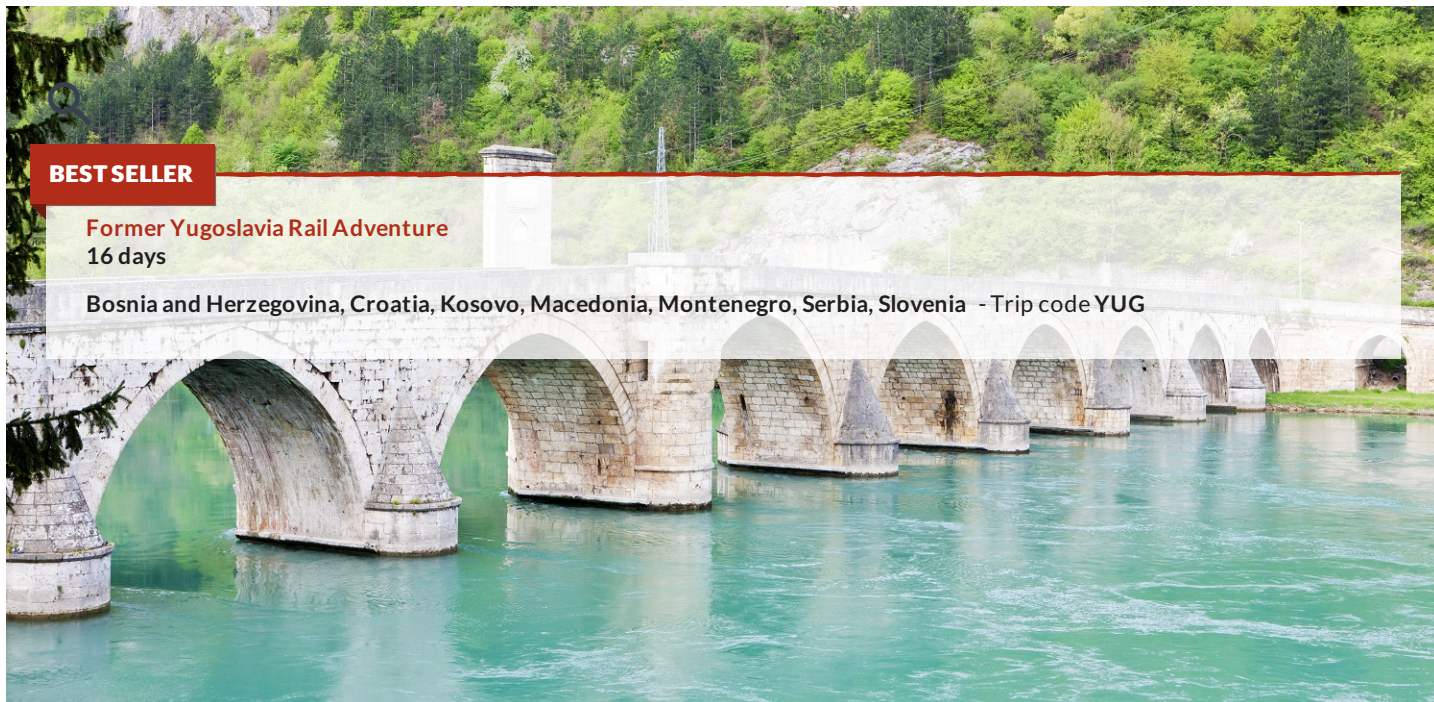


# EXPLORE!



**BEST SELLER**

**Former Yugoslavia Rail Adventure**  
16 days

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia - Trip code YUG

## Former Yugoslavia Rail Adventure

On this 16 day adventure discover Europe's newest countries, travelling by rail through some of the Balkan's most inspiring scenery. After war and communism reigned strong for much of the 20th century, former Yugoslavia remains relatively undiscovered by most travellers, however now there are thriving new capitals and untouched countryside to be explored. This fast paced trip gets under the skin of Tito's Yugoslavia, as well as visiting Europe's oldest lake, Lake Ohrid, and Croatia's largest national park, Plitvice, to see its iconic cascading waterfalls.

### Trip highlights

- ★ **Seven countries** - See many of the nations of Former Yugoslavia, that are now found in the captivating Balkans
- ★ **Multiple capital cities** - Visit seven diverse cities and discover their varying history and culture
- ★ **Rail journeys** - Including one of the most visually stunning train rides in Europe on the Bar to Belgrade line
- ★ **Plitvice National Park** - See the beautiful scenery, waterfalls and lakes

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

##### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

**TRIP PACE:****Full on**

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

**GROUP SIZE:****12 - 18**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

# Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

## DAY 1 - Join trip in Ljubljana, Slovenia

Our journey through the Balkans will begin in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. This historic city lies in the shadow of its old castle and upon the banks of the Ljubljanica River which meanders through the pedestrianised centre. Depending on the time of your flight or if you are extending your stay by a night then we'd recommend visiting the castle today.

