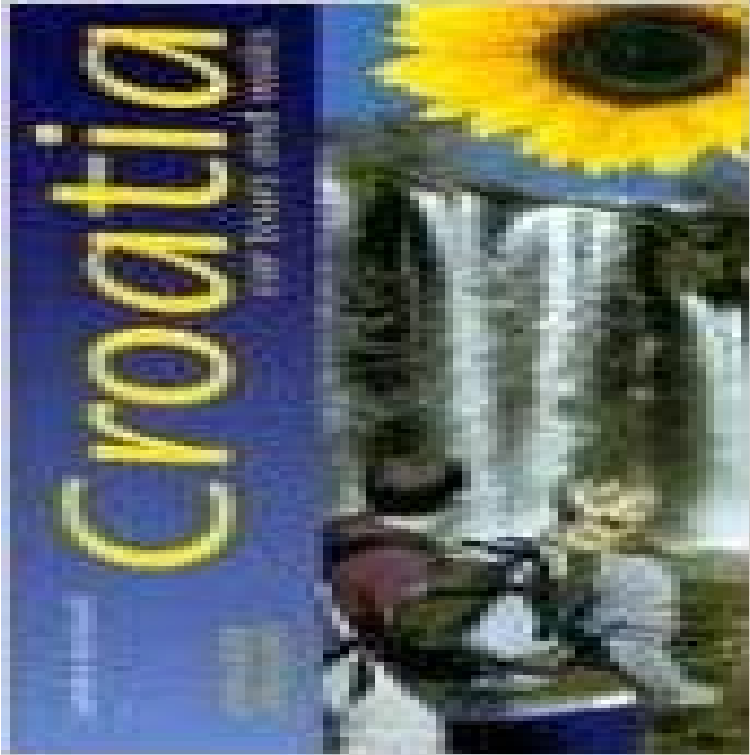


Landscapes of Croatia: A Countryside Guide (Sunflower Guide Croatia) (Sunflower Guides Croatia)



From the northernmost shores of the Kvarner Gulf, southwards all the way to Dubrovnik, this guide covers Croatia's Adriatic coast, eleven of the myriad islands and two inland areas. It includes the Mljet, Plitvice Lakes, Krka and Paklenica national parks and Biokovo and Učka nature parks, and mentions five of Croatia's six World Heritage sites. Happily, these bald though impressive facts describe one of the most beautiful and beguiling countries in Europe. Contrasts and diversity sum up Croatia: tall forests, wind-combed prickly thornbush and juniper on the stony uplands, the miraculous waterfalls in the Plitvice Lakes and Krka national parks, the aridity of the karst landscapes, modern tourist resorts and timeless old villages, the deserted Krajina region and the intensively cultivated Neretva delta. Each island has a distinct identity, best discovered on foot. Mljet's forests and lakes are unique, and though Koločep, Lopud and Šipan share precious tranquillity, their attractive villages are subtly different. Brac's coastline, punctuated by innumerable coves, is overlooked by the highest peak of the Adriatic islands, while there's more to elongated Hvar than its much-visited capital old villages, breezy uplands and wide views. Remote Vis still seems to be haunted by its past, compact Rab's beaches are without peer. Most of the northern half of Krk is forest-clad, while magnificent rolling uplands, often called moonscapes, characterise the south. Slender Losinj is dominated by a rugged ridge and is blessed with many delightful coves and inlets, while neighbouring Cres is an island of broad hills, small villages and extensive olive groves. The spectacularly rugged Pelješac peninsula has perhaps the most dramatic mountain scenery of all in a country not short of peaks and high places. Everywhere the colours of the landscapes are deeper, more vivid and intense than in higher latitudes, particularly the blues and

greens of the water sparkling turquoise, ultramarine and jade green, the deep greens of the forests, the dazzling white of the karst moonscapes, and the vivid pinks and purples of garden plants. The ever-present sea is a constant source of fascination. Its often calm, painted with mirror-perfect reflections through which fish and aquatic plants are clearly visible. It can also be whipped into turbulent fury by the bura, driving blizzards and spiralling vortices of spray across the grey-green water. Croatia's national and nature parks are the best places to visit for the colourful flora peculiar to limestone country. Still, the parks' special glories are the magnificent forests, especially in Učka, Plitvice Lakes and Paklenica. The light green beeches, venerable wide-spreading oaks, hardy chestnuts, and sombre black pines are all cool havens in the heat of a summer's day. The parks are particularly welcoming to walkers, with miles of waymarked and well-maintained paths and trails, some bringing seemingly inaccessible summits within quite easy reach. Any walk can be enriched by meeting fellow walkers and local people. Croatia draws walkers from many countries near and far, as visitors' books on mountain tops and first-hand experiences testify. Some excursions take you through residential areas of everyday Croatia, far removed from nearby resorts. Similarly, using public transport brings you into contact with the patterns of local people's daily lives: workers travelling to the mainland on dawn ferries and women going to town for the early-morning market.

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