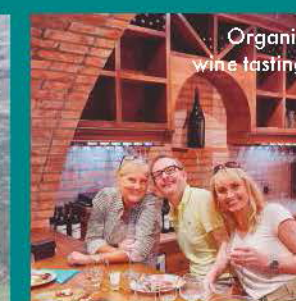


THE BALKANS

Country



Looking out from Cincar viewpoint in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Organic wine tasting

5
TOP
SELLING
TIPS



Talk about history: The region has so much diversity in such a small area, from Unesco-listed architecture to remnants of the Yugoslav era.

Win clients through food: The Balkan countries have delicious hearty dishes such as *börek* pastries in Bosnia or *sarma* (cabbage rolls) in Croatia.

Highlight natural wonders: There are incredible lakes and waterfalls and the Adriatic Sea.

Go off the tourist trail: There are places where clients can feel like the only visitor, such as Croatian island Lastovo, which has a population of 1,000.

Money matters: The region is great value. Food, accommodation and activities are often cheaper than in other European countries.

Kristijan Svajnager,
general manager for Eastern Europe, Intrepid Travel

Value is a strong selling point, however your clients choose to visit, says Cathy Toogood

MOUNTAIN HIKES

For clients who enjoy active adventures, hiking across the Dinaric Alps in the western Balkans will be a real treat. Taking in incredible mountain scenery in Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Montenegro, this trip with Intrepid Travel introduces the histories, cultures and landscapes of the four countries. Highlights will include hiking to the remote village of Lukomir in Bosnia to share lunch and Bosnian coffee with the locals, a night walk with stargazing, watching herds of wild horses near Cincar Mountain and admiring the views over glacial lakes and pine forests in Montenegro's Durmitor National Park.

Book it: Intrepid Travel's Hiking The Balkans: Via Dinarica trip costs from £1,830, including nine nights' B&B, transport (excluding flights), some extra meals and activities. Departing on September 3. intrepidtravel.com

TRANSYLVANIAN TREASURES

A trip to Romania may appeal to clients looking for a destination that's still off the mass tourism trail. And this nine-night tour of Transylvania with Jules Verne combines culture with countryside, taking in rural villages, dramatic gorges, three Unesco World Heritage Sites and Dracula's Bran Castle. In Mălâncrav village, which has Saxon architecture and one of the most important fortified churches in Transylvania, guests will eat a traditional lunch in a private home, while there will be photograph opportunities galore in Sinaia along with a visit to the striking Peles Castle. Clients will also stay in Romania's capital Bucharest at the beginning of the tour.

Book it: Jules Verne's Treasures of Transylvania trip costs from £1,395 including flights, nine nights' B&B accommodation, some extra meals and all transfers. Departing on October 6. jvtr.com

SCENIC JOURNEY

Knock-out Balkans scenery, ancient sites, hill-top monasteries and fabulous local food are on offer on this tour from Albania to Montenegro with Responsible Travel. Clients will stay in local guesthouses and homestays, gaining insight into the area from local guides as they take in the highlands of Albania around Berat, the Albanian Riviera and then some of Montenegro's palaces and the old town of Kotor. There's also the chance to hear live music during an evening spent with Albanian folk musicians; take a cruise on picturesque Lake Skadar; and sample organic wines at an award-winning Montenegrin winery.

Book it: Responsible Travel's Albania to Montenegro Cultural Holiday costs from £1,067 including 11 nights' B&B accommodation, some extra meals and car hire. For departures between October 1 and May 1, 2024. responsibletravel.com



"A key selling point of the Balkans for clients who love the outdoors is the contrasting natural beauty the countries offer. The Balkans take their name from the incredible mountain range that stretches throughout

Bulgaria, and other regions are just as impressive, such as the Rhodope Mountains, where visitors can see brown bears, and the Carpathian Mountains, which have become synonymous

with Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. The Balkans are also known for views along the spectacular Dalmatian coastline and the long-held traditions and fascinating history of cities such as Prizren, the

culture capital of Kosovo. Having been under numerous influences throughout the ages, the Balkans have a diverse cultural offering."

Tom Wilkinson, senior product manager, Exodus



With fascinating cities such as Belgrade and Bucharest, beautiful scenery from mountains to coast and plenty of exciting food, the Balkans are an excellent suggestion for clients who are looking for an alternative to Europe's big hitters. Plus, a key selling point for many right now is that trips here generally offer good value.

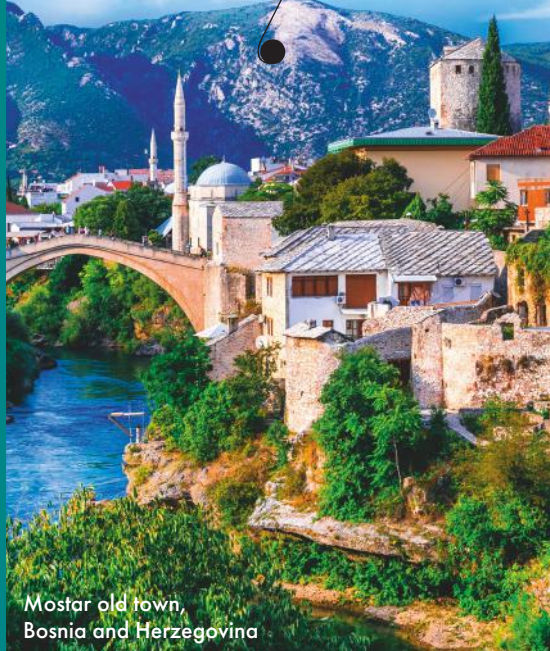
In the Balkans, clients can escape on active breaks, hiking to remote mountain villages, or delving into the history of the fascinating region with local guides. There are island-hopping adventures, beach breaks, indulgent trips sampling local food and wine, and more.