This evening you might like to have dinner in one of the city's 'Gostilna' restaurant where traditional recipes are prepared with local ingredients and paired with good wines. Some of the most popular Slovenian dishes include Prekmurje a layered cake made with cottage cheese, poppy seeds and with a walnut and apple filling, Kras prosciutto an air dried ham and Bleki a beef soup with noodles. After dinner you may fancy trying a glass of Slovenia's Pleterska Khruska liquor made with brandy and pears.



**Accommodation: Hotel Park** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

## DAY 2 - Explore Ljubljana on foot; chance to visit beautiful Lake Bled

Ljubljana is a lovely city full of art, culture and music, and the architecture has an almost Germanic feel to it. First thing this morning we will explore the city on foot with a local guide to take in some of its most attractive landmarks including the Opera House, National Gallery, Republic Square and arguably the city's most famous, Triple Bridge. Connecting the old Medieval town to the modern business centre, the bridge, originally served as the entrance to the fortified part of the city, but now is bustling with local residents.

The rest of the day is then free for you to continue to wander and enjoy the sights in Ljubljana or you might like to join a short boat trip along the Ljubljanica River to see the city from a different perspective. Alternatively you may like to join an excursion to Lake

Bled, which is about one hours' drive away. The picturesque resort town of Bled is situated on a tranquil lake. It was one of the most fashionable European resorts in the early 20th century, home to the Yugoslavian Royal Family and also the summer residence of President Tito. You may wish to visit the island in the lake by traditional gondola boat known as a Pletne. Once on the island you'll find the Baroque Church of the Assumption or there's Bled Castle perched on a steep cliff above. Alternatively you might like to walk the 6 kilometres around the lake past linden, chestnut and willow trees and swans and water lilies on the water.



**Accommodation: Hotel Park** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Free morning in Ljubljana; train to Zagreb, Croatia

This morning is free for you to relax in Ljubljana and have lunch before taking an afternoon train across the border to Zagreb in Croatia. After a three hour journey we'll walk to our hotel to check-in before having the opportunity to go out for dinner this evening.

Tonight you might like to try the traditional Zagreb meat and vegetable stew of Cuspajz followed by the dessert Strukli a boiled dough filled with sour cream and cottage cheese or Knedli a sweet potato dumpling rolled in sugar and stuffed with fruit such as plum. If you fancy washing it down with an unusual drink then order Bambus, which consists of red wine and cola served over ice.



**Accommodation: Hotel Central** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Walking tour of Zagreb; visit to beautiful Plitvice National Park

After breakfast we begin with a guided walking tour of Croatia's capital, Zagreb. It is a city rich in art, culture and gastronomy, but for a capital city it doesn't experience the huge rush of tourists that most other European capitals do, with most visitors choosing instead to visit better known Dubrovnik or Split. However Zagreb is just as deserving with its blend of Austro-Hungarian architecture and more hard edged socialist buildings. The city's centrepieces are the Gothic Zagreb Cathedral and 13th century Saint Mark's Church.

Following our tour we drive for about three hours out of the city to the stunning natural attraction of the Plitvice National Park. The park boasts 16 interconnecting lakes, waterfalls and dense woodland with an array of wildlife. The rare fauna includes wild brown bear, wolves, lynx and eagles, but more commonly lizards, butterflies and various birdlife can be spotted. We will take a couple of ferries and follow the well-marked walking trails (mostly on wooden promenades) through this magical landscape. Every turn leads us to new breathtaking scenery and yet another stunning waterfall. After time for a picnic lunch we return to Zagreb for the evening.



**Accommodation: Hotel Central** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 5 - Train journey to Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

This morning we walk from our hotel to the railway station to board our train to the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo, which will take us around 11 hours. As the train is a stopping service, passengers are generally locals commuting or covering shorter distances and the train can get busy when starting in Zagreb and nearing Sarajevo. The daytime journey is a fantastic way to see the spectacular scenery which is particularly prominent once we cross the border into the rural, mountainous areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina. We also get great views of Sarajevo as we approach the city, where we will be staying for the night. On arrival we will walk to our hotel and after checking in we will be free to have dinner.

On some departures, it may be necessary for us to undertake part of this journey by road. When this is the case, we will travel by train from Zagreb to Vrpolje, which is close to the border. We will then change to a private bus for the Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina border crossing, before continuing on to Doboje, where we will board a train to Sarajevo. This is a slightly shorter route, taking around nine hours, so we will be arriving into Sarajevo a little earlier.

