

# Tour 5: Beauty of North Montenegro

## Montenegrin and Albanian Mountains



*In the Durmitor National Park © alexeykphotos*

*Note:* The information in this brochure was compiled by our Montenegrin partners/local tour operators. In case of specific information requests, we can forward them to the local tour operators.

- Holiday type: Guided hiking
  - Duration: 9 nights/10 days
  - Locations: National Parks Durmitor, Biogradska Gora & Prokletije
  - Group size: min 4 – max 18 persons
  - Difficulty grade: Moderate
  - Departure dates 2025: 12 July – 21 July, 23 August – 01 September, 20 September – 29 September, 02 October – 11 October
  - Price from: On request
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## Overview

**Durmitor National Park** is the largest National Park in Montenegro and is a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**. The Park is characterized by diversified ecosystems and numerous endemic species, as well as some of the **highest peaks of the Dinaric mountains**, **Tara River Canyon**, which was proclaimed a world ecological reserve, **18 glacial lakes known as “The Mountain Eyes”** of which the **Black Lake is the most famous** one and represents a sort of the symbol of the Park and its beauty. Here, the water and ice have eroded the limestone typical of the place and thus creating a rare-beauty landscape – a reason enough why **you should not miss experiencing it**. The park territory covers the Durmitor massif and the narrow **Tara Canyon which is 1300 meters deep – second after the Grand Canyon Colorado**. Tara River, also known as the **“Teardrop of Europe”**, is considered to be **one of the most beautiful rivers on the entire continent**.

The diverse flora and fauna of **Biogradska Gora National Park** is another **amazing treasure of nature**. Biogradska Gora is one of the oldest protected areas in the world. Only 6 years after Yellowstone was declared the first national park in America, Prince Nikola I Petrovic put Biogradska Gora under state protection in 1878. Due to its immense natural wealth and its preservation, **Biogradska Gora National Park** has been proclaimed a **UNESCO Natural Heritage Site**. The most impressive part of the National Park is the **primeval rainforest reserve, one of the last in Europe**. It is located in the valley of Biograd and Jezerstica River, surrounding Biograd Lake where the beauty of the ancient forests reflects in their waters. **Many of the trees in the forest are over half a millennium old**, with some soaring to 60 m high. This is the region of magnificent beauty and graceful experience.

**Prokletije National Park** is the most dramatic hiking destination in Montenegro. Prokletije or Accursed Mountains are the southernmost and **highest part of the Dinaric Alps**. Surreally scenic and remote, this magnificent area may well be one of **Europe’s least explored corners**. Here, vertical peaks pierce the sky. The park encompasses most of the Prokletije Mountains (also known as the Albanian Alps), which form the natural border between Montenegro and Albania. Given the remoteness of this region, **you will see very few people hiking here**.



*Mountain ridge between Montenegro & Albania © Wild Montenegro*

## **Trip Highlights**

- Durmitor National Park is a paradise for lovers of exceptional nature, and one of the most stunning nature reserves in Europe
- Rafting the Tara River, through the deepest canyon in Europe (1300 m) and the second deepest in the world
- Discover Biogradska Gora National Park. Visit one of the three remaining rainforests in Europe
- Tour signature sites of the park - Biogradsko Lake and Pesica Lake, arguably the prettiest glacial lake in the park
- The majestic wilderness of Prokletije (aka the Accursed Mountains) is one of Europe's most remote corners and has incredible scenery
- Visit Hrid Lake at 1970 m, Montenegro's highest and most beautiful lake. Pure nature and wild beauty!

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- Grebaje Valley - the heart of the Prokletije National Park with a hike to Volusnica and Popadija, two peaks from where you will have the most beautiful view over the craggiest peaks of Prokletije Mountains
  - Beautiful Ropojana Valley with natural attractions – Eye of the River Skakavica, the waterfall of the River Grlja and Alipasa's springs

## Day 1

### **Durmitor National Park: Zabljak, Black Lake, Snake Lake**

Upon arrival at Podgorica Airport (TGD), our representative will be waiting for you at the Arrivals hall, to direct you to the transfer. After assisting you with the luggage, you will be transferred by private vehicle from the airport to the town of Zabljak (Durmitor National Park) (125 km, 2.5 hrs drive) with a few photos or coffee stops. Depending on your arrival, we will organize lunch in Zabljak, or some of the restaurants on the road to Zabljak. The town of Zabljak is situated in the northwest of Montenegro, in the heart of the Durmitor region, at an altitude of 1450 meters above sea level as the highest urban settlement in the Balkans. Situated at the foot of Mt. Durmitor, Zabljak is surrounded by 22 mountain peaks over 2200 meters, with 18 mountain lakes and the Tara Canyon, the deepest canyon in Europe.

