



TRIP DETAILS

The Best of the VIA DINARICA

2 – 26 September 2020 (25 Days)

Escorted by Jos Bauk

A trekking and cultural journey through the Western Balkans.
National Geographic Best of the World Destination for 2017.

The Via Dinarica is the world's newest long-distance trail extending almost 2,000 kilometres from Slovenia to Albania.

Concentrating on "The White Trail", following the spine of the Dinaric Alps, we traverse high shepherd trails, summit high mountain peaks soaring above spectacular shimmering lakes and view turquoise rivers surrounded by dense, ancient forest.

Taking in the highlights of one of Europe's least explored and most biodiverse mountain ranges, this adventure also explores cultural highlights as we peek in to an old world Europe. Strategically located at the crossroads between Asia and Western Europe, the Balkan region has known its share of conflict and conquest over the centuries. Despite, and maybe because, of this the Balkan people are a warm and truly welcoming people with a unique culture.

Peregrine Travel Centre Perth was the first company in the world to run an itinerary of this length and nature in 2016 and again in 2018, with this experience, we believe we have further improved what is a unique itinerary.



Inclusions:

- Tour escorted by Jos Bauk, Senior Travel Consultant and frequent Croatian traveller.
- Services of local English speaking guide/s.
- Mountain guides.
- Accommodation in local 3*Hotels or Mountain Huts
- Transport by Private bus.
- Meals:
- 24 breakfasts, 23 lunches, 23 dinners.
- Rafting on Tara River (optional).
- All fees and taxes for National Parks, Northern Velebit, Sutjeska, Durmitor and Nature Park Blidinje.
- Sarajevo, & Dubrovnik city tour.
- Wine Tasting Kosovo, Komani & Kotor boat trip
- Group size: min: 8, max: 15

\$8,799.00

per person twin share
excluding flights.

Single supplement: AUD\$995
(18 nights only- Not available at all accommodation)

More information can be found on our website
www.summittravel.com.au

Trip Highlights:

- Enjoy breathtaking views while hiking and exploring among the great peaks of the Via Dinarica trail.
- 6 Balkan countries - Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro.
- UNESCO Cultural & Natural Heritage Sites.
- The Adriatic sea with its unique mediterranean climate and culture.
- Visit Sarajevo: the Jerusalem of the Balkans, and Mostar's bridge of unity.
- Ancient old growth forests and glacier lakes of Sutjeska and Durmitor National Parks.
- Mt Maglic and Bobotov Kuk, optional summits of the highest peaks in Bosnia & Herzegovina and Montenegro.
- Isolated highland villages.
- Rafting through Europe's deepest canyon on the Tara River.
- Day walks in the Accursed Mountains of Albania or ferry ride, being one of the worlds great small boat trips.
- Kotor harbour, voted # 1 city destination in the world by Lonely Planet for 2016.
- Dubrovnik walled city tour.
- Stay at former 15th century palace at a Dalmatian island village & trek to highest point of any Adriatic island.

This itinerary has been designed for those who are looking for an active journey. We will visit many of the Balkan's best National Parks and famous attractions. It has been developed for those who like to walk and explore the less travelled world. We have chosen many excellent walks from 1 to 9+ hours duration, all led by experienced local mountain guides.

The emphasis is on the walking and hiking in the mountains but we also showcase the more remote and difficult to get to locations. We have designed the trip to minimise the amount of time in a vehicle yet still managing to get the most out of the time in the Balkans.

The accommodation has been chosen to lessen travel times and to take advantage of the beautiful natural environment and diverse local culture. We don't just spend time in the big cities, we also stay in classic, rustic mountain huts managed by local families and mountain club volunteers who cook us hearty meals. There is still time spent in historically important cities and villages like Sarajevo, Mostar and Dubrovnik so that you can explore and dig deep to discover the Balkan story.

In 2020 where we offer challenging walks, there will be the option to substitute it with a moderate alternative.

DAY TO DAY ITINERARY SUMMARY

Day 1: Sep 02	(Wed):	Commence Ljubljana, Slovenia
Day 2: Sep 03	(Thu):	Lake Bled and Lake Bohinj
Day 3: Sep 04	(Fri):	Triglav N.P, Hike to Debeli Pec (2014m) & Brda (2009m)
Day 4: Sep 05	(Sat):	Babica Sica hike to Zavizan, Velebit N.P, Croatia
Day 5: Sep 06	(Sun):	Zavizan Premuzic Trail to Alan, Velebit N.P, transfer to Starigrad
Day 6: Sep 07:	(Mon)	Hike up to Velika Paklenica Canyon, Paklenica National Park
Day 7: Sep 08:	(Tue)	Transfer to Mostar and Blidinje National Park, Bosnia & Herzegovina
Day 8: Sep 09:	(Wed):	Blidinje NP Hike Cvrstica & Viliac Peak
Day 9: Sep 10	(Thu):	Viliac - Hajducka Vrata – Vitlenica hike, transfer to Sarajevo
Day 10: Sep 11	(Fri):	Sarajevo City Tour or optional hike to Lukomir village at Bjelasnica Mountain
Day 11: Sep 12	(Sat):	Transfer to Sutjeska NP, Hike to Lake at Donje Bare and Ugljesin Peak
Day 12: Sep 13	(Sun):	Hike to Trnovacko Lake or optional challenging hike to summit of Mount Maglic
Day 13: Sep 14	(Mon):	Rafting option on the Tara River and Durmitor NP, Montenegro
Day 14: Sep 15	(Tue):	Optional challenging ascent to summit of Bobotov Kuk or moderate walk to Zeleni Vir
Day 15: Sep 16	(Wed):	Transfer to Theth Valley, Accursed Mountains, Albania
Day 16: Sep 17	(Thu):	Full day visit of cultural and natural heritage of the Theth valley.
Day 17: Sep 18	(Fri):	Optional Theth to Valbona challenging hike. Moderate option transfer by Theth to Koman Boat Trip to Fierze
Day 18: Sep 19	(Sat):	Hike Maja Rosit pass and to the border of Montenegro.
Day 19: Sep 20	(Sun):	Transfer to Kosovo with visit of the Visoki Decani Monastery, transfer to Prizren Kosovo
Day 20: Sep 21	(Mon):	Full Day Transfer to Kotor via Lake Shkoder and visit winery enroute Montenegro
Day 21: Sep 22	(Tue):	Full day Kotor with boat harbour tour
Day 22: Sep 23	(Wed):	Transfer to Dubrovnik for city tour Croatia
Day 23: Sep 24	(Thu):	Local ferry to Dalmatian island of Brač for stay at the coastal town of Pučišća.
Day 24: Sep 25	(Fri):	Transfer & morning trek to summit of Vidova Gora (778m), the highest peak of any Adriatic Island.
Day 25: Sep 26	(Sat):	Trip ends.