We've picked out some of the best breaks in the Balkans, whether your clients want to escape to the countryside, soak up the energy of a city or relax by the coast.

DESTINATIONS

CROATIA & THE BALKANS | 3 WAYS

City



Mostar old town,
Bosnia and Herzegovina

PARTY CAPITALS

Younger clients (aged 18-39) will love exploring lesser-known cities and partying until late on G Adventures' 14-night Zagreb to Athens trip. Starting in Croatia with tours and nights out in Zagreb, Split and Dubrovnik, stops include Lake Skadar in Montenegro, Albania's capital Tirana and Corfu, for chill-out time, before rooftop drinks and free time to explore Athens.

Book it: Zagreb to Athens: Adriatic & Ancient Capitals costs from £1,549 including 14 nights' accommodation, transport, tours and some nights out. Departing on June 4. gadventures.com

HISTORIC GEMS

There's a lot packed into this tour, including Roman ruins in Bulgaria, 20th-century sculptures in Târgu Jiu and the enormous St Sava Cathedral in Belgrade, plus a trip to one of the oldest, but under-the-radar, cities, Nis in Serbia. But there's relaxation time too, over *rakias* (fruit spirits) in a communist-era retro bar in Sofia, coffee

and cake at the oldest *kafana* (local bistro) in Belgrade and prosecco with nibbles at a historic restaurant in Bucharest.

Book it: Jules Verne's 10-night Balkans Revealed tour starts from £1,695, including B&B, flights and guides. Departing on May 15. vjv.com

URBAN CULTURE

From sampling wine in Bosnia and Herzegovina's southernmost city Trebinje to exploring inside the fortified walls of seafaring Kotor, hugged by one of southeast Europe's biggest fjords, this trip offers a taste of urban culture and history across the Balkans, with plenty of scenic journeys in between. Clients also stop at Mostar's famous bridge, Dubrovnik's Unesco-protected Old Town and Montenegro's ancient capital Cetinje.

Book it: Bosnia & Beyond costs from £2,179 for 10 nights' B&B, flights, some extra meals, transport, a tour leader, activities and airport transfers. Departing on June 3. exodus.co.uk ➤

In your direction

London Heathrow - Zagreb

London Heathrow - Split

London Gatwick - Split

Connections via Zagreb available to Dubrovnik, Pula and Zadar.

croatiaairlines.com

 CROATIA AIRLINES

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER 

DESTINATIONS

CROATIA & THE BALKANS | 3 WAYS

Coast



KAYAKING ADVENTURE

For a coastal trip with a difference, Responsible Travel offers a seven-night adventure to Croatia's Elaphiti Islands. Organised by a Croatian kayaking champion, clients will head out to the quiet island of Sipan, the largest of the Elaphiti Islands. Staying in a locally owned guesthouse, they will then explore the islands by bike, foot and kayak.

Book it: Dubrovnik Islands & Activity Holiday costs

from £627 for seven nights' B&B, some meals, activities and use of equipment and ferry transfers. Departing on May 20. responsibletravel.com

BEACH BREAK

If clients are looking for an excellent value fly-and-flop holiday, this all-inclusive beach break in Nessebar, Bulgaria, is one of Balkan Holidays' most popular trips. Accommodation is in the four-star Sol Hotel Marina Palace, which has a rooftop pool and sky bar. It's also close to the Unesco-listed city of Nessebar.

Book it: Seven nights' all-inclusive at Sol Hotel Marina Palace starts from £700, including flights from Belfast and transfers. Departing on May 26. balkanholidays.co.uk

DALMATIAN DREAMING

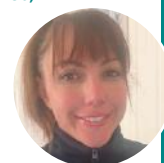
Croatia's Dalmatian coast has beautiful beaches, ancient cities and remote islands – and clients can explore it all in style on a Premium trip with Intrepid. From the small island of Lastovo, clients will head out with a local fisherman, his wife and crew to bring in and eat the day's catch.

Book it: Premium Split to Dubrovnik costs from £2,580 for seven nights' B&B, some meals, ferry and transfers, and tips. Departing on July 28. intrepidtravel.com **TW**

ASK THE expert

"My number-one tip for an agent when selling a beach holiday to Bulgaria is to mention the experiences available to complement days on the sand. As an example, one of our best-selling holidays is to Sunny Beach, so I'd talk about taking the water taxi from Sunny Beach to the Old Town in Nessebar."

Lynsey Jones,
national
sales
manager,
Balkan
Holidays



NUMBER 1

to the Balkans

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