

# Call of nature

Montenegro's star is on the rise, but how can clients see it sustainably? Rhonda Carrier suggests options

**A**fter years spent simmering away under the radar of most travellers, Montenegro is finally stepping into the spotlight. But how can it avoid the perils of overtourism as it becomes better known?

This Balkan destination provides an alluring combination of Adriatic coastline, epic outdoor activities and fascinating history, all closely connected in a tiny country just half the size of Wales. Visitors can expect everything from rugged mountainscapes with sparkling glacial lakes, raging rivers and lush forests, to sun-drenched shores with watersports galore.

Here we look at what's new, with options that allow clients to explore responsibly – whether enjoying a slow-paced sailing, staying at a sustainability-minded resort or visiting small villages and national parks – so that even amid its rapid growth, they can see Montenegro's natural splendour shine through.

## COASTAL CRUISING

One of the loveliest ways of seeing this coastline is on a boutique cruise aboard a traditional wooden Turkish gulet. Travelling with Sailing Adriatic on its seven-night gulet cruise, I took in bewitching Perast – which has just a single main street but finds space for 16 churches and 17 Venetian palazzi, some of them now romantic ruins – and delightful Herceg Novi with its Ottoman fortresses and an amphitheatre that affords soaring views of the bay.

We also spent a night docked in the Unesco-listed old town of Kotor, one of Europe's most atmospheric (if very popular) historic districts. Any visitors dismayed by the 1,350 steps up to its hilltop fortress can opt instead for the cable car, which opened in 2023, and takes clients to Lovćen National Park in about 10 minutes, where hiking, ziplining, cycling, e-biking and more await. The cliffs of Lovćen have also become a focal

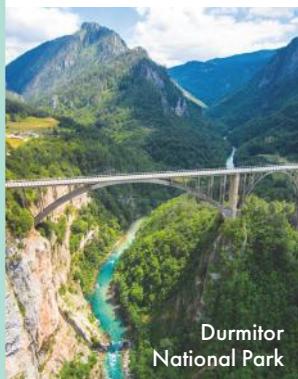
## ASK THE expert



### Emma Heywood, co-founder, Undiscovered Balkans

"Montenegro has made its mark as a rising star of European tourism, and the challenge is now to manage numbers wisely, along with its signature promise of 'wild beauty'. The focus must be on quality tourism, not quantity. A shift towards active and nature-based tourism is a welcome move, and one we fully support through our range of locally guided, small-group adventures in the country's beautiful interior."

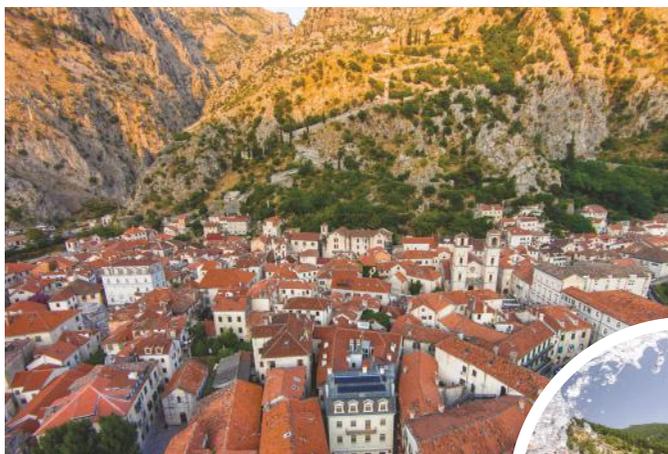
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Durmitor National Park

## GETTING THERE

Montenegro has two international airports – one in the capital Podgorica and one in the coastal town of Tivat. **Ryanair** and **Wizz Air** fly to Podgorica from London, while seasonal flights to Tivat are operated by **easyJet** and **Jet2.com** – which boosted its capacity from the UK to the destination by 9% this year – from London, Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol.



**CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** Kotor Old Town; Sailing Adriatic's traditional wooden gulet; The Chedi Luštica Bay; white-water rafting  
**FACING PAGE:** Villa Two, One&Only Portonovi; cycling in the Bjelasica mountains

**PICTURES:** Sergej Zabijako/Montenegro National Tourism Organisation; NTO CG; Christos Drazos Photography



point since last year's opening of the Alpine Coaster – a two-person ride down the mountain at speeds of up to 25mph, with spectacular views of the Bay of Kotor.