After refreshment at your hotel, you will have an easy walking tour around Black Lake, the premium tourist attraction of the Durmitor area. It is the largest and the best known of 18 glacial lakes on the mountain. The path around Black Lake that we will take, is a 3.6 km long walking path and is a must-do for each visitor to the park. Black Lake's position is wonderful: Surrounded by coniferous forest and the rounded mass of Mount "Bear", as its guardian behind it. Following a picturesque trail along Mill Creek, we continue our walking to Snake Lake, which is hidden deep in the spruce forests at an altitude of 1520 m. It is a calm and peaceful place, perfect for rest. After Snake Lake, we will be transferred by minivan back to Zabljak. Tonight in the small resort of Zabljak, the only town in this wild region, we have a chance to sample traditional Montenegrin dishes, including highland specialities such as a typical shepherd's dinner and the regional Vranac, red wine with a Mediterranean character. Overnight in Zabljak.

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**Hike duration: 4-5 hours, 6 km ↑150 m ↓150 m**

## Day 2

### **Durmitor National Park: Red Rock Peak Hike**

We hope you've had an enjoyable night's rest and are excited by today's adventure. After breakfast, you will be transferred (20 mins drive) following the gently winding road through the forest to "Red Rock" massif, this table mountain stands out not only for its natural beauty and the magnificent views it offers but the amazing diversity of lakes surrounding it. In the beginning, from the starting point (1750 m) the trail goes slightly upward in the direction of Red Rock, visible in the distance, along meadows and clearings, partly through a thin pine forest. In summer, flowers and wild plants serve as a beautiful carpet which makes it even more impressive. In the last meadow, before the beginning of the ascent to the peak of Red Rock, the trail separates into two parts; left downhill after walking for 20 minutes and descending for about 80 meters you will arrive at the Jablan Lake (1791 m). The other part of the trail, going slightly to the right, leads you into the clearly visible trail heading to the peak of Red Rock (2175 m). For the next 1.5–2 km the path is semi-circular, going along the edges of Red Rock through the pine woods, gradually uphill around Jablan Lake, offering you a remarkable view of the Plateau of Lakes and you will be able to spot the uniquely shaped "Black Lake". In the last part, the position of Red Rock and the trail is oriented towards the Durmitor massif, offering you one of the most beautiful views on Mount Bear and the whole area of Durmitor massif including the highest peak - Bobotov Kuk. We will continue towards Black Lake (1416 m), despite the name, this glacial lake gleams in emerald green reflecting mysterious pine forest and craggy peaks. We will rest and enjoy ourselves on the shores of the beautiful lake. Overnight in Zabljak.

**Hike duration: 7-8 hours, 14 km ↑450m ↓850m**

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## Day 3

### **Durmitor National Park: Rafting on Tara River**

The inevitable outdoor activity during the visit to Durmitor National Park is undoubtedly rafting on the Tara River. At 1300 m (4300 ft) deep, the Tara River Canyon is the deepest canyon in Europe and the second-deepest in the world next to the Grand Canyon in the United States. The Tara River Canyon covers 80 km of the Tara River's 158 km length and makes up part of Durmitor National Park, which has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1980 because of its rich habitat and species diversity. Rafting is by far the most fun and exciting way to see the Tara Canyon. The water is crystal clear, waterfalls rush down into the river and you can even stand under a waterfall. The main feature is rapids that might seem scary, but are suitable even for the less experienced guests as long as they are accompanied by a good skipper. We start the rafting tour from Splaviste, which is within National Park Durmitor. During the tour guests will enjoy the untouched nature of the National Park, passing by river Ljutica, which is the shortest river in Europe and under the famous Tara Bridge. At the time it was built, this bridge that stands 172 meters above the Tara River, was the biggest vehicular concrete arch bridge in Europe. After rafting, if you love the idea of soaring over the Tara River, there is a zipline. The "longest zipline in Europe" is not for the faint of heart, but the views really cannot be beaten. The zipline is situated right next to the Tara Bridge which in itself is quite a stunner. A traditional Montenegrin meal for lunch with mountain cheese, fish and a fresh salad will bring back your energy to return to Zabljak. Driving back to Zabljak, towards villages Njegovudja and Zminica, amazed by the spectacular nature, we arrive at Zminicko Lake. Without a doubt, you will find this mountain lake surrounded by thick forest magnificent. After admiring Zminicko, we continue towards Fish and Devil's Lake. Beside the road are situated mysterious carved stone tomb monuments (stećci) – dating from between the 12th and 16th centuries (added to Unesco's World Heritage list in 2016). Arrival and overnight at Zabljak.

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## Day 4

### **Durmitor National Park: Prutas Peak Hike**

Today you experience a mountaineering tour that provides views of the most beautiful Durmitor National Park landscapes - a real mountaineering pleasure and experience! Adorned with unique rock shapes (sticks or rods), the name "Prutas" (eng. mountain of rods), ideally reflects the real beauty of this peak. With easy ascent along the deep, green slopes, amazing views over the glacial "Skrcka Lakes", including peaks of "Djevojka" (2440 m), "Bezimeni Vrh" (2487 m) and "Bobotov Kuk" (2525 m), the Prutas hiking trail is probably the most beautiful trail at Durmitor National Park. If you come down from the plateau below the summit of Prutas, descending towards the west for about 50 meters you will reach a viewpoint with a great view of the Susica River gorge and Skrcka Lakes.

