



Above Looking out over the leafy island of Hvar and the sparkling Adriatic Sea
Left A couple standing on a sailboat off the coast of Split

This golden crescent of a bay is only accessible by sailboats



SCOUT OUT a sunbathing spot on the picturesque sands of **Stiniva Beach**



SIP a glass of locally grown wine in a **Hvar** beach bar as you watch the sun go down

EXPLORE the spectacular **Blue Grotto**, where the sunlight fills the cave with a silver-blue hue

VISIT the alleged birthplace of Marco Polo among the elegant houses of **Korčula**

TAKE a hike through the thickly forested, lake-hugging hills of **Mljet's National Park**



13 Island-Hopping in Croatia

LOCATION Croatia **START/FINISH** Split/Dubrovnik **DISTANCE** 365 km (235 miles) **TIME** 3 to 5 days **INFORMATION** Cruise availability, facilities and itineraries vary

Scattered around Croatia's sun-drenched coastline are more than 1,000 idyllic islands and islets. Take to the water on this laid-back voyage to explore five of the prettiest by chartered yacht.

This Adriatic adventure begins as you push off from Split, the cultural hub of the Dalmatian Coast, and plot a course for Hvar. It may have a reputation as Croatia's party island, but Hvar is also home to dramatic Gothic palaces, hilltop fortresses and lavender fields, so save the beachside cocktail until sunset.

Next up is Vis, where Stiniva Beach, one of Europe's most beautiful stretches of sand, awaits. Almost entirely enclosed by a curtain of sheer rock, this golden crescent of a bay is only accessible by sailboats. Hidden nearby is Biševo island's Blue Grotto, a rocky cavern that shimmers a silvery blue in the sunlight.

Skidding over aquamarine seas, the boat reaches Korčula. While known for its old town – a merry tangle of medieval squares and Venetian-style terracotta roofs – a trip inland reveals hidden sandy coves, verdant vineyards and abundant olive groves. From Korčula, it's not far to unassuming, forest-sheathed Mljet, where rolling hills rich in Mediterranean vegetation swaddle two sparkling saltwater lagoons. Ancient ruins are complemented by gentle sandy shores and crystal-clear water, revealing an abundant underwater world. A small hop takes you back to the mainland, where Dubrovnik's ancient city walls lie in wait.

another way

Instead of going south from Split, head north to explore the Komati Islands, an archipelago of around 100 rocky isles blessed with rugged cliffs, hidden caves and grottos, and startling rock formations.