Numerous stop-offs in secluded bays allowed us to dive, swim, snorkel, paddleboard and kayak from the boat – often to nearby beaches or islands. And when we were docked by the shore rather than being anchored out at sea, it was easy to hop off and sample local cuisine in charming waterside taverns. Meals back on board were a sociable affair too, with the chance to help the captain catch fish from the bay to feast on at lunch or dinner.

## SUSTAINABLE STAYS

Montenegro's rapidly developing riviera has seen foreign investment pouring into seaside hotel and resort developments including Luštica Bay, Portonovi Montenegro (home to a luscious One&Only resort) and, from this summer, the Mövenpick Hotel & Residences Teuta.

The Chedi Luštica Bay, a sleek spot that is on track to become one of the first zero-waste resorts in Europe, offers a promising example of tourism development within tight controls, helping to avoid the problems of overtourism seen by so many destinations in the region.

Careful management is particularly crucial here since Luštica Bay alone will see another six luxury hotels opening over the coming years, and Montenegro's first golf course – designed by golf legend Gary Player and offering sea views from every hole – is under

construction there, with nine holes scheduled to open in 2026 and the remainder by 2028.

For the moment, recommend clients enjoy its clutch of waterside bars and restaurants, a lighthouse with jazzy projections by night and activities including diving, sailing and biking. The Chedi itself has a divine spa and runs yoga and fitness sessions with a sea view.

On the other side of the Bay of Kotor, investment is being ploughed into improving the road infrastructure around Tivat's Porto Montenegro – a luxury marina and resort area lined by smart boutiques and superyachts. If clients have time for more than just a spot of lunch and shopping, the Maritime Heritage Museum offers an insight into Montenegro's turbulent history, including its years as part of Yugoslavia from the First World War until 2006.

There's expansion here too: Boka Place is a new neighbourhood being developed within Porto Montenegro, offering shops, restaurants, entertainment and wellness facilities. It will also be home to the Kerzner International-owned Siro Boka Place Tivat hotel, which will offer an array of wellness breaks when it opens on May 15.

## OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

But this country is about so much more than just the coast – it's also an outdoor playground for white-water rafting, off-road safaris, walking, cycling, ziplining, orienteering and more.

Inland highlights include Lake Skadar in the national park of the same name, where clients might

**BOOK IT**

**Beds with Ease** sells Sailing Adriatic's seven-night Pearls of the Adriatic gulet cruise from €1,800 per person. The price includes seven nights' half-board accommodation, two dinners, the use of sports equipment and guided tours in Budva and Kotor Old Town. [bedswithease.com](https://bedswithease.com)



**Elegant Resorts** offers seven nights in a Superior Room at The Chedi Luštica Bay on a bed-and-breakfast basis from £1,890 per person, based on two sharing, including economy-class flights from Luton, UK airport lounge passes and private transfers to the hotel, for a departure on September 15. [elegantresorts.co.uk](https://elegantresorts.co.uk)

spot endangered otters or rare Dalmatian pelicans; Biogradska Gora National Park, home to one of the oldest forests in Europe; Kolašin ski resort and the nearby Komovi Mountains, which offer snow sports in winter and superb hiking in summer; and the Tara River Gorge, one of the world's deepest, in the Unesco-listed Durmitor National Park.

All feature on Regent Holidays' eight-day Highlights of Montenegro group tour, which is new this year and starts at £2,150 including flights (departures April-October).

The country's interior hasn't escaped the wealth of development. Kolašin and Kolašin Valleys – a

new complex that includes Montenegro's first ski-in ski-out resort – are a particular hive of activity, with a raft of mountain retreats opening in 2025 and beyond, perfect for both summer and winter.

Swissôtel Resort Kolašin opened in 2024 and is soon to be joined by the Grand Chalet Hotel, Crowne Plaza Hotel Kolašin, Pullman Breza Kolašin and the Radisson Blu Hotel & Resort Kolašin.

Montenegro might be small, but it has big ambitions and a rapid timeframe for transformation – all the more reason to recommend clients see it before the rest of the world cottons on. **TW**

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