Bosnian cuisine tends to use a range of subtle spices and is similar in some ways to Turkish food with grilled meats and pita bread followed by sweet and sticky nutty Baklava being a popular choice. Other local specialities include Burek, a spiral of meat filled pastry served in slices or Rastika, kale leaves stuffed with rice and minced meat. Another tasty dessert option is Tulumba, deep-fried dough served in syrup. To wash it down you could try the non-alcoholic drink Kompot made with fruit such as rhubarb or gooseberries soaked in water, sugar and spices like vanilla or cinnamon.



**Accommodation: Hotel Grand - Sarajevo** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 6 - Walking tour of Sarajevo; chance to visit the Tunnel Museum

They say that the events that took place on 28th June 1914 in Sarajevo triggered the start of World War I, and this morning we'll take taxis into the city centre to begin our walking tour with a local guide to find out more. This event was the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife at the northern end of Latin Bridge by a 19 year old Bosnian-Serb called Gavrilo Princip. We will see the Eternal Flame, which is a memorial to all those that lost their lives during the war. We also see excellent examples of Austro-Hungarian architecture, namely the City Hall and learn more about the dreadful fate of the Jewish community which once thrived in this city, then known as 'Little Jerusalem'.

The afternoon will be free to spend as you wish and to make your own way back to our hotel at a time of your choosing. You may want to take a relaxing wander through the city's Old Town or as with everywhere else in the Balkans grab a strong coffee and watch

local life go by. There is also an array of museums dedicated to the varied histories of the capital, including the Tunnel Museum depicting life during the Sarajevo Siege in 1992-1995 and showing how the resident civilians managed to keep themselves supplied during the longest siege in modern history. You may choose to join the Times of Misfortune tour which includes entry to the Tunnel Museum.



**Accommodation: Hotel Grand - Sarajevo** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 7 - Scenic rail trip to Mostar with a walking tour on arrival

This morning we walk to the railway station to board the very scenic train ride between Sarajevo and Mostar, which takes us just under three hours. As we chug slowly through the mountains, which were once occupied by Bosnian Serbs during the Bosnian War, the dramatic scenery will capture our attention. We arrive into Mostar this afternoon and after taking taxis to our hotel to check-in we return back to the city centre by taxis and begin our guided walking tour.

Mostar is in the Herzegovina region of the country and still displays vivid scars from the 18 months the city was held under siege in the nineties. Much of Mostar was ruined during this period; however, with its relaxed atmosphere it's hard to believe the conflicts are such recent history. The city still has a very Ottoman feel to it with its winding cobbled stone streets and skyline dotted with domes and minarets. We will see the bazaar, mosque and old city on the way to one of the country's most famous landmarks, Stari Most. This bridge is a reconstruction of the original Ottoman bridge that was built in the mid-1500's, but was destroyed by shelling in 1993.



**Accommodation: Hotel City** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 8 - Visit Old Town Dubrovnik and the Bay of Kotor en route to Podgorica

Today will be full-on but worth the energy! Leaving Mostar early this morning we will drive to Podgorica in Montenegro via Dubrovnik, Croatia and the Bay of Kotor. Depending on border crossings we hope to have around two and half hours to see the Old Town area of Dubrovnik. This city stands proudly on the coast surrounded by its ancient walls and the crystal clear Adriatic Sea just beyond. Despite the horrific shelling Dubrovnik came under in 1991, the Old Town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and has been remarkably well restored.

We then continue down the coastline, crossing into Montenegro where we stop in the old Mediterranean port of Kotor. Sitting on the coast, Kotor is surrounded by dramatic cliffs and is one of the best preserved Medieval old towns on the Adriatic Sea. We hope to have about three hours to explore, before heading to Podgorica for the night.

This evening you might like to try a popular local Montenegrin dish for dinner such as Pohovani Kackavalj - fried cheese or Corbast Pasulj - a stew made with beans, smoked ribs, salami and sausage. You could also sample a local beer, such as the dark ale Niksicko.



**Accommodation: Hotel Terminus** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 9 - Scenic train journey to Belgrade, Serbia

This morning we walk the short distance to the railway station to board one of the most scenic rail routes in Europe; this 11 hour journey from Podgorica to Belgrade will offer the most astounding scenery of any of the rail journeys we take during this trip. The backdrop is a mixture of gorges, canyons and snow-capped mountains as we ascend and descend following the natural topography of the land. This beautiful setting and his passion for rail travel was the motivation for former Yugoslavia's Head of State, Tito, to have his own train built in 1959. Between the trains' inaugural trip until his death in 1980, Tito made this journey often, regularly hosting many famous guests within the deluxe carriages, including Queen Elizabeth II. We arrive in Belgrade this evening and take a taxi to the hotel where we stay for the next three nights.

