

SAILING SATELLITE – MONTENEGRO



The Bar Experience

Bar, the largest seaport on the Montenegrin coast, is often overshadowed by the more touristy Kotor. But Bar offers its own unique charm. The city is divided into two parts: the Old Bar, nestled at the foot of the Rumiya Mountain, and the New Bar, adjacent to the port. If medieval ruins aren't your thing, stay close to the sea and explore the modern streets and charming boutiques selling Italian clothes.

Across the Adriatic: Bar and Bari

Bar plays a crucial role in maintaining sea communication with Italy. Directly opposite Bar, across the Adriatic Sea, lies the Italian city of Bari. The Italians on the Montenegrin side are called Antibari, meaning "opposite Bari." The Oceanis yacht can cover the 100-nautical-mile distance in less than a day. On clear days, you might even catch a glimpse of Italy from the Montenegrin mountains. Two passenger ferries from Montenegro Lines cross the Adriatic daily in the summer and occasionally in the winter, making the journey an adventure in itself.

Italian Influence in Bar

Not only do Italian clothes make their way to Bar, but so do Italians themselves. With gambling prohibited in Italy, many Italians head to Montenegro's casinos, game clubs, and

bookmakers to try their luck. They arrive on Friday ferries and spend the weekend indulging in the local gambling scene, either losing their fortunes or becoming millionaires.

Historical Bar: King Nikola's Palace

Dive into Bar's history with a visit to the palace of King Nikola Petrovich Negosh, a ruler of the Montenegrin dynasty for over two hundred years. Known for his leadership, poetry, and diplomacy, King Nikola's modest two-story residence, Villa Topolica, now serves as a historical museum. Stroll through the shady park and enjoy a cup of coffee in the former Winter Garden, gifted by the Italian king Victor Emmanuel.

Old Bar: A Step Back in Time

Old Bar, located four kilometers from the sea at the foot of Mount Rumia, is a treasure trove of history. This medieval city, now in ruins, offers a glimpse into Montenegro's past with its stone arch aqueduct, fortress walls, churches, Turkish clock tower, and ancient roadways. The city is slowly being revived by archaeologists, restorers, and artists, adding new life to its historic walls.

A Blend of Cultures

The Old Bar is a melting pot of Slavic, Venetian, and Turkish influences. As you explore, you'll find narrow souvenir streets, Turkish wooden balconies, and charming teahouses where you can savor a cup of tea and compare the taste of baklava. The Old Bar stands proudly on a dais, offering a commanding view over the modern New Bar and the sea.

Evening in Bar: A Symphony of Sounds

As evening falls, the city comes alive with the sounds of the Orthodox Church of St. Vladimir's bells, the Catholic Cathedral of St. Nicholas' mass, and the muezzin's call to prayer. The ferry's booming horn signals its departure from Bar, heading towards Italy, or from Italy towards Bar. No matter where you are on the Montenegrin coast, remember that this is just one part of Montenegro's rich tapestry.

Montenegro: A Historical Perspective

Modern Montenegro, with its current borders, is a relatively young country, having acquired its coastal regions less than a hundred years ago after World War I. Before that, Montenegro was a tiny state nestled in the high mountains. Only in the early 20th century did Kotor Bay and the Adriatic coast become Montenegrin, giving the Montenegrins access to the sea.

Ulcinj: A Sun-Soaked Frontier

Montenegrins welcomed Ulcinj into their fold a little over a hundred years ago in 1880 when it was wrested from the Ottoman Empire. With this addition, the Montenegrin coast gained one of the sunniest cities in the Adriatic.

Ulcinj is a frontier city, blending influences from both sides of its history. The trading quarter here is a lively bazaar, with market days on Tuesday and Friday. Minarets pierce the skyline, and Serbian signs are often duplicated in Albanian. Tourists, dressed for the beach, curiously glance at women in kerchiefs and men with mustaches sipping coffee, who return the curiosity.

The Enchanting Old Town

The symbol of Ulcinj is undoubtedly the Old Town, a fortress perched on a steep cliff over the sea. This incredible heap of eras features remnants of Illyrian-Greek fortifications, towers of medieval Serb rulers, Venetian chambers, and churches with attached minarets. Local legends weave tales of Algerian pirates, black slaves, Jewish false prophets, and even Miguel Cervantes, who was said to have been captured by these pirates. As you wander the narrow streets of the Old City, you might spot goats grazing in the fortress, indifferent to the layers of history around them. From the steep walls, you can peer out over the sea, imagining pirate ships on the horizon returning with their loot.