**Price: \$AUD 8,799p.p TWIN SHARE (international flights not included).
Single supplement \$995 (not available for all accommodation)**

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Tour escorted by Jos Bauk, services of local English speaking tour guide and mountain guides.

Transportation: Mini bus 15 + 1, or 20 + 1, with AC. Includes arrival transfer.

Accommodation: Twin share basis hotels (20ngts), Guesthouses (2ngts) Mountain Huts (2ngts)

Most meals: Breakfast (24), Lunches (23), Dinner (23)

All National Park entrance fees and taxes.

Sarajevo & Dubrovnik City Tour.

Tara Rafting with all fees.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED?

International flights (please enquire with Jos for more information), visas, travel insurance, meals not listed, any optional tours and activities during free time, excess baggage charges, tips or gratuities, sodas, alcohol, laundry and items of a personal nature. (Travel insurance is compulsory and can be quoted should you require assistance).

CLIMATE:

While we will be travelling in end of summer /early autumn, which is perfect timing to walk and travel in the Balkans, we cannot guarantee that it will not rain nor have some hot days – we are in the mountains after all! The weather at this time is pleasantly mild. The higher villages and towns in Bosnia and Slovenia may have some cooler nights with day time temperatures ranging between 20-30 degrees, September is generally characterised by slightly falling temperatures, however in days of climate change this can be variable. Croatian seaside towns will be slightly higher, around 24 – 30 + degrees but could be as high as 35+, bring your bathers! Please also see separate gear list for weather information provided after booking. Note: in case of inclement weather and local variables, all hiking will be at the experienced mountain guide's discretion. For safety reasons variations to itinerary may occur.

HEALTH/MOBILITY/DIET

You should be reasonably fit to take full advantage of this trip, it is an active holiday. There will be hill walking, forest rambles and some walking on cobbled streets exploring villages and cities; there will be some hikes of up to 9+ hours along ungrouted trails on hard and at times jagged limestone rock. Many historical buildings are often built on top of a hill and to visit them you will need to follow a road or path up to their entrances. Additionally, although some hotels do have lifts, some hotels don't! Staff and our guides are available to help you with your bags. Some of our accommodation is in local mountain huts which have shared sleeping arrangements & shared facilities like washrooms, you will need to be flexible. We eat a variety of local Bosnian, Slovenian and Croatian food. Enquire if you have any specific dietary concerns.

TOUR ESCORT:

JOS BAUK

Jos is one of our Senior Travel Consultants of 22 years' experience with the Peregrine Travel Centre here in Perth. He has extensive travel experience having travelled to about 90 countries. His family are originally from Croatia and Jos has journeyed back there almost too many times to count, with Jos' sister still living in Croatia and his family having a holiday house on the island of Brač. He has also explored the Western Balkans, having trekked with our local operator in Bosnia many years ago during the end of the war in the early 1990's. Jos accompanied our 2016 Via Dinarica departure, the first operated itinerary of this type by any adventure travel company in the world and also the subsequent second trip in 2018. Jos' other experience includes several Himalayan treks, many European walks plus treks and climbs as varied as Kilimanjaro, Aconcagua, the Kokoda in PNG and the Simien Mountains in Ethiopia. He has travelled extensively in Central & South America, Africa and Antarctica.

HEAD GUIDE:

LORENC KONAJ



Having jumped into the outdoors at the age of seven Lorenc became more than passionate about (fell in love with, actually) the environment and pristine wilderness in what was then known as the country of Yugoslavia.

He soon discovered his other joy in life, that of sharing the beauty of the region with all those visiting this little corner of the globe – a place rich in culture, history and gorgeous nature. Lorenc is a Certified Mountain Guide, Travel Guide and trained Park Ranger, member of a Mountain Rescue Team, and has been leading Green Visions trips since 2000. When not leading trips, Lorenc is involved in training Green Visions tour leaders and mountain guides.

His other interests include Transcendental Meditation, nutrition and the environment, and he received his degree from the Maharishi European Research University, Switzerland in the Science of Creative Intelligence.

For booking information please contact Jos on jos@peregrinewa.com.au or

The Peregrine Travel Centre WA on sales@peregrinewa.com.au or on (08) 9321 1259.

More information can be found on our website at www.summittravel.com.au

Please do also check out the highly informative video on Via Dinarica on this link:

<https://vimeo.com/140947966>

The Best of the Via Dinarica 2020

Connecting the Balkans Naturally through the Via Dinarica: 25 day hiking and exploring adventure through the Western Balkans.

Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro.

Day 1: 2 Sep 2020 (Wed) – Arrival in Ljubljana, Slovenia.

A representative will meet you outside of the customs and immigration area at the airport and escort you to our hotel. There will be a briefing by the trip leader meeting in the foyer at 6.30pm. The guide will answer questions, and brief you on the immediate arrangements. At the “welcome” dinner, you’ll have a chance to meet the other members of our group. (Note: should you be arriving prior to Day 1 – we will have a private transfer arranged for you for pre-tour hotel night(s)).

Overnight in **Hotel Lev** <https://www.union-hotels.eu/en/hotel-lev/about-hotel/> or similar.

Dinner

Ljubljana is one of Europe's most beautiful cities and highly deserving of more time. We highly recommend (and can book extra nights pre trip commencement for you,) extra time in the Slovenian capital (rates start from \$135 per person twin share per night subject to availability) ...why not spend extra days in the city before the trip starts?!

Ljubljana was recently awarded by the European Commission the highly coveted Green Capital of Europe for 2016 and just recently the city received the permanent title City of Literature awarded by UNESCO to cities with rich cultural heritage and a thriving contemporary literary scene.