Paprika is arguably the most popular ingredient in Serbian cooking and they tend to use the red fruit itself rather than the dried spice. You'll find it chopped up in salads with tomatoes, cucumber and cheese, chargrilled with barbequed meats, pickled, stuffed and even mashed. They also love cream and Kajmak a partially fermented thick cream which is often served with grilled meats or fresh bread. It's a bit like a cross between sour cream and clotted cream. Rakia is the most popular spirit and it's normally distilled with plums or grapes, but you can also find more unusual variations like quince, walnut or honey.



**Accommodation: Hotel Prag** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 10 - Excursion by train to Novi Sad; traditional Serbian barbeque dinner

We leave our base in Belgrade this morning and walk to the station to board a train, which takes just under two hours, for a day trip to Novi Sad. Although the second largest city in Serbia, Novi Sad offers a much more laidback atmosphere standing tall above the Danube River. The city is thought to have originated and expanded from the historic Petrovaradin Fortress, which sits proudly on the cityscape. We will be guided around here on foot and using the local buses to see the main points of interest including the fortress that is rich in Roman, Greek and Byzantine history, the Greek school and the Orthodox cathedral. We then have a couple of hours free time to wander through the pedestrian area of the city, maybe choosing to have a drink at one of the many cafes that line the river bank and watch life go by, before journeying back to Belgrade.

Tonight we walk from our hotel to a local restaurant where we'll experience a traditional Serbian barbeque dinner with live music.



## Accommodation: Hotel Prag (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 11 - Walking tour of Belgrade; overnight train to Skopje, Macedonia

We begin today with a guided walking tour to see the earliest known areas of the city, Belgrade Fortress and Kalemegdan Park. The fortress is a very appropriate setting to learn about the city's history through the centuries including Medieval, Roman and Ottoman periods. The Romans originally built a fortification here in 2nd century AD due to its excellent strategic viewpoint on the hill overlooking the city and the confluence of the Sava and Danube Rivers. However, when the Huns and the Goths later waged war, the original structure was burnt down but fortunately rebuilt in the 6th century.

The afternoon will be free for further personal exploration, perhaps you will take the time to absorb the local atmosphere in Kalemegdan Park which is popular with the locals or take time to visit Tito's Mausoleum which is a rite of passage when in Belgrade.

This evening we will walk from our hotel to the train station and board our overnight train journey, which takes around nine and a half hours. We will use sleeper carriages that have up to six bunk beds in each compartment (three beds above one another on each side) and two shared toilet facilities at the end of each carriage. There are no shower facilities on board.

On the 22nd September and 29th September departures, please note the journey from Belgrade to Skopje will be taken by private bus. We will depart Belgrade in the early afternoon and arrive in Skopje in the evening.



## Accommodation: Overnight Train Belgrade to Skopje



Simple Overnight Train



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 12 - Orientation tour of Skopje; traditional Macedonian dinner

An early arrival on the overnight train will allow plenty of time to get to know the best of Skopje, the capital of Macedonia and once home of Mother Teresa. We start our explorations by driving up Mount Vodno to watch the sunrise over the city below. After this we drive to the nearby Ethno Village where we enjoy a traditional Macedonian breakfast in a local restaurant. We then continue to our hotel to leave our luggage before taking taxis into the city centre for an orientation tour conducted by our local guide including highlights such as the fortress, 12th century Old Bazaar, which is the largest and most well preserved bazaar in south-east Europe, and the Holocaust Museum. In 1963 a huge earthquake rocked the city and destroyed an estimated 75% of the town, but it is still rich in historic culture and Ottoman heritage. Skopje has been used a pawn in many wars, including World War II and many empires have ruled over the city, all having influenced the architecture, religion and traditions. Despite the turbulent and sometimes violent history, Skopje is now a peaceful city where residents are free to practice all religions, the main faiths being Macedonian Orthodox and Islam. The city boasts many beautiful churches and mosques, although you'll notice mostly minarets on the skyline due to a historic law that was enforced by the Turks stating Christian buildings could not be taller than mosques.

This afternoon we have free time to further enjoy the city or to relax following the overnight journey and busy morning

explorations. We will end today with dinner in a traditional local Macedonian restaurant.