A City of Contrasts

In the late 16th century, the Ottoman Turks conquered Ulcinj from the Venetians. The city's favorable position at the intersection of trade routes made it a prime target. Pirates patrolled the coast, attacking port cities and engaging in the slave trade. On the Small Beach of Ulcinj, just beneath the walls of the Old Town, they divided their loot, and black slaves were sold in the stone square inside the city walls. Today, each local resident hopes to uncover pirate gold hidden somewhere in the city.

Beaches of Ulcinj

Today, the Small Beach—Ulcinj's city beach—attracts sunbathers. The Adriatic coast is not known for its sandy beaches, but Ulcinj boasts two of them. The Small Beach stretches 360 meters, while the Great Beach extends for thirteen kilometers. This vast expanse of fine gray sand is accompanied by the summer mistral wind, ideal for surfing and kite flying. The Great Beach ends at the triangular Ada Island on the Boyana River, home to the most famous nudist beach on the Montenegrin coast, a paradise for sunbathing enthusiasts.

Cervantes' Legacy

As you explore Ulcinj, you might find yourself wondering if the locals' stories are true—if a real Spanish nobleman once languished in a medieval tower overlooking the sea, and if Dulcinea del Toboso was inspired by one of Ulcinj's residents.

Herceg Novi: The Sunniest Gem of the Bay

Herceg Novi, the largest and sunniest city in the Bay of Kotor, is also the youngest—though its youth is relative. Founded in 1382 by Bosnian Duke Tvrtko the First, Herceg Novi was named Castel Nuovo, or the New Fortress, to contrast with the older nearby cities of Kotor and Dubrovnik.

A Tale of Two Dukes

A century after Duke Tvrtko, Duke Stepan Vukchich Kosacha came down from the Bosnian Mountains to the Bay of Kotor. Competing with Kotor and Dubrovnik, he founded a cloth factory, the second in Europe, which spurred the city's development. Grateful residents added his title to the city's name, resulting in the modern name—Herceg Novi.

Symbols of Herceg Novi: Mimosa and Stairs

Herceg Novi is known for its mimosa blooms and endless stairs, or "skalinade." The mimosa's bloom heralds the arrival of spring in the Kotor Bay. The city's unique layout, with houses on different levels, means navigating its streets involves climbing numerous stone steps. Despite the physical challenge, the climb is rewarded with an unparalleled view from the terrace of Gradska Kafana, overlooking the Bay of Kotor and the open sea.

Medieval Fortresses: Guardians of the Bay

Herceg Novi greets and bids farewell to all who visit the Bay of Kotor, standing opposite the bay's single sea entrance and exit. The city boasts three medieval fortresses: the Turkish Kanli Kula (Bloody Tower), Spanish Spaniola, and the Venetian Citadel. These fortresses often transform into theater stages, hosting events such as the celebrations of the 300-year friendship between Russia and Montenegro.

Healing Mud Baths of Igalo

In the suburb of Igalo, the river Sutorina flows into the sea, creating a shoal with therapeutic muds. In 1949, the Institute of Physical Medicine, Rehabilitation, and Rheumatology was founded here. Close to the institute, hidden among pines and cypresses, is the former villa of Marshal Broz Tito, now an exclusive mud bath.

A Stroll Along the Promenade

After conquering the city's ups and downs, take a walk along the picturesque promenade. Imagine the rock trail once held railway tracks connecting the Bay of Kotor with Bosnia during the Austro-Hungarian era. Today, only memories and a locomotive near the former railway station in Bosnian Trebinje remain.

Abandoned Submarine Tunnels

Not far from the bay's entrance are tunnels, once shelters for warships, built during the Yugoslav era after World War II. These tunnels, including the 200-meter-long Rose tunnel, were designed to hide, arm, and repair submarines and boats. Though abandoned and forgotten, these grand concrete structures occasionally host electronic music festivals, and adventurous youth compete in daring jumps into the water.

Perast: A Timeless Gem

Nestled in the Bay of Kotor, Perast boasts three hundred houses and fewer than three hundred inhabitants, yet it sees an endless flow of tourists. Visitors arrive by large and small buses, rented cars, and on foot, exploring the city's streets and venturing out to the islands on small fishing boats.

A City Frozen in Time

Perast appears almost unchanged since the 18th century. Modern construction is prohibited to preserve the city's original appearance. The only exception is an abandoned garment factory built during the Yugoslavian era, but it remains unobtrusive. Residents even seek out old, burnt roof tiles to maintain the historic charm.