We can pre-book day tours in Ljubljana that take in the iconic sights such as Tivoli Park, Museum of Modern History, the Ljubljana Castle as well as different sights such as the district of Metelkova - an old Yugoslav military base that has been converted into one of the most famous alternative neighbourhoods in Europe. One of our favourite half day city tours is a half day tour based on the famous Slovene architect Jože Plečnik, who left an indelible mark on the landscape of the city.

Alternatively the Ljubljana Card, is a great concept allowing for self exploration, whereby you can purchase a 24, 48 or 72 hour card that allows you entry in to over 15 city attractions, travel in city buses, 24-hour access to WiFree Ljubljana (the city's wireless internet network), a free tourist boat cruise, and a free funicular and tourist road train ride to Ljubljana Castle.

The card can be pre-purchased on the website: <http://www.visitljubljana.com/en/ljubljana-card>. Card costs start from EUR28.

Day 2: 3 Sep 2020 (Thu) – Transfer Ljubljana to Lake Bled to explore before transfer to Lake Bohinj (approx 1 hour to Bled, road transfer 55kms & then approx. 25 mins/30kms to Bohinj)

Today we will have a transfer to the beautiful town of Bled where we will take an easy introductory 6 kilometre walk around the lake, past linden, chestnut and willow trees, swans and water lilies on the water. We will then have an optional short but steep walk to the medieval castle of Bled. Perched 100 metres on a cliff above the lake and offering stunning panoramic views, its history dates back to the early 11th century. Your leader can help arrange other activities such as a boat trip to the island in the centre of Bled lake. We then transfer to Lake Bohinj, spectacularly situated within the 838 square kilometre Triglav National Park where we stay for the following two nights. Surrounded by beautiful mountains and quiet villages Lake Bohinj is known as a jewel in the crown of Slovenia's only national park.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner. **Hotel Kristal** <http://www.hotel-kristal.si/> or similar, Lake Bohinj, Slovenia

Day 3: 4 Sep 2020 (Fri) (Triglav National Park) Debela Peč (2014m) & Brda (2009m)

This morning we will transfer to enjoy the beautiful colours and breathtaking views of the surrounding mountains and hills around Bohinj and especially Triglav, Slovenia's highest peak and the symbol of the National Park. To start, we follow the signposts towards 'Lipanca' alpine meadow and "Blejska Koca" Hut. A wide path ascends gently through the interesting forests of Pokljuka plateau.

The path takes us to a saddle between the summits of Brda and Debela peč. Here we will have first views towards the central Julian Alps, we stay on the right and descend slightly towards north-east. The grassy peak of Debela peč is now just a short stroll away. It offers an amazing view all the way from Ljubljana basin to the highest Slovenian peaks. In the afternoon, we return to the shores of Lake Bohinj.

-Moderate walk / 4-5hrs walk / 900 metre ascent / 15Km

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

- **Hotel Kristal or similar, Lake Bohinj, Slovenia**

Day 4: 5 Sep 2020 (Sat) – National Park Northern Velebit & Zavizan Botanical Garden (approx 5 hours, road transfer 300kms)

Early morning departure towards the National Park Northern Velebit, one of the most beautiful areas of the Croatian Dinarics. Hike from the northern entrance at Babic Sica to Zavizan mountain hut (1h30) where we spend the night. Zavizan Mountain Hut is the highest meteorological station in Croatia. From its terrace, we can enjoy magnificent views to the islands of the Northern Adriatic, situated almost 1,600m below us.

In afternoon we may undertake an optional hike to the nearby Zavizan Botanical Garden, where we learn about the rich flora of Northern Velebit. In the evening, a mountaineer's dinner in the hut and overnight.

-Easy – moderate walk / 2hrs walk / 300Δh / 5Km

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-**Mountain Hut Zavizan** https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g6368970-d553257-i112431178-Northern_Velebit_National_Park-Krasno_Polje_Lika_Senj_County.html or similar, Velebit Mountain, Croatia

The Zavižan mountain hut was built on the foundations of Krajačeva Kuća (Krajač's house), which dates back to 1927. The Krajačeva Kuća collapsed during the Second World War, and in 1951 the Croatian Mountaineering Association, supported by mountaineers from the town of Senj, started the construction of a new mountain hut which was open on 27 July 1953.

The Zavižan weather station has for three generations now been staffed by the members of the Vukušić family, who in addition to being meteorologists are performing the job of mountain hut caretakers. Thanks to them, the lodge is also open in winter. Since Velebit forms a natural border between continental and Mediterranean regions of Croatia, two different climates clash at its uppermost parts – the maritime and the continental climates - resulting in unpredictable weather conditions.

Day 5: 6 Sep 2020 (Sun) National Park Northern Velebit – Premuzic Trail

Today we hike around Velebit Mountain. After about 30min walk from Zavizan, we embark on a portion of the famous Premuzic trail – a masterpiece of mountaineering architecture with a trail that follows the main ridge of Velebit Mountain, in the direction NW to SE, taking us through the heart of the Northern Velebit National Park.

While walking this first stage of the trail, we pass through Rozanski Kukovi, a strict nature reserve protected for its many endemic and rare plant species as well as a rich fauna, including the 3 big predators of Croatia – bears, wolves and lynx . Upon trek conclusion at Alan Mountain Hut, we will transfer (approx 1½ hours, 70kms) to Starigrad Paklenica, a town situated on the Croatian Adriatic coast, just below National Park Paklenica, at the southern tip of Velebit Mountain. We will drive along the well known Adriatic Magistrala, a scenic road that winds along the Croatian coast offering beautiful views of the bays and islands below and ahead of us. Our reward tonight is a gourmet dinner on an open rooftop restaurant overlooking the sea.

Trek to **Alan Mountain Hut**, at the SE border of the National Park.

-Moderate walk / 6-7hrs walk / 300Δh / 15Km

Transfer to **Starigrad Paklenica**, dinner and overnight.