**Accommodation: OK Hotel** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 13 - Train to Bitola and visit to the ancient city of Heraclea

Taking a step back in time, today we visit the ancient Macedonian city of Heraclea. We leave our hotel early this morning by taxi to the station where we board our four hour train journey to Bitola in southern Macedonia, which is a short distance from Heraclea. We drive to our hotel to check-in before our local guide takes us on an orientation tour of Bitola. Sitting on the bank of the Dragor River, the exact origin of bustling Bitola is unknown, but it seems it grew up in the shadow of Heraclea only to outlive its parent city. Today, despite being a busy commercial centre, Bitola still radiates the relaxed cafe culture that is so popular in this area of Europe.

This afternoon we drive the short distance to ancient Heraclea for a guided walking tour. Named after the legendary Greek mythical hero, Heracles, it dates back to approximately 4th century BC, but many of the remains discovered are from around 2nd century BC when the Romans invaded and conquered it. The site of this once prosperous city has some excellent ruins including an amphitheatre once used for gladiator fighting and preserved mosaic floors.

This evening you are free to have dinner in Bitola. A popular Macedonian dish is Turlitava, a meat and vegetable stew baked in a terracotta pot. Ravanija is a traditional dessert which originates from when the country was under Ottoman rule; it's a type of cake with a sherbet top. Macedonian wine is a popular choice with red being the more dominate option which is usually made using the Vranec grape or sometimes Stanusina Crna, which is indigenous to the country.



**Accommodation: Hotel Sator** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 14 - Journey to Ohrid with an afternoon boat ride on the lake

This morning we drive through the beautiful Galicica National Park to Ohrid. Popular for its wealth of attractive scenery including mountains, lakes and impressive caves, the national park is also very important to the area's agriculture industry. We will make a number of short stops along the way to absorb the extraordinary landscapes and to take some photographs. Before arriving in Ohrid we will also visit the Saint Naum Monastery, which is one of the most photographed places in the country, with its red tiled roof set at the water's edge on the banks of Lake Ohrid; one of Europe's oldest and deepest lakes.

Later this afternoon we arrive into the 3000 year old town of Ohrid in time to have a tour conducted by our local guide of this historic settlement, which has an almost Mediterranean feel to it and is nestled into a bay on the lake. Weather permitting we will take a trip out onto the lake by boat, so we can see the town from a different perspective. To end the day we will walk the short



distance to a local restaurant to have a traditional fish supper. If we're lucky this will include Lake Ohrid brown trout which is a speciality often served in soups or as a whole stuffed fish.



**Accommodation: Millenium Palace** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Dinner

## DAY 15 - Visit to Mavrovo National Park en route to Pristina, Kosovo

This morning we make the journey to Kosovo's capital, Pristina. The drive will take us around nine hours in total but we will make several stops along the way. We visit Saint Jovan Bigorski Monastery, dedicated to Saint John the Baptist and built almost 1000 years ago. We also stop in the Mavrovo National Park which is home to a wealth of pine forests, field covered plains, waterfalls and also Macedonia's highest mountain, Mount Korab, standing at 2,764 metres high.

Once we cross the border into Kosovo we drive the final section to the capital city Pristina. Kosovo is still almost untouched by tourism and we'll get a taste of this unique destination by staying here overnight. After checking in to our hotel we have about an hour free before having the opportunity to join our Explore Leader for a final dinner and then to take a walk through Mother Teresa Square before returning to our hotel.

Kosovo cuisine has been influenced by many different countries over the years and is quite similar to that found in Albania. Bread and dairy are important elements of most dishes and Flia is a popular dish which is similar to a crepe like layered tart normally served with Kaymak cream. Pies, stews and grilled meats with potatoes and rice are also all popular. If you want to try a local liquor then Boza is a thick sticky sweet drink made from malted corn and flour.



**Accommodation: Hotel Garden** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 16 - Trip ends in Pristina

Our trip ends at our hotel in Pristina this morning. Depending on the time of your flight or if you're extending your stay by a night then we'd recommend exploring more of the city. It's not the prettiest of the places that we visit on this trip but it does have a number of attractions that are worth visiting and a lively atmosphere.

You could go into the Emin Gjiku Ethnographic Museum, which gives you a great introduction to traditional Kosovar culture. Set in two charmingly preserved Ottoman houses, within a large walled garden, there is a range of weapons, clothing and jewellery and household items exhibited. In the city's bazaar you can see a 26 metre high clock tower, which dictated when stall holders should close for pray. It's worth stopping by at the National Library to admire the unique architecture of this bizarre building. The Independent House of Kosovo tells the story of the former president Ibrahim Rugova and Kosovo's campaign for independence

from Serbia and you can also see the Newborn Monument, which was unveiled on the 17 February 2008 when Kosovo first declared its liberation. Sultan Mehmet Fatih Mosque is the city's most important and Jashar Pasha Mosque was recently beautifully restored as a gift from the Turkish Government. If all this exploring makes you thirsty then you could stop by at Pristina's first microbrewery, Sabaja Craft Brewery.

