

Tom Luck

## Top Four Things on Foot: Dubrovnik

*Discover the best things to do in Dubrovnik this year, from a holidaymaker who fell in love with the city on their first visit.*

In recent years Dubrovnik has become one of the top tourist destinations in not just Croatia but the whole of the Mediterranean—and it's easy to understand why. Known as the Pearl of the Adriatic—the electric blue sea that edges its famous city walls—and listed as one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites, Dubrovnik is a stunning city mapped with marble streets and crowned with roofs of vibrant orange. With plenty to do both inside and outside—and even *on*—its city walls, here's a list of the top 5 things to do in Dubrovnik in 2019.

### 1. Old Town

Once you've dropped off your luggage, the first thing you should do is to take a walk around Dubrovnik's Old Town. There's no better way to get to know a place than getting lost in it! Listen to the stringed melodies of local musicians as they welcome you through Pile Gate, follow the sun-smacked limestone along Placa-Stradun (Main Street), explore the veiny maze of cobbled side streets, and guzzle gelato on the Old Port to the rhythmic rise and fall of the waves. You will quickly be sucked into a beautiful, singular place that seems unstuck from time: although a perfectly preserved medieval city, with a weave of architecture from the Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque periods, Dubrovnik is still lived-in and bustling with locals, whose homes frame the many squares, neighbour the various churches and monasteries, and top the tall narrow streets above the shops. Dubrovnik's Old Town remains captivating well into the evening, with the majority of restaurants offering outdoor seating areas for you to enjoy your meal, while high overhead swifts swoop in the warm air.

*Tip:* *Instead of staying in a hotel outside of Dubrovnik's city walls, rent a room or apartment on airbnb and stay in the Old Town itself. Prices will be similar—if not cheaper—than a hotel, and you won't need to catch a bus or walk in each day. Trust me, there's nothing like waking up with Dubrovnik's Old Town directly on your doorstep—I wouldn't suggest visiting any other way!*

### 2. Swim at Dance Beach

While Dubrovnik has several nice beaches, these can often get overcrowded during the summer months. Instead of fighting for towel space on the most popular beach, Banje Beach, you should instead head just west of Old Town—it's what the locals do! A short walk (5 minutes) from the city walls you will find a secluded swimming area at Dance Beach. Here you can sunbathe on the large rocks, or launch yourself from the jetties into the warm, glittering azure of the Adriatic Sea. Not only are there less crowds, but you can even swim beneath Fort Lawrence—otherwise known as the Red Keep to Game of Thrones fans.

### 3. Climb Mount Srd

Although there is a cable car that can take you from the bottom to the top of Mount Srd in four minutes, if you have the time—and the legs—for it then you should consider hiking the

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mountain's serpentine footpath instead. Whereas the cable car will zip you past the unravelling views of Dubrovnik and its gorgeous backdrop, the footpath will allow you to enjoy them at your own pace—there are plenty of photo opportunities before you reach the top! Starting from Jadranska Cesta, a road just north of Old Town, the route takes around an hour to 90 minutes to walk. The cool shade of tall pines will begin you on a gradual ascent, but as the footpath becomes rockier underfoot you will become exposed to the hot sun—good shoes, bottled water and sun defence are a must! While this can be uncomfortable for some, there are frequent places to stop and rest, with the added benefit of being able to absorb a view that changes with every turn in the footpath. If you can time your descent with that of the sunset, your return journey will not only be more comfortable but it will be washed in warm transforming colour that somehow enhances an already picturesque view.

#### **4. Take a Karaka Cruise**

Carve foamy curls through the spangled waters of the Adriatic sea on a replica 16th century wooden ship—otherwise known as a karaka—and feel the salt breeze on your cheeks as you enjoy panoramic views around Dubrovnik. You will feel transported to a distant past out on the open deck, beneath the masts and sails and ratlines, as you sip your complimentary drink and guzzle the coastal surroundings. As you leave the main port (Gruz) and head for the Old Port, the orange sun slips into the sea, shedding light and shadow on the nearby cliffs and distant mountains and all that lies in between. There are a variety of cruises, including a *Game of Thrones* tour, which includes an experienced tour guide who will divulge their insight into the series and show you the local filming locations, as well as giving you the opportunity to dress up in costume and have your photo taken. Afterwards, you can continue your *Game of Thrones* tour on foot (highly recommended, as you visit filming locations), or return to the present for an evening meal in sun-soaked Old Town.