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-**Hotel Vicko** <http://www.hotel-vicko.hr/en/> or similar, Starigrad, Paklenica, Croatia

The Premužić Trail is a 57km-long path mapped out by lifelong Velebit enthusiast Ante Premužić in the 1930s. It was officially placed under protection, in its entire length, as a cultural asset of national importance. Working its way from one side of the Velebit central ridge to the other, the trail provides a superb taste of the mountains varied geography, with lush deciduous woodland alternating with pine forests and arid rocky wastes. The trail was deliberately engineered to provide easy walking with gentle gradients – although the surface is stony (good quality hiking boots are required) and can be made more difficult with hot sun baring down. We will be walking a portion of this famous trail during the course of our stay in the park.



Day 6: 7 Sep 2020 (Mon) Circular hike up to Velika Paklenica Canyon

This morning we will transfer (approx 30 mins) by road from the hotel to Paklenica National Park, established in 1949 it is Croatia's second oldest park. There is over 150 kilometres of trails within the park, we concentrate on the canyon of Velika (big!) Paklenica. We will start our hike from the bottom of the canyon and almost immediately trek past immense, spectacular rock walls, which are so favoured by climbers. The walking is pleasant as we make our way through lush beech and black pine forest and alongside small flowing streams with intermittent views of high rocky peaks. Our high point is the preserved old house Ramica Dvori run by the charming Mario Ramić and his family, where we have a delicious trekker's lunch and maybe a taste of some homemade rakija, the local fruit brandy. We then make our way back down to our start point and back to the hotel for a refreshing swim in the Adriatic right outside your room!

-Moderate walk / 5hrs walk / 450Δh / 12km

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-**Hotel Vicko or similar**, Starigrad, Paklenica, Croatia

Day 7: 8 Sep 2020 (Tue) Transfer to Mostar and Blidinje Nature Park (BiH)

(approx 4 hours, road transfer 300kms to Mostar, approx 2 hours road transfer to Blidinje N.P)

Today we have an early morning transfer to Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and the famous city of Mostar. Before we reach Blidinje Nature Park and continue our hiking journey, we will visit Mostar's Old Town and the old bridge, which is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. After a tasty lunch on the banks of the Neretva River we have time for self exploration and some shopping before we continue our journey to Blidinje Nature Park, where we continue the Bosnian portion of your Via Dinarica Adventure.

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-Hotel Hajducke Vrleti <https://www.facebook.com/VrletiBlidinje/> or similar, Blidinje Nature Park, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Mostar was named after the bridge keepers (*mostari*) who, in the medieval times, guarded Stari Most (Old Bridge) over the Neretva River. The bridge was built by the Ottomans in the 16th century, and is one of Bosnia and Herzegovina's most recognizable landmarks as well as being one of the most outstanding work of Balkan Islamic architecture.

The bridge was destroyed in 1993 during the Bosnian War. An international effort to rebuild the bridge commenced in 1999. The project used as much as possible the same technology, materials and Ottoman techniques. Divers recovered the original stone from the river below, whilst the same stone was also sourced from local quarries. The reconstruction was ultimately finished in 2004.

Day 8: 9 Sep 2020 (Wed) Blidinje Nature Park and Hike to Vilinac peak (2,118m)

We commence our Bosnian trekking portion of our Via Dinarica Adventure in Blidinje Nature Park, from where we will start hiking over Cvrsnica mountain. Today's goal is Veliki Vilinac peak (2,118m). The first portion of trail takes us through thick beech forest with a very gentle ascent. As the elevation rises we climb above the tree line to the "sleepy giant": the Cvrsnica Mountain. From the top of Vilinac we will see all the surrounding peaks and have 360-degree panorama. From the peak, the hut is located 15 minutes away where we spend our first night in Bosnian mountains. Our stay at the hut is basic with communal bedding in one shared room upstairs. The stay however is a real highlight of the whole trip with a remote location and quite incredible views of the mountains. *Important Note : Sleeping bags are provided for you tonight, however as the hut is remote, these bags need to be walked in (and out) from the morning commencement point. Please have room in your daypack today to include this bag or if you require assistance with the bag advise Lorenc or Jos.*

-Moderate to Challenging walk / 7hrs walk / 800Δh / 15Km

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-Mountain Hut Vilinac <http://www.vilinac.ba/ba/psd-vilinac-jablanica-o-nama/nasi-objekti/dom-vilinac.html> or similar, Cvrsnica mountain, Bosnia and Herzegovina



Day 9: 10 Sep 2020 (Thu) - Hajdučka Vrata Hike

Sunrises are at their most beautiful in the mountains and the sunrise from Vilinac Hut is definitely one of the best in Bosnia if not the Balkans! After breakfast we will hike east toward Drinaca Peak (2,038m) and Hajdučka Vrata. Hajdučka Vrata is a natural arch more than four meters wide. This natural phenomenon is very typical for karst and limestone. There are many natural arches of this kind in this area, but this one is the largest.

From here we will retrace some of our steps and make our way down to Vitlenica and reunite with our vehicle where we will be transferred (approx 2 hours, 100kms) to Sarajevo, where we stay for the following two nights.

-Moderate -Challenging walk 5-6hrs walk / 800Δh / 14Km

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner /

-Hotel Ada <http://www.adahotel.ba/> or similar, Sarajevo, Bosnia



"Hajdučka Vrata", translates to "Rebels Door" in English and is a natural wonder, being the product of wind erosion.

Day 10: 11 Sep 2020 (Fri) Rest Day in Sarajevo

Today we have an option to enjoy an easy paced Walking Tour of the major historical, cultural and war sites in the city that will help us to piece together its complex and fascinating history, after which we are free to explore the city at our own pace.

In the 1990s Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina and surrounded by the Dinaric Alps, was a city under siege and verging on the edge of destruction. Today, its restored historic centre is full of welcoming cafes and restaurants, the bullet holes mostly plastered over on the blend of Ottoman and Austro- Hungarian architecture.

Our hotel is located next to Baščaršija, Sarajevo's old bazaar built in the 15th century and now the main tourist attraction in the city.