**IOF** Meals Provided: Breakfast



## Why book this trip

This exciting trip is a fantastic way to discover Former Yugoslavia and begin to uncover seven fast changing countries in just 16 days; using the local railways to get around. On this varied holiday you'll visit capital cities, beautiful coastline, Europe's oldest lake and a number of stunning national parks. It's a great introduction to the region and will allow you to get under the skin of the true Balkans.

## What's included?



### Included meals

Breakfast: 15  
Dinner: 3



### Transport

Bus  
Boat  
Ferry  
Public Bus  
Taxi  
Train



### Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader  
Driver(s)  
Local Guide(s)



### Accommodation

14 nights standard hotel  
1 nights simple overnight train

## Trip information

### Country information

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

Climate

With only 20 kilometres of coastline on the Adriatic Sea, Bosnia and Herzegovina has a continental climate for the most part, with cold winters and warm summers. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. In spring to autumn the temperatures are normally in the low to mid 20's (in °C). Much of the country is mountainous or hilly, rising to a height of 2,386 metres and winter snow lies for long periods in the higher regions. Mostar is set back from the coastline on a plain, which has a hotter Mediterranean climate with temperatures averaging in the mid to high 20's (in °C) in spring and autumn and July and August in the low 30's (in °C) - although sometimes temperatures here can get up as high as 40°C.

**Time difference to GMT**

+1

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Islam (mainly Sunni) and Christian (mainly Serbian Orthodox)

**Language**

Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian

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## Croatia

**Climate**

The Croatian Adriatic has a Mediterranean climate with mild winters and warm, dry, sunny summers. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. Hvar Island gets the most sunshine in summer with 10-12 hours each day, followed by Split, Korcula Island and Dubrovnik with around 7-8 hours. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the low to mid 20's (in °C), but can reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August. Trip itineraries with boat cruises can occasionally be disrupted due to bad weather.

**Time difference to GMT**

+1

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Roman Catholic

**Language**

Croatian

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## Kosovo

**Climate**

Kosovo has a largely continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the mid to high 20's (in °C) and reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August - although sometimes it can reach as high as 40°C.

**Time difference to GMT**

+1

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Islam

**Language**

Albanian and Serbian

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## Macedonia

**Climate**

Macedonia has a transitional climate from Mediterranean to continental. Summers are hot and dry and winters are moderately cold. It is a land locked country, so isn't cooled by coastal breezes and is separated from both the Adriatic and Aegean Seas by

mountain ranges. The wettest time is in late spring and autumn, but rainfall isn't abundant in the valleys, such as around Skopje. Rainfall in summer is uncommon. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the mid to high 20's (in °C) and reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August - although it can reach as high as 40°C sometimes.

**Time difference to GMT**

+1

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Orthodox Christian

**Language**

Macedonian

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## Montenegro

**Climate**

Montenegro's coastline has a Mediterranean climate with hot dry summers and mild winters, whereas the more mountainous inland areas have a sub-alpine climate with warm summers and very cold winters with frequent snowfall. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn in the coastal areas, though generally this is in the form of short showers. In the mountains rainfall tends to be more frequent including around the Bay of Kotor. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the low to mid 20's (in °C), but can reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August.

**Time difference to GMT**

+1

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Christian (mainly Serbian Orthodox)

**Language**

Montenegrin

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## Serbia

**Climate**

Serbia has a continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the low to mid 20's (in °C), but can reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August - although sometimes warm air currents from Africa can reach here and push the temperatures as high as 40°C.

**Time difference to GMT**

+1

**Plugs**

2 Pin Round

**Religion**

Christian (mainly Serbian Orthodox)

**Language**

Serbian

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## Slovenia

**Climate**

Slovenia has a continental climate, with warm summers and the possibility of some rain in the Julian Alps. There is an average of 5-6 hours of sunshine in April, May, June and September and 7-8 hours in July and August. Seasonal weather patterns can be unpredictable. In the capital, Ljubljana, in spring and autumn temperatures average at around 15°C, with April being cooler at around 9°C, and in summer the temperatures average at 20°C.

**Time difference to GMT**

+1

### Plugs

2 Pin Round

### Religion

Roman Catholic

### Language

Slovene

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Ljubljana:

Ljubljanica River boat trip (1 hour, trip begin on the hour) €8.00 per person.

