Islands (p214). Booking an excursion to these islands from Murter will allow you to see more of the archipelago than if you were to come from Šibenik or Zadar, since Murter is much closer. **Coronata** (☎ 435 933; www.coronata.hr; Žrtava Ratova 17) is one of several agencies that run full-day excursions to the Kornati Islands (250KN) from Murter.

If you'd like to stay on an island, **KornatTourist** (☎ 435 855; www.kornattourist.hr; Hrvatskih Vladara 2, Murter) arranges private accommodation. It will cost about €600 per week for a two-person cottage including the boat transfer, a twice-weekly food delivery, gas for lighting and the admission fee for the Kornati National Park. You can also rent a motorboat for €190 per week.

Keep in mind that Murter inhabitants are the owners of the Kornati Islands and visit them occasionally by private boat to tend their land. Asking around town may put you in touch with someone who will run you out there and arrange for you to stay overnight in their cottage for less money.

often simply referred to as the **Krka monastery**. First mentioned in 1402 as the endowment of Jelena Šubić, the sister of Emperor Dušan of Serbia, it was built and rebuilt until the end of the 18th century. The monastery has a unique combination of Byzantine and Mediterranean architecture and had a valuable inventory dating back to the 14th century, some of which was destroyed during the recent war.

Below the monastery the river becomes a lake created by the **Roški Slap** barrier downstream and the valley narrows into a 150m gorge. Roški Slap is a 650m-long stretch that begins with shallow steps and continues in a series of branches and islets to become 27m-high cascades. On the eastern side of the falls you can see water mills that used to process wheat.

The first kilometre of the lake is bordered by reeds and bulrushes sheltering marsh birds. Next downstream is the **Medu Gredama gorge**

with cliffs 150m high cut into a variety of dramatic shapes. Then the gorge opens out into Lake Visovac with **Samostan Visovac**, its lovely island monastery. In the 14th century hermits built a small monastery and church, which they abandoned under threat from the Turks in 1440. They were succeeded by Bosnian Franciscans in 1445, who remained throughout Turkish rule until 1699. The church on the island dates from the end of the 17th century and the bell tower was built in 1728. On the western bank is a forest of holm oaks and on the eastern bank is a forest of white oaks.

Six kilometres downstream you come to the largest waterfall, **Skradinski Buk**, with an 800m-long cascade covering 17 steps and rising to almost 46m. As at Roški Slap, water mills used to grind wheat, mortars pounded felt and huge baskets held rugs and fabrics. The mills are deserted now but Venetians used to collect a small fortune in taxes from the Krka

mills. Downstream from Skradinski Buk is less interesting due to the construction of the Jaruga power plant in 1904. It takes about an hour to walk around Skradinski Buk and see the waterfalls. Bring a swimsuit because it is possible to swim in the lower lake.

Sleeping & Eating

There are several restaurants and grocery stores along the harbour. Skradinski Buk has a few snack places and inexpensive restaurants, plus there's one hotel in Skradin.

Hotel Skradinski Buk (☎ 771 771; www.skradin.skibuk.hr; Burinovac bb, Skradin; s low-high 275-372KN, d 363-575KN; 📍 🚶 🚰) This hotel is fairly standard issue in terms of decoration, but it has rooms that are nicely outfitted with satellite TV and internet access. Some of the rooms can be quite cramped.

Getting There & Around

Although several agencies sell excursions to the falls from Šibenik, Zadar and other cities, it is possible, and certainly more interesting, to visit the falls independently if you base yourself in Šibenik.

There are six daily buses from Šibenik that make the 30-minute run to Skradin. The bus drops you outside Skradin's old town. You pay

the park admission fee here, which allows you to board a boat to Skradinski Buk. It's about a 45-minute walk if you don't want to wait for a boat. If you take one of the five daily buses to Lozovac, you can take a bus to Skradinski Buk (also included in the park admission price), but you miss out on the boat ride through the canyon that you can enjoy from Skradin.

From Skradinski Buk, there are three boats daily from April to October going to Visovac (adult/concession 70/40KN) and Roški Slap (100/60KN). From Roški Slap, there's a boat to the Krka monastery (70/40KN).

At other times of the year, you should first call the Krka National Park office (p212) or ask at the tourist office in Šibenik (p209) about the boat schedule.