The name Baščaršija is derived from the Turkish words, "baş" meaning "head" and "çarşı," a commercial street. Situated along the northern bank of the Miljacka River, Baščaršija is an oriental bazaar, a maze of narrow streets with small shops, neighbouring the impressive and striking Gazi Husrev-beg Mosque. Nowadays, many of the old artisan shops have been converted to souvenir shops where craftsmen make and sell their products.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-Hotel Ada or similar, Sarajevo, Bosnia

Day 11:12 Sep 2020 (Sat) Sutjeska National Park, Zelengora Mountain & Donje Bare Lake

(Sarajevo – Sutjeska : approx 2 hours, road transfer 100kms)

In the morning we transfer south, just above the border with Montenegro, to our hotel in Sutjeska National Park, Bosnia's oldest National Park, before continuing to the tranquil lake of Donje Bare. After lunch, weather conditions permitting, we walk through a beech forest and open mountainous terrain to the summit of Ugljesin Peak (1,858m) for one of the best panoramic views of the Zelengora peaks and the rock face wall of Volujak. We continue the stunning circuit back to Gornje Bare lake via the Tovarnica ridge (1.5 hours) with Bosnia's highest peaks a constant companion on the horizon. We then transfer back to the hotel in the Tjentiste Valley, before an early dinner.

-Moderate walk / 4-5hrs walk / 400Δh / 9Km

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-**Hotel Mladost** <http://npsutjeska.info/?id=48&ime=hotel-> or similar, Tjentiste, Sutjeska National Park

Day 12: 13 Sep 2020 (Sun) Sutjeska National Park

Challenging option: Ascent of Maglic Mountain (2,386m), Bosnia and Herzegovina's highest peak

We transfer to Lokva Derneciste (approx. 1 hour) and head for Bosnia's highest peak, Maglic Mountain (2,386m), through forests and open mountainous terrain. The ascent itself will take approximately five or six hours over maintained mountain trails with steep cliffs. This is the most demanding part of today's trek. Please note it is not recommended for anyone suffering from vertigo. Each step takes us further above the surrounding peaks until we reach the summit.

Here we have lunch and enjoy wonderful views over Montenegro and our next stop, the emerald green waters of Trnovacko Lake. Descending to the lake in the afternoon can be steep and slippery at times, we then head for Prijedor where we meet our transfer back to the hotel in Tjentiste.

-Challenging walk / 10hrs walk / 950Δh / 14Km

Moderate option: Trek within Sutjeska National Park

We will have various options within Sutjeska National Park and may include a walk to Prijedor for incredible views of this majestic park. Maglic, Zelengora and Volujak will tower around us....many have compared the experience to Yellowstone National Park.

At the edge of the forest the trek descends towards the Glacier Lake Trnovacko, which is set at 1,500 meters in the middle of a huge amphitheater of rocky peaks. Then (weather permitting) we enjoy an icy cold swim (only for the very brave!) and tasty lunch where you can relax and enjoy some of Bosnia's best peaks towering around you. After lunch we make our way back along the same trail and head back to our hotel.

Moderate walk / 5hrs walk / 500Δh /

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-**Hotel Mladost** or similar- Tjentiste, Sutjeska National Park, Bosnia

Sutjeska National Park is located in Republika Srpska, one of the two Entities comprising Bosnia and Herzegovina. Established in 1962, it is Bosnia and Herzegovina's oldest national park and home to the highest peak in the country – Mount Maglic (translated as Foggy Mountain).

The park is also famous as being the location of the World War II Battle of Sutjeska. In 1943 the Partisans, led by Marshal Josip Broz Tito were victorious over the German occupying forces in the battle. The Partisans, were vastly outnumbered and surrounded by predominantly German forces but were successful in breaking out of the encirclement, though with heavy casualty. The battle marked a turning point toward Partisan control of Yugoslavia during World War II. Several large Partisan Memorial stone monuments commemorate this event within the park perimeters.

Day 13: 14 Sep 2020 (Mon) Tara Rafting (optional) & Durmitor National Park, Montenegro (Sutjeska - Durmitor : approx 2 hours, road transfer 100kms).

After breakfast, we'll transfer to Durmitor National Park in Montenegro, via Lake Pivsko and the Highlands of Durmitor. But before that we'll give our legs a break today and soak up the views. Leaving Sutjeska National Park, we'll follow the Drina river, before reaching the place where Piva & Tara Canyon joins. Aside from being the largest canyon in Europe, the Tara River also offers excellent whitewater rafting, which we will stop to take advantage of.

Following the border with Montenegro, the Tara River runs 120+kms of class II-IV rapids, sitting more than 1,000m down in the canyon, with stunning wilderness all around. Depending on the level of the water, our rafting trip will last 3 – 4 hours. We will enjoy a late lunch on the Tara River before continuing journey by vehicle to Zabljak and Durmitor National Park. The drive this afternoon to Žabljak is spectacular and known as one of the great drives in the world so have your camera handy!

Important Note: The rafting is an optional activity and of course not compulsory. For those not interested in this activity you will have the option of staying back at the commencement point being the rafting lodge camp, at which the rafting also ends. It will mean that you will be at the camp for 3-4 hours which does not offer many, if any, other alternative activities aside from perhaps relaxing and reading a good book! A staff member will also be with you as well as local camp staff. The rafting itself is quite comfortable, on our previous trips we have not had any members fall out of raft, however water levels are dictated by weather at that time. Swimming ability is required though you will be supplied with life jacket and wetsuit. A long sleeve rashie from home can be recommended.

-3 to 4 hours of Tara Rafting, class II-IV rapids

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-Hotel Žabljak <http://www.hmdurmitor.com/en/hotel> or similar, Žabljak, Montenegro



A jewel amongst the world's natural heritage spots the Tara River follows the border with Montenegro, and is 140 kilometers in length. At its deepest the canyon is 1300 metres, making it the deepest canyon in Europe.

Day 14: 15 Sep 2020 (Tue) Durmitor N.P, Montenegro

Challenging option:

Bobotov Kuk (2,523m), Highest Summit of Durmitor N.P, Montenegro

New day, new adventure; with another high point: a climb of Bobotov Kuk, one of Montenegro's highest peaks, sitting on 2,523m above sea level. Starting relatively high, on Sedlo (1,900m), we hike over the grassy slope of Surutka toward Zupci ("Teeth"), a magnificent massif with 14 sharp rocky "teeth"—a trademark of Durmitor. After circling the "teeth," we arrive at the glacial Zeleni Vir Lake, the highest in Durmitor. We then begin a steep ascent toward Bobotov Kuk. With every step, the views expand, until we reach the top of Bobotov Kuk—and of the park. On a clear day, you can see all the way to the Adriatic Sea from this vantage point.