Excursion to Lake Bled by private bus and with a local guide approximately €70.00 (price is based on 8 passengers; price varies depending on passenger numbers). Three course lunch at Villa Preseren Restaurant starts from €20.00 (excluding drinks), three course lunch at Bled Castle Restaurant starts from €28.00 (excluding drinks), Bled Castle entrance is €10.00, Pletna boat to Bled Island is €18.00, entrance to Saint Mary Church on Bled Island is €6.00.

Sarajevo:

Times of Misfortune tour including the Tunnel Museum €26.00.

### Clothing

The weather in the Balkans can be very hot, especially in the height of summer, so lightweight cotton clothing is best. During spring and autumn temperatures can be lower or drop during the evenings and there is also a stronger possibility of rain, although light rainwear may be needed at any time of year. A warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings.

It's best to pack light because of the train journeys on this trip, so we'd recommend making use of the hotel's laundry facilities where available instead of packing enough for the full two weeks duration of the trip.

When visiting mosques and orthodox churches, women should avoid bare arms and cover their head, shoulders and knees, so it's handy to pack a shawl or scarf. Men should also ensure their knees are covered.

### Footwear

A comfortable pair of walking shoes or boots is essential for exploring and trainers or sandals for relaxing.

### Luggage

20kg

### Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and a small daypack.

It's very important that you pack light and are able to lift your case, as this trip is at a full on pace, including train journeys with shorts walks and/or stairs between platforms, stations and accommodation. There is also limited storage on the trains and the steps to board can be steep. A soft sided bag is best and the smaller bag you can use then the easier this will be for you to lift on board and to store it.

### Equipment

A water bottle, sunhat, sun glasses and sunscreen are essential.

You may find insect repellent, a personal first aid kit and a torch/head torch handy (in case of emergencies and for use on the overnight train journey). Some of the walking on this trip will be over uneven terrain and often the old towns have slippery cobbled

paving, so you may want to bring a walking pole. Not all of the trains used will have air conditioning so it can get hot on board, especially in summer, so you might like to bring a handheld fan with you.

You will be travelling through seven different countries, many of which use different currencies, so calculating how much of each currency you need can be tricky, so we'd recommend considering taking a FairFX currency card with you.

Most importantly don't forget your camera along with a spare battery and large memory card as they'll be no shortage of sights for you to photograph.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly, you should allow €35.00 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leader may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

## Country Information

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

##### Lunch price

£5

##### Dinner price

£8

##### Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

##### Water price

£1.2

#### Foreign Exchange

##### Local currency

Bosnian Mark.

##### Recommended Currency For Exchange

Euros, US Dollars and Pound Sterling can all be exchanged for local currency. However, Euro is the best currency for exchange in most places. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

##### Where To Exchange

Banks or Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

##### ATM Availability

Major towns and cities have ATMs for cash withdrawal, but these are limited in more rural areas.

##### Credit Card Acceptance

Accepted in major restaurants and hotels in Sarajevo, but outside the capital most monetary transactions are made in cash.

##### Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can only be exchanged in some banks.

### Croatia

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Dinner price**

£18

**Beer price**

£2

**Water price**

£1.5

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Croatian Kuna.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Pound Sterling, US Dollars and Euro cash can all be exchanged for the local currency.

**Where To Exchange**

Most major towns and cities - your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival. Only exchange money at reputable places like banks, ATM's and official Forex Offices.

**ATM Availability**

Most towns and cities have ATM's for cash withdrawal.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Generally accepted throughout including most restaurants and hotels.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers Cheques can only be exchanged in banks.

## Kosovo

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£6

**Dinner price**

£13

**Beer price**

£1.2

**Water price**

£1

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Euro.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Pound Sterling and US Dollars can be exchanged for local currency. The Serbian Dinar is sometimes accepted in Serb-majority areas. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

**Where To Exchange**

Banks or official Forex Offices in the main towns and cities.

**ATM Availability**

There are some ATM's in the capital Pristina and other major cities, but not in more rural areas.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit cards are not widely accepted and most monetary transactions are made in cash.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers Cheques are not widely accepted and can only be exchanged in some banks.

## Macedonia

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£4

**Dinner price**

£8.5

**Beer price**

£2

**Water price**

£1

### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Macedonian Denar.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Euros, US Dollars and Pound Sterling can all be exchanged for local currency. However, Euro is the best currency for exchange in most places. Please note if using Pound Sterling then only Bank of England issued bank notes are accepted. Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not accepted. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

**Where To Exchange**

Banks or official Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. British banks don't generally exchange Macedonian Denar, so you should exchange any unwanted local currency before you leave Macedonia. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

**ATM Availability**

Major towns and cities have ATMs for cash withdrawal, but these are limited in more rural areas.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Accepted in major restaurants and hotels.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers Cheques can only be exchanged in some banks.