A Strategic and Historic Hub

Perast's history dates back to the 15th century when its residents descended from Mount St. Elijah to engage in shipbuilding and brokering trade. Despite their lack of goods and money, they borrowed from the aristocrats of Kotor and Dubrovnik. Trade flourished, and the townspeople navigated their small, maneuverable vessels to Greece, Italy, Dalmatia, and Albania, avoiding pirate Turkish ships and returning safely to the Bay of Kotor.

Venice's Watchful Eye

In the same century, the Republic of Venice took interest in Perast, recognizing its strategic importance. The city became the guardian of the sea route leading to Kotor, Venice's main outpost in the Bay of Kotor. Perast was entrusted with the Venetian military flag, a prestigious honor. After Venice's fall, the inhabitants of Perast held a solemn ceremony to bury the flag under the altar of St. Nicholas Church.

Building a Fortress

Venetians imparted knowledge to Perast's residents but provided no funds for a fortress wall. Ingeniously, each captain built a watchtower alongside his palace, benefiting both his family and the city. The Fortress of the Holy Cross was constructed at the city's highest point. However, in the early 20th century, a road was built around the Bay of Kotor, leading to the

demolition of obstacles, including the towers. Today, stone ledges along Perast's embankment are all that remain of the medieval private moorings.

Perast's Maritime Legacy

The captains of Perast were renowned throughout the Mediterranean. Marco Martinovic, one such captain, trained cadets sent by Peter I. His name, alongside those of other nobles, is preserved in paintings by an unknown artist. Another notable captain, Matia Zmaevich, served as commander of the galley fleet, chief commander of the St. Petersburg port, and admiral of the Russian Empire. These achievements are documented in the naval museum of Perast.

Celebrating Tradition: Gadzhene Kokot

Every year on May 15th, Perast celebrates a unique holiday called "Gadzhene kokot" or "shoot the cock." This tradition commemorates the city's defense against Ottoman Turks in 1654. Young men of the city line up along the quay, holding replicas of old muskets, and take turns shooting at a foam bird symbolizing the Ottoman Empire. The hero of the holiday is celebrated with a bowl of Vranac, the local wine, followed by a solemn procession with icons and banners.

A Picturesque Setting

The stories of battles and captains have become legends, and modern cruise liners pass by Perast's medieval palaces. From the upper decks, the city appears as a picturesque theatrical setting, adding charm to the already enchanting Bay of Kotor.

Sveti Đorđe: St. George's Island - Challenge to the Pope

Between the city of Perast and the Strait of Verige, there are two islets in the sea. Can you guess which one is natural and which is man-made?

St. George's Island (Sveti Đorđe) is a natural island, distinguished by its century-old cypress trees and underground springs. These evergreen trees symbolize death to the ancient Romans and eternal life to Christians, serving as sentinels in Mediterranean monasteries.

The Benedictine Abbey on St. George's Island

Guarded by cypresses, St. George's Island houses a Benedictine abbey. Monks seeking solitude and peace, or rather expanding the Pope's influence, chose the island in the 10th century. The small abbey quickly gained influence, prompting the Pope to appoint abbots and establish monastic parishes in the surrounding lands.

Conflict and Excommunication

This arrangement displeased the local residents. In 1535, the people of Perast killed a church attendant at the altar, leading to their excommunication by the Pope. The island was forbidden to serve for eleven years until the bell rang again in the monastery.

Theatrical Performances in Kotor Bay

During the summer, medieval towns in Kotor Bay transform into open-air theater grounds. Spectators, actors, and musicians gather on city squares as the day's heat wanes, and performances begin. "Bokel D Minor" by the Tivat Theater Center is a legendary performance about a love story with a final chord on St. George's Island, based on events from two hundred years ago.

The Legend of Anto and Katica

In 1807, Napoleon's ships arrived in Kotor Bay. Displeased with the French occupation, Perast residents revolted in 1813, leading to the city's shelling. Officer Anto's ship destroyed the house of his lover, Katica. Anto never left the Bay, becoming a hermit and later being buried alongside Katica on St. George's Island.

The Island of the Dead

Until the 19th century, St. George's Island served as a monastery cemetery, earning it the nickname "Island of the Dead." Art historians believe the island is depicted in Swiss painter-symbolist Arnold Böcklin's work.

A Forbidden Anchorage

From a distance, an inverted anchor sign indicates that anchoring is prohibited near St. George's Island. While excursions are not allowed, swimmers often brave the waters from Perast's embankment, challenging their endurance or the Pope himself.