We enjoy lunch here, and then descend via the Velika Previja pass, this portion of the walk can be long and occasionally on slippery with portions of uneven terrain. Upon conclusion we have a short ride back to Žabljak for a well-deserved rest.

-Challenging walk / 9-10hrs walk / 700m ascent & up to 1,100metres descent / 12Km

Important: Bobotov Kuk is not for vertigo sufferers with steep approach. Some rock scrambling is required to the summit and descent down the trail is steep and narrow. Helmet is provided for safety purposes.

Moderate option:

Hike to Zeleni Vir (below Bobotov Kuk)

For the moderate option today we will follow the hike as above for the challenging hikers to our high point of Zeleni Vir Lake with its spectacular views of the vast face of Bobotov Kuk. Here we will rest up and take in the views before we make our way back down to the vehicle and then back to Žabljak.

-Moderate walk / 4-5hrs walk / 6kms 350Δh

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-Hotel Žabljak or similar, Žabljak, Montenegro

Day 15: 16 Sep 2020 (Wed) Welcome to the Accursed Mountains, Thethi, Albania (Durmitor - Thethi : approx 8-10+ hours, road transfer 160kms).

Today we bid farewell to Montenegro and transfer to the Montenegro - Albanian border of Hani i Hotit. Transfer to the Thethi Valley with a lunch stop on the way . Dinner and overnight in a family run guesthouse in Thethi valley. *Note: Border formalities dictate our travel time today and may even mean an evening arrival.*

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-Guesthouse Bujtina Polia https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Hotel_Review-g2706054-d10037801-Reviews-Bujtina_Polia-Thethi-Shkoder_County.html or similar, Thethi Valley, Albania

Folklore says two brothers went hunting and found a beautiful fairy. Asked by the brothers which one she preferred, she answered - one for his bravery, the other for his good looks. The brave brother killed the handsome one and took the fairy home to their mother, who was so angry she cursed the fairy and the mountains for ever. This is supposedly how the Accursed Mountains got their name.

Day 16: 17 Sep 2020 (Thu) Visit of the cultural and natural heritage of the Theth valley

Full day visit of the cultural and natural heritage of the Theth valley, including the church, blood feud tower, and Nderlysa waterfall. Lunch at the waterfall. After lunch optional additional walk two hours to Blue Eye Lake, alternatively you may wish to enjoy the scenery around the waterfall. Late afternoon transfer with van back to Thethi.

Moderate walk / 4hrs walk / 350Δh / 10Km (+optional two hours Blue Eye Lake walk)

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-Guesthouse Bujtina Polia or similar, Thethi Valley, Albania

Day 17: 18 Sep 2020 (Fri) Theth to Kukaj

Challenging option: Theth to cross Valbona Pass Hike

Despite the sinister pseudonym of the Accursed Mountains, the Albanian Alps is known for its rugged, almost untouched beauty. This area is spellbindingly beautiful and will be one of the highlights of the trip. We wake at dawn for breakfast and then commence our hike to leave the Valley of Theth (750m) by firstly ascending through forests and alpine pastures to reach the Valbonë Pass (1950m), from where we take a few moments to enjoy the spectacular views down Valbonë and Theth Valleys before maybe a picnic lunch at the Pass. We then follow a trail which brings us alongside the Valbonë River, passing some beautiful waterfalls along the way. We finish at a small village where the minibus will wait for us to transport us to our next guesthouse in the village of Kukaj. Expect some rocky mountainous terrain today, particularly as we descend. Dinner and overnight in a family run guesthouse in the small village of Kukaj.

Challenging walk / 8-9hrs walk / 1022Δh / 15Km



Moderate (non-trekking) full day option:

Theth to Koman for Ferry Trip to Fierze with road transfer to the highland village of Kukaj

After breakfast, we drive to Koman (approx. 4 hours – note time can vary!). We then take a ferry through the beautiful Komani Lake (which takes approx. 2 hrs). Bradt Guides calls it one of the world's classic boat trips, up there with the Hurtigruten along the Norwegian coast or the ferry from Puerto Montt to Puerto Natales in Chile. The journey has breath-taking scenery with views of spectacular mountain gorges and sheer cliffs that tower above and down to the lake.

The ferry is not an expensive luxury river cruise, you will share the ride with locals making their way from their homes to the rest of Albania, transporting their wares such as livestock and small cargo. It is however a unique experience sharing this journey, whilst taking in a landscape that you will not forget.

Upon arrival in Fierze disembark for the approx. 90 mins drive to the village of Kukaj where you will reunite with those who have trekked today.

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-Hotel Margjeka, <http://hotelmargjeka.al/> Valbona Valley, Albania

Day 18: 19 Sep 2020 (Sat) Hike Maja Rosit pass

Hike Maja Rosit pass and to the border of Montenegro. This morning we start our hike directly from our accommodation in Kukaj. Passing through dry river beds the trail quickly climbs through dense forests of beech and pine. The forest is a welcome companion and protects us from the hot sun. This is a trail that's frequently used by the villagers bringing their sheep and cows to higher pasture. After about 2 hours we arrive at the edge of the forest. The views are rapidly changing with many peaks visible and hovering over this beautiful valley. The trail winds up through grassy open terrain to a lonely shepherds hut. Here we enjoy a cold drink before we push on to Maja Rosit pass separating Albania from Montenegro. Here we have outstanding views of many mountains on what is a high border between the two countries with steep, rock faced peaks like Kollata mountain (2555 m) and Maja e Thatë dominating the scenery. After a hearty picnic lunch of highland cheese, bread and perhaps accompanied by a local Peja beer we set back down the same way we came to the hamlet of Kukaj.

-Moderate walk / 3 to 5hrs walk / 400 - 700Δh / 8 to 15Km

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

- **Hotel Margjeka**, Valbona Valley, Albania



Day 19: 20 Sep 2020 (Sun) Transfer to Kosovo

After breakfast we will transfer by road to Prizren, the cultural capital of what is in fact the second newest country in the world, Kosovo, having declared independence from Serbia on February 17, 2008.

