



THE
GEORGIAN
GROUP

29 APRIL – 6 MAY 2012

£1650 PER PERSON

THE VENETIAN ADRIATIC



Defending the Adriatic was a key strategic requirement for the Venetian Republic, whose borders (until its dissolution in 1797) covered almost all of what is now coastal Croatia. What started as geopolitical necessity has left a glorious architectural and cultural legacy, still evident today in a string of magnificent littoral strongholds, from Pirano and Rovigno in Istria to Trogir and Ragusa (Dubrovnik) in Dalmatia, all of which feature on this seven night exclusive tour.

Starting in Venice, we shall sail to Parenzo and from there explore the wonderful hilltop towns that command the lush valleys of Istria. Highlights are Grisignana, Portole and Montona d'Istria, where we shall stay in a fine hotel yards from Palladio's Church of St Stephen. The Winged Lion of St Mark is ubiquitous. The second leg of the tour takes in the fortified coastal towns of Dalmatia, absolute masterpieces of urban planning. Among the unmissable sights amid a welter of Unesco World Heritage Sites are St Donatus' Church in Zara (administrative capital of Venetian Dalmatia), Sibenik Cathedral, the great fifteenth century Walls of Ston, the magnificent island redoubt of Hvar, a major Venetian naval base – and of course the magical Diocletian's Palace in Spalato (Split), the closest one can get to inhabiting a Piranesi etching.

PROVISIONAL ITINERARY

Sunday 29 April

Independent travel to Venice. Early evening rendezvous at centrally-located hotel for dinner and scene-setting talk.

Monday 30 April

Morning in Venice studying the roots of the architectural influences that filtered through the Republic. Afternoon: comfortable ferry to Parenzo, luxury coach to the Kempinski Palace Hotel, Pirano.

Tuesday 1 May

Walking tour of Pirano, annexed by Venice as early as 933. Our tour will include the Venetian House, the Tartini House and the Church of St George (1608 bell tower). Coach to Rovigno, home to Venetian palazzi, mediaeval townhouses and thirty churches among the narrow cobbled streets leading up to the commanding Church of St Ephemina (Venetian Baroque, 1725–36). Afternoon: the highly evocative Baroque hill-towns of Buie (visit to private villa), Grisignana, Portole and Montona d'Istria (overnight Hotel Kastel).



Wednesday 2 May

Luxury coach via the scenic coastal route to Zara (Zadar). Tour taking in the Roman Forum and circular St Donatus', with a melange of Roman fragments, from inverted capitals to whole pillars, recycled in its fabric. At Sibenik we see the Cathedral of St Jacob, a top-ranking example of Renaissance architecture that reflects the transition from Venetian Gothic to Tuscan Renaissance. Continue down the picturesque Dalmatian coastline to delectable Trogir, ruled by the Venetians from 1420 and now a Unesco World Heritage site.

Thursday 3 May

Walking tour of Trogir, including St Lovro's Cathedral (1240), its portal richly carved with Old Testament figures, including Adam and Eve above brutish-looking Venetian lions. The Rector's Palace, expressing Venice's economic strength in the first half of the 15th century, and the Palazzo Cipiko, with its bays of Venetian Gothic three-light windows, will also feature. Arrive in Spalato/Split in time for the evening passeggiata, the best time to savour the peristyle, the public heart of Diocletian's Palace.

Friday 4 May

Morning visit to the Archaeological Museum of Split before a comfortable ferry journey to the island of Hvar, now beloved of the *jeunesse dorée* but still highly evocative of Venetian military might, its harbour guarded by the spectacularly-sited Spanjol Fortress and assorted Venetian lions. Tour of the old town to include the Cathedral and the Arsenal, converted to a theatre in 1612.

Saturday 5 May

By coach across the picturesque island of Hvar to its eastern tip at Sucuraj; short ferry trip back to mainland Dalmatia and on to Dubrovnik, stopping *en route* at the Walls of Ston (still largely intact and the closest European equivalent to the Great Wall of China). From our base at the five-star Hilton, a stone's throw from the old town, we will explore Dubrovnik at a leisurely pace, taking in the Rector's Palace and the Baroque Jesuit church of St Ignatius, amongst other sites, before a farewell dinner.

Sunday 6 May

Travel to Dubrovnik airport for independent return flights.

Please note: this is a provisional itinerary and the order and content may be changed if necessary.