KORNATI ISLANDS

Composed of 147 mostly uninhabited islands, islets and reefs covering 69 sq km, some of which are a national park, the Kornati Islands are the largest and densest archipelago in the Adriatic. Typically karst terrain, the islands are riddled with cracks, caves, grottoes and rugged cliffs. Since there are no sources of fresh water on the islands, they are mostly barren, sometimes with a light covering of grass. The evergreens and holm oaks that used to be

KNIN & THE INTERIOR

The interior of the Šibenik-Knin region includes part of the Military Frontier (Vojna Krajina) established by the Austrians in the 16th century as protection from the Turks. It was settled by Vlachs and Morlachs belonging to the Orthodox Church and thus developed a large Serbian population. Upon the Croatian declaration of independence in 1990, the Krajina Serbs, with the help of arms from Belgrade, established their own state and made Knin its capital. When Croatia retook the territory in 1995, virtually the entire Serbian population was expelled, leaving a landscape of smashed buildings and ruined villages. Although the physical damage has been repaired, the economy is in tatters and few Serbs are returning. As a result, many of the formerly thriving small towns in the interior remain underpopulated.

Located on a historical hot seat on the borders of Dalmatia and Bosnia, Knin was an important trading centre in the Middle Ages at the intersection of roads running between Slavonia, Bosnia and the Dalmatian coast. When Croatia was ruled by Croatian kings in the 10th century, Knin was the capital and the seat of the Croatian aristocracy. Realising their vulnerability, they erected the fortress that still looms over the town from steep Spas hill. When the Croatian kings fell, Knin was battered by a series of would-be occupiers until the Ottomans snatched it in 1522. Later, Venice swept in followed by Austria, France and then Austria again.

The huge Croatian flag flying from the top of the fortress is more to do with recent events than medieval history, though the town's economy evaporated along with the expelled Serbs in 1995. Although there's not much for travellers to do besides climb up the fortress, a visit would help the local economy. There's one homely hotel, the **Hotel Mihovil** (☎ 022-664 444; www.zivkovic.hr, in Croatian; Vrpolje bb; d 2000KN) with friendly owners and decent rooms. Enjoy the mountain views towards Bosnia and Hercegovina from the café on top of the fortress.

found on some islands were long ago burned down in order to clear the land. Far from stripping the islands of their beauty, the deforestation has highlighted startling rock formations, whose stark whiteness against the deep blue Adriatic is an eerie and wonderful sight.

Information

The **Kornati National Park office** (☎ 434 662; www.kornati.hr; Butina 2; 🕒 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) in Murter village on the island of Murter has all the information you may need on the park.

Sights

The Kornati Islands form themselves into four series running northwest to southeast. The first two series of islands lie closer to the mainland and are known locally as Gornji Kornat. The largest and most indented of these islands is **Žut**.

The other two series of islands, facing the open sea, comprise the **Kornati National Park** (adult/child 50/25KN) and are the most dramatically indented. **Kornat Island** is by far the largest island in the park, extending 25km in length but only 2.5km in width. Both the land and sea are within the protection of the national park. Fishing is strictly limited in order to allow the regeneration of fish shoals that have been severely overfished. Groper, bass, conger eel, sea bream, pickerel, sea scorpion, cuttlefish, squid, octopus and smelt are some of the fish trying to make a comeback in the region.

The island of **Pišker**a, also within Kornati National Park, was inhabited during the Middle Ages and served as a collection and

storage point for fish. Until the 19th century the islands were owned by the aristocracy of Zadar, but about a hundred years ago peasant ancestors of the present residents of Murter and Dugi Otok bought the islands, built many kilometres of rock walls to divide their properties and used the land to raise sheep.

The islands remain privately owned: 90% belong to Murter residents and the remainder to residents of Dugi Otok. Although there are no longer any permanent inhabitants on the islands, many owners have cottages and fields that they visit from time to time to tend the land. Olive trees account for about 80% of the land under cultivation, followed by vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens. All told, there are about 300 buildings on the Kornati Islands, mostly clustered on the southwestern coast of Kornat.

Getting There & Away

The best way to visit the islands is by boat, especially your own. The largest marina is on the island of Piškera, on the southern part of the strait between Piškera and Lavsa. There's another large marina on Žut and a number of small coves throughout the islands where boaters can dock.

Otherwise, you can book an excursion from Zadar, Šibenik, Split and other coastal cities or arrange private accommodation from Murter (see boxed text, p213). There is no ferry transport between the Kornati Islands and the mainland.