First we will stop, after an approx 2 hour drive (note: border formalities can affect times), in the lower valley to visit the St. Nicolas Monastery of Dečan – one of Kosovo's beautiful Orthodox monasteries dating back to the year 1327. The monastery is located by the Dečanska Bistrica river gorge at the foot of the Prokletije Mountains.

We then continue on by road a further approx 2 hours to Prizren with a possible enroute winery for tastings, time permitting. Upon arrival in the city we will do a 2 hour city walking tour. The evening will be spent in the Ottoman style neighborhood of Prizren.

Dinner in a traditional restaurant and overnight in the hotel near the city centre.

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-**Hotel Centrum** <http://hotelcentrumprizren.com/> or similar, Prizren, Kosovo

**Day 20: 21 Sep 2020 (Mon) Transfer to Kotor, Montenegro
(approx 8-9 hours, road transfer 350 kms)**

Transfer to the Lake District of Shkodra where we then continue on to have lunch and a wine tasting in lovely surrounds. We have a long day's drive today and border formalities between Kosovo and Montenegro can add to our time, we however have a beautiful diversity of scenery changing from the Šar Mountains to the lakes before our final stretch takes us among the most spectacular Adriatic scenery along the Montenegrin coast. Near sunset, we pass stunning Sveti Stefan, the small medieval town jutting in to the sea, famous in it's day for attracting Hollywood jetsetters such as Sofia Loren and Elizabeth Taylor. We arrive in to Kotor in time to refresh and then have dinner at our lovely hotel situated on the sea's edge.

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

-**Hotel Splendido** <http://www.splendido-hotel.com/> or similar, Kotor Montenegro



Kotor, inhabited since 3000BC, is a UNSECO listed World Heritage site and was recently announced by Lonely Planet as the number one city in the world to visit in 2016. The Bay of Kotor is an almost 40 kilometre long cul-de-sac veering off the Adriatic Sea. Known as the southern most fjord in Europe, it is in fact a submerged river canyon and truly spectacular.

Day 21: 22 Sep 2020 (Tue) Kotor, Montenegro

Today we visit Kotor's 4.5km long fortification walls and its many churches and palaces. In 1979 Kotor was included on UNESCO's list of Natural and Cultural Heritage Sites. Our 2 hour walk will take you through some of Kotor's spacious squares, lined with grand town houses, palaces, and various impressive religious buildings. After our tour we take a short transfer to Perast, a town once owned by the Venetians, a fact which explains its distinctly Italian feel. The panorama of Perast is dominated by the 17th Century church of St Nikola, protected by a Venetian fortress and surrounded by beautiful palaces and gardens once built by the famous sea captains of the Adriatic. Here we have lunch overlooking the bay. Following lunch we take a boat ride to the 'Lady of the Rocks' island and visit the chapel. The views of towering cliffs of the Dinaric Alps from the boat are truly impressive, giving us a different perspective of the Montenegrin coastline. We transfer back to our hotel by boat, the best way to really enjoy this fabulous setting.

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

- **Hotel Splendido** or similar, Kotor Montenegro

Day 22: 23 Sep 2020 (Wed) Kotor to Dubrovnik

(approx 2 ½ hours Kotor to Dubrovnik, road transfer 100 kms)

Today we transfer on a spectacular drive to the fortified town of Dubrovnik for a city tour in the morning of the Old Town. Encircled with massive stone walls, the fort was completed in the 16th century. We will lunch in Dubrovnik at a beautiful tucked away small restaurant overlooking the fort and Adriatic.

This afternoon will be free time to explore this ancient city at your own leisure.

-Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

- **Hotel Lero** <https://hotel-lero.hr/> or similar, Dubrovnik.

Day 23: 24 Sep 2020 (Thu) Dubrovnik to the Dalmatian island of Brač and town of Pučišća

(approx 4 ½ hours Dubrovnik ferry to Bol, road transfer approx 45 mins / 40kms to Pučišća)

This morning we wake early as we have a local ferry departing at 07.00am (based on current timetables) to the island of Brač. We witness the Dinaric Alps we have walked so much of, but this time viewed from the sea, as enroute we pass and quickly stop at islands such as Korčula and Hvar.

Arriving in to Bol at just prior to midday, we will be transferred to the small town of Pučišća with lunch enroute.

Pučišća, is a small, gorgeous harbour town with just over 1,000 inhabitants, sheltered by a protective cove and filled with attractive Mediterranean style white and terracotta houses. It has been named in various travel publications as one of the "Top 15 Villages in Europe for Travel Snobs". As reward for many hours of trekking in the mountains over our previous 3 weeks, we stay at the oldest palace on the Adriatic coast, built in 1467, now converted to a lovely boutique hotel.

The afternoon is at your leisure or take part in an optional tour of Croatia's only stonemason school, opened in 1906, as the town is famous for its pure white limestone, of which some has been used to build The White House in Washington DC.

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

- **Hotel Puteus Palace** <https://www.puteuspalace.com/> Pučišća



Day 24: 25 Sep 2020 (Fri) Trek up to the summit of Vodova Gora (778m)

This morning we transfer by road approx 45 mins to the start point of our trek, to the highest point of any island in the Adriatic.

The trail is well marked, but slightly rocky as we slowly make our way through exposed sections before entering some small pine forest. We soon summit on to a ridge where a further short 10 minute section takes us to the summit. The views are outstanding looking over the famous Zlatni Rat beach below (known as one of the worlds most beautiful and photographed beaches) and the neighbouring island of Hvar. We descend down the trail in quicker time and make our way to the nearby town of Bol where we have lunch and maybe time for a quick swim before we return back to Pučišća. Tonight - farewell dinner.

Moderate -Challenging walk 4-5hrs walk / 500Δh / 10Km

Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

- **Hotel Puteus Palace**

Day 25: 26 Sep 2020 (Sat). Trip End.

After breakfast in Pučišća trip ends. We will include a transfer to either Brač airport to depart or a road transfer and ferry to Split or Split Airport to depart.

Trip Dates

September 2 – September 26, 2020

Trip Cost:

AUD\$ 8,799 ex Ljubljana twin share, excluding international flights.