## Montenegro

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£9

**Dinner price**

£11

**Beer price**

£2

**Water price**

£1.00 - 2.00

### Foreign Exchange



**Local currency**

Euro.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Pound Sterling and US Dollars can be exchanged for local currency. Please note if using Pound Sterling then only Bank of England issued bank notes are accepted. Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not accepted.

**Where To Exchange**

Banks or Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

**ATM Availability**

Most towns and cities have ATM's for cash withdrawal.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit cards are also generally widely accepted.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers Cheques can only be exchanged in banks.

## Serbia

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£8

**Dinner price**

£12

**Beer price**

£1.20 - 4.00

**Water price**

£1

### Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Dinar.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Euros, US Dollars and Pound Sterling can all be exchanged for local currency. However, Euro is the best currency for exchange in most places. Please note if using Pound Sterling then only Bank of England issued bank notes are accepted. Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not accepted. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

**Where To Exchange**

Banks or official Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. British banks don't generally exchange Dinars, so you should exchange any unwanted local currency before you leave Serbia. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

**ATM Availability**

Generally widespread, but limited in more rural areas.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Accepted in major restaurants and hotels.

**Travellers Cheques**

Travellers Cheques can be exchanged for the local currency but only in banks and they are only accepted in major hotels and shops in the main towns and cities.

## Slovenia

### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices

given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

**Lunch price**

£8

**Dinner price**

£15

**Beer price**

£2

**Water price**

£0.9

## Foreign Exchange

**Local currency**

Euro.

**Recommended Currency For Exchange**

Pound Sterling and US Dollars can be exchanged for the local currency.

**Where To Exchange**

Most major towns and cities - your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival. Only exchange money at reputable places like banks, ATM's and official Forex Offices.

**ATM Availability**

Major towns and cities have ATMs for cash withdrawal.

**Credit Card Acceptance**

Credit cards are also generally accepted.

**Travellers Cheques**

Accepted in most banks but not all money changing facilities.

## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Ferry, Public Bus, Taxi, Train

### Accommodation notes

**Booking a Single Room**

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Train travel was once the only way to travel through the Balkans and was considered to be a luxury option, but due to the recent increase in the availability of flights and the break-up of Yugoslavia the trains are no longer of a comparable standard to those found in the UK or Western Europe.

The trains are no-frills, often with no or limited air-conditioning, no restaurant or refreshments service and with basic toilet facilities. Also the technology at the stations and on board is very dated and trains can be delayed. It's not possible to open the majority of train windows, so it can get hot on board especially in summer, so we recommend wearing light cotton clothing and layers.

For the overnight journey we will use sleeper carriages that have up to six bunk beds in each compartment (three beds above one another on each side) and two shared toilet facilities at the end of each carriage. Luggage is stored either under the bottom bunk beds or on shelves above the beds. There is the possibility that you will be sharing with non-Explore clients in the same compartment and that it could be mixed genders within each compartment. There are no shower facilities on board. There is however usually a great sense of camaraderie during the journey.

This is one of the last places in Europe where you can experience authentic rail travel on ex-socialist and soviet trains, travel with the

local people and it's the only way to see the incredible scenery along the way. Take toilet roll, hand sanitiser and an open mind for maximum enjoyment!

The majority of hotels on this trip offer a laundry service which is usually efficient and inexpensive.

## Essential Information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

#### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa and Passport Information

Visas are not required by British citizens for any of the countries on this trip. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change, so please check with your local consulate for the most up to date advice for the countries you are visiting.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

### Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

### Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

#### Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

#### Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

### Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom. Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## Included activities

This trip is designed to introduce you to seven fascinating countries in just 16 days and to take a number of rail journeys in between. There is a substantial amount of walking each day (approximately 13 kilometres), as our explorations of the national parks, towns and cities will mostly be on foot.

We will take a number of long train journeys, so as well as enjoying the ever-changing views we'd recommend taking snacks and drinks for your journey (there won't always be food and drink facilities on board) and entertainment such as a book, audio books or an electronic book reader, games device or tablet, pack of cards or a quiz book.

The border crossings during the train journeys can take time and the officials will want to check your documentation, so it's best to keep your passport to hand at all times.

There's so much to enjoy and there's a lot of ground to cover, so please be prepared for the busy nature of this enthralling holiday.

## Non refundable permits

### Bosnia and Herzegovina

#### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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### Croatia

#### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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### Kosovo

#### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Macedonia

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Montenegro

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Serbia

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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## Slovenia

### Vaccinations

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.

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