Gospa od Škrpjela: Our Lady on the Rocks

Gospa od Škrpjela (Our Lady on the Rocks) is a man-made island created by sailors. Before embarking on long sea campaigns, sailors sought the protection of the heavenly patron. Medieval sailors of Kotor Bay threw stones into the sea to create an island, hoping the Mother of God would protect them from pirates and storms.

The Creation of Our Lady on the Rocks

In the 15th century, fishermen from Perast discovered an icon of the Mother of God on a reef. Believing it was a sign, they began a 200-year project to create an island. Stones were initially brought by small fishing boats, then by flooding old or captured Turkish ships filled with stones. By the 17th century, the island covered three thousand square meters, and a church with a turquoise dome was erected.

The Church of Our Lady on the Rocks

church's interior is adorned with sixty-eight canvases painted by Tripoli Kokolyu, depicting biblical prophets, Greek sibyls, and holy figures. An altar from Genoa, made of Italian marble, houses the icon of the Mother of God. Mariners pray before this icon before setting out to sea, and their gratitude is displayed in the form of over two thousand silver tablets in the church.

The Fashinad Tradition

Every year on July 22, a festive boat procession called Fashinad takes place. Decorated boats row to the island, where men throw stones into the sea, seeking the Mother of God's continued protection. The celebration is a testament to the island's significance and the sailors' enduring faith.

Kotor: A Reserved Aristocrat

Enter Kotor through the main sea gate, just like countless travelers before you. Kotor is a reserved aristocrat among the medieval towns of the Adriatic coast. It lent its proud name to the entire Kotor Bay, the deepest, most beautiful, and rainiest bay of the Adriatic Sea.

A Living Medieval City

Kotor is not merely a fortress but a living city with a medieval soul. In the stone houses once owned by Eastern aristocrats, ordinary people now live, hiding from the tourist noise behind closed shutters. Look beyond the windows of boutiques and souvenir shops, and you'll see ropes stretched between medieval windows with modern clothes drying on them. The residents of Kotor create a spectacular stage for tourists, eager for interesting shots.

Venetian Influence

Built by Venetians, Kotor reflects their architectural principles. Each house belonged to a single owner (una casa - una famiglia), with kitchens under the roof to avoid fires. The winged lion, symbol of Venice, can be found throughout the city. Climb to the top of the fortress wall (entrance 2.5 euros) to the bastion of San Giovanni, where you can escape the city noise and enjoy the view.

A Fortress Built Over Centuries

From the 15th to the 18th century, Venetians built Kotor, creating a four-kilometer fortress wall, six bastions, seven city squares, and palaces for aristocratic families. The city's squares are connected by narrow, winding streets, with the narrowest one aptly named "Let Me Go." This street is so narrow that two aristocrats couldn't pass each other without conflict.

The Three Gates

You can enter Kotor through three gates: the main sea gate, northern gate, and southern gate. Each gate is protected by water obstacles—the river Shkurda, the underground source Gurdich, and the sea. In the Middle Ages, bridges leading to the gates were elevated during danger, transforming the city into an impregnable fortress. Remarkably, Kotor was never conquered by the Turks during three hundred years of Venetian rule. The residents credited their protection to blessed Ozanna, a nun who led an uprising against Hajruddin Barbarossa. One of the city's churches bears her name, and her incorrupt relics rest in a glass sarcophagus inside.

Exploring Kotor

As you enter the city through the main sea gate, you'll be greeted by a bas-relief of Saint Trifon, the city's defender since the 9th century, and Neptune's stone mask above the gate. Take a stroll around the city, explore its squares, navigate narrow streets, buy souvenirs from former artisan shops, and enjoy a cup of coffee at a café. Listen closely to the city—it may not reveal all its secrets, but it will share something special with you.

Getting Around

Don't worry about getting lost in Kotor. You can pick up a free map at a tourist tent near the main gate. If you want to delve deeper into the city's history, consider hiring a guide.

Tivat: A Charming Resort Town

Tivat, a small and picturesque resort town on the Adriatic Sea, showcases the classics of the genre. Winter brings a rainy, empty coast, but summer transforms it with colorful beach umbrellas, a palm-lined promenade, and a quest for the perfect mojito.

Ancient Origins and Medieval Remnants

Tivat's history dates back to ancient times, with theories suggesting either Illyrians or Greeks founded the first settlement. However, no visible evidence from that era remains. From the Middle Ages, under Venetian rule, the city retains a medieval stone tower, the remains of the summer palace of the Kotor aristocratic family. Today, this medieval hacienda serves as an open summer theater venue.