- Price is per person, double occupancy and shared accommodation in mountain huts and various bed and breakfasts
- Single rooms are available on a request basis for 18 nights of the trip being at Ljubljana, Bled, Starigrad, Blidinje Nature Park, Sarajevo, Tjentiste, Zabljak, Prizren & Kotor, Dubrovnik & Pučišća...please enquire for single tour supplement availability if of interest. We can share you up with a fellow group member of same sex however please note if we have odd numbers of same sex a compulsory single supplement will be required to be paid. Single Supplement cost : \$ 995.

Group Size

Minimum: 8 Maximum: 15

What is Included

- Services of Jos Bauk as tour escort (Croatian frequent traveller & Senior Peregrine Travel Centre Consultant)
- Transportation during entire trip with 15 or 20+1 MiniBus (including Airport Arrival Transfer)
- Arrival transfer. A departure transfer is included on departure day only.
- Luggage transfers
- Fully equipped English speaking local Trip Leader
- Local guides in Croatia and Albania to add to unique local experiences
- Accommodation for 24 nights
- Meals as per specified in itinerary
- Tara Rafting with all fees and safety equipment
- Sarajevo City walking Tour (with all entrance fees where needed)
- Dubrovnik City walking tour
- Komani and Kotor boat trips
- All fees and taxes for National Parks, Northern Velebit, Sutjeska, Durmitor and Nature Park Blidinje & VAT
- Scheduled Group Departure Meeting in our Perth office in approx early June 2020.

What's not

- International Flights, we have many options available, please contact us for a quote.
- Meals not specified in itinerary
- International travel insurance (compulsory)...please enquire for quote should you require.
- Optional tipping to leader, guides and local staff. A separate recommended tipping guideline is provided to assist with your budgeting.
- Souvenirs and items of a personal nature (sodas, alcoholic beverages, laundry, etc.)
- Any items not specifically mentioned in the program

Payment & Cancellation Policy

Payment of **AUD\$700 deposit** after booking confirmation. The rest of the amount is due Friday 19th June before the trip date. Cancellation policy:

- Cancellation after payment of deposit - loss of deposit
- From 60 days before start date - loss of 100% of total price

Important – Trip costs are based against the EURO, in event of drastic devaluation of the Australian dollar against the Euro, costs listed prior to final payment being made may be subject to change. We will do our best to avoid this however world currency changes are of course beyond our control.

Then Leave the Rest to Us

Before you go, we provide you with extensive pre-departure information, including clothing recommendations, suggested reading lists, up-to-date health advice and other details.

IMPORTANT NOTES ON ITINERARY:

Although we will do our very best to adhere to the itinerary schedule as listed, it is subject to change for numerous reasons, including weather, and natural and political events beyond our control.

**European trekking companies do work around strict safety guidelines, if weather is inclement, guides may be forced to adjust itinerary and decision will be at sole discretion and judgement of guide.

**Mountain Huts, such as Zavizan and Vilinac, may be shared, some with shared 'dorm style' accommodation and no shower and shared outside toilet facilities.

** Sleeping bag is provided at Vilinac Mountain Hut however on this day you are required to carry this bag in your own daypack.

**Elevations for day listed in trip notes are elevation gains and listed in metres ie 1022m and is total ascent for the day and not necessarily in one ascent.

**In Albania road conditions off main road arteries can be rough and may involve slower travel time depending on weather. Albania itself is less developed than all other countries on the itinerary so some patience may be required however its sense of isolation is one of the many highlights of the trip.

** Boutique Palace stay in Pučišća : The property is small with only 15 total rooms, and all of these rooms are different, only limited number of rooms have sea views, and some are bigger than others.

**IMPORTANT NOTE : Trekking in the Balkans is unique and can be different to what you may have encountered in your trekking resume elsewhere around the world such as the Himalayas or Andes. The Dinaric Alps are characterised by karst limestone landscape formed by underground water and acidic rain over long periods of geological formation. It does mean that there will be plenty of rock underfoot that you will encounter, which can be more hard wearing on your feet after a long day's trek than other trekking areas you may have seen. This rock can be also sharp in areas and constant, so good balance and dexterity is required in many portions of your day's trekking. It may be worth contemplating having a gel insert in your boots such as Scholl or alternatively seeing a podiatrist for advice. Fatigue can also be sometimes a factor due to September sun we may encounter with some hot days more so early in the trip.



Note on Services

To comply with regional laws and regulations, we sometimes use local suppliers, who provide services that may include transportation, equipment, logistic support, and other services (hotels, restaurants, etc.). We work with service providers, who share our commitment to safety and quality, and work closely with them to develop itineraries unique to the Via Dinarica.

Activity Levels – see walking days noted with grading for that particular day as above with explanation as below:

Easy

Trips rated EASY typically have 1-3 hours of activity per day, with hikes/walks less than five kilometers on mostly flat terrain at altitudes of up to 900 meters.

Easy to Moderate

Trips rated as EASY to MODERATE are designed for travelers seeking both EASY and MODERATE trip activity levels. Trips rated EASY to MODERATE typically have easier rated walks/hikes with options for more moderate activity levels on some days.

Moderate

Trips rated MODERATE typically have 3-6 hours of activity per day, with hikes up to 15 kilometers on rolling or mountainous terrain with some steep ascents/descents and uneven trails at altitudes of up to 1,900 meters.

Moderate to Challenging

Trips rated as MODERATE to CHALLENGING are designed for travelers seeking both MODERATE and CHALLENGING trip activity levels. Trips rated MODERATE to CHALLENGING typically have moderate rated walks/hikes with options for more strenuous activity levels on some days.

Challenging

Trips rated CHALLENGING typically have 5-8 hours of activity per day, with hikes up to 15-20 kilometers on mountainous, exposed terrain with steep ascents/descents and uneven trails at altitudes of up to 2,700 meters.

Ultimate Challenge

Designed for very fit and experienced hikers. Trips rated ULTIMATE CHALLENGE typically have 10 or more hours of activity per day, hiking 20 or more kilometers on remote, mountainous, exposed terrain with steep ascents/descents, and uneven trails at altitudes of up to 2,700 meters.