The Austro-Hungarian Influence

In the 19th century, Tivat began to develop actively. The Austro-Hungarians built two shipyards in the Bay of Kotor, one of which was the military Arsenal, becoming the city-

forming center of Tivat for the next century. During Yugoslav times, Soviet submarines came to service and repair here, while Soviet sailors admired the colorful Yugo and Zastava cars parked among the palms.

The Birth of Porto Montenegro

A few years ago, Montenegro sold the Arsenal, and a Canadian billionaire purchased the plant. He transformed the former factory into Porto Montenegro, a private port that receives and services private vessels.

Exploring Porto Montenegro

A stroll through Porto Montenegro is a must for anyone visiting Tivat. Here, you can see mega yachts belonging to Oleg Deripaska and Nathaniel Rothschild, take a tour of a small submarine, and enjoy the best espresso macchiato with caramel syrup at the Italian restaurant Al Posto Giusto. The coffee costs 2 euros, and you'll get an incredible view of the moored yachts and the historic red and white port crane on the main quay.

Bigova Fishing Village: A Secluded Paradise

Bigova is a small fishing village on the Adriatic Sea, part of the Kotor Municipality, about 13 km from Kotor. Officially home to 114 people, Bigova is located on the shore of a bay in the Grbal Valley, between Tivat and Budva. The main occupation of Bigova's residents remains fishing, but its port zone, sheltered from sea waves, attracts yacht owners.

Peaceful and Picturesque

The Grbal Valley's sea coast is far from noisy tourist areas, featuring mainly agricultural lands with vineyards, gardens, and olive groves. Along the coast, there are a few villas and holiday homes, ensuring clean sea water. Bigova offers a peaceful retreat, with stony beaches and air filled with the aroma of laurel and coniferous trees, beneficial for respiratory health. Fresh fish from local fishermen is a bonus, with several restaurants in town serving excellent fish soup, chorba.

Activities and Relaxation

Bigova is perfect for relaxing alone, with friends, or as a family. You can enjoy diving, fishing, kayaking, boating, sunbathing, and swimming in clear sea water. Nearby, the sandy beaches of the Lustica Peninsula await. If you seek excitement, major cities and attractions are easily accessible by car. The Tivat airport is just 5 km away.

Budva: The Metropolis of Modern Tourism

Montenegrins call Budva the metropolis of modern tourism, and rightly so. This small resort town on the Adriatic coast transforms into a bustling hub during the summer months, with hundreds of thousands of tourists flocking to the Budva Riviera. Home to the largest hotels and the most crowded beaches on the coast, Budva has become a favorite destination for Russian-speaking tourists, sparking a construction boom that blends cozy Yugoslavian family houses with modern high-rise buildings.

Exploring Medieval Budva

While the modern quarters of Budva may not offer much for non-residents, the medieval Old Town is a must-see. Another stronghold of Venice in the southern Adriatic, Budva's history predates the Venetians. About 500 years before our time, the ancient Greeks founded Budua (modern Budva) as a trading colony. During hotel construction under the old city walls in the early 20th century, excavators discovered a Greco-Roman necropolis, now commemorated by a Roman tombstone at the hotel entrance and artifacts in Budva's tiny archaeological museum.

A City of Legends

Medieval Budva remains a small trading town with artisan shops on the first floors of buildings, characterized by combined door and window openings. The city's main souvenir is an image of two stone fish, symbolizing a local legend about a stonemason and an aristocrat who fell in love but faced societal prejudice, ultimately transforming into fish and immortalizing their love in the city's name, "Budva" - "we will be together."

Navigating the Old City

Surrounded by a kilometer-long wall, the Old City is accessible through four gates: Solid Earth, Iron, Pisa, and North. The fifth gate, Garbage, is only visible from the sea and was used during sieges to manage sewage and replenish food supplies. The labyrinth of narrow streets leads to the main handicraft street and ultimately to Church Square, home to one Orthodox and three Catholic churches. The Venetian Citadel, the city's main fortification, offers a panoramic view from its observation deck, accessible for 2.5 euros.

Petrovac on the Sea: The Hidden Gem

Petrovac, a pearl of the Budva Riviera, is hidden by its bustling "older sister." Known for its breathtaking sunsets, Petrovac offers a classic, relaxed seaside experience with beach lounging, evening promenades, and dining along the waterfront.

Active Recreation in Petrovac

For adventure seekers, Petrovac offers water scooters, kayaks, and snorkeling around the two islets of Katich and Holy Sunday. Sailors who returned safely from distant voyages named the islands and their church, adding to the area's historical charm.