Our start is from Sarban (Dobri Do 1,707 m) and during the next 3 hours with a total ascent of 700 m over the 4 km trail, we will reach this magnificent, grass-covered peak. This access is from the southern side via the "Skrcko zdrijelo" pass (2114 m) and is considered the best and easiest access path to Prutas. It is adorned with gentle ridgelines, green mountain sides, miraculous oblique layers of "Rods" after which it was named, cliffs of vertically elevated layers, but also typical limestone rock formations. Prutas peak (2393 m) is a spacious plateau covered with grass and the view spreading from the peak is remarkable in all directions - you will take great photos! This is one of those hiking tours that offer the most beautiful views, and thus a real hiking pleasure and experience! At the top, you will have a well deserved time for rest, while soaking up the beauty surrounding you. This hike will be the highlight of your Montenegro and Durmitor National Park adventure.

**Hike duration: 6-7 hours, 8 km ↑700m ↓700m**

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## Day 5

### **Biogradska Gora National Park: Hike to Zekova Glava Peak with Descent to Pesica Lake**

After breakfast, transfer from Zabljak to Kolasin (90 km, around 1.5 hrs drive) with most of the road above the beautiful Tara River canyon. After check-in and short refreshment in the hotel, we will go on a hiking tour. This hike begins at Bjelasica ski center Jezerine (1450 m). Mountain Bjelasica with its specific shapes, rolling hills and smooth pastures is predestined for sustainable mountain tourism both in summer and winter. This pastoral mountain invites nature lovers for an easy hike with breathtaking views. As we hike across the trails of Bjelasica, a massif with ten separate peaks above 2000 m, views stretch across spectacular mountain terrain, while the lush meadows below are scattered with wooden shepherd's huts (called "katuns") amid the dense beech forest. Walking through the forest, we will arrive at the Vranjak village. After a brief stop, we will hike up to the grassy summit of Zekova Glava (2117 m) and then descend and enjoy a prolonged rest at a nearby glacial lake - Pesica Lake (1.771 m). To the starting point, we go back with a different path and pass by the natural spring of the Biogradska River. Transfer from starting point to Kolasin. Overnight in Kolasin.

**Hike duration: 6-7 hours, 12 km ↑600m ↓600m**

## Day 6

### **Biogradska Gora National Park: Kom Vasojevicki Peak Hike**

Breakfast. Transfer from Kolasin to the Stavna village (1650 m), underhill of Komovi massif, where we will hike up to Kom Vasojevicki summit. Ripping through clouds, the giant Komovi mountain impressively dominates the southeastern part of Montenegro. It takes a relatively small area as a mountain massif, however, reaching almost 2500 meters in height. Komovi is believed to be the most beautiful mountain in Montenegro, with unspeakable beauty – you have to see and enjoy it for yourself. Coming to Stavna's vast plateau, your attention will immediately be drawn to one impressive peak on the left, that is Kom Vasojevicki peak.

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The summit of Kom Vasojevicki offers many beautiful panoramas. The route to Kom Vasojevicki begins from Stavna, on the north side below the rocky massif. The path continues along grassy and rocky areas. After approximately 2,5 hours of ascent, you will stay on beautiful Vera Pass (2200 m) which opens the views to the border mountains of Albania, in particular to the Prokletije mountain range (aka Accursed Mountains) and its highest peak Maja Jezerce (2694 m) which dominates in the wider area. From there, the path continues to the summit and very soon you will have the privilege to enjoy the view from the summit of Kom Vasojevicki (2460 m). Return to Stavna village by the same trail. Transfer to the little town of Plav (45 km, 1-hour drive). Dinner and overnight in Plav.

**Hike duration: 5-6 hours, 6 km ↑650m ↓650m**

## Day 7

### Walking Tour to Hrid Lake

Transfer from Plav to the starting point of today's hike in Babino Polje (40 min drive). Our destination for today is situated around 20 km from Plav and according to many opinions, it is the most beautiful mountain lake in Montenegro – Hrid Lake. Hrid Lake (1968 m) is a glacial lake also known as the “Pearl of Prokletije”. The clearness of the water of the lake was an inspiration to many legends. One of them says that the Lake was created by the Gods as a hidden bathing place for fairies, where they could bathe unseen by human eyes. It is set in a spectacular landscape with high pine and spruce trees and interesting rock formations. Pure nature and wild beauty! After a break at the lake to take photos, we optionally continue the ascent up to the nearby peak Hridski Krs or stay to rest and swim in the lake. Transfer back to Plav. Visit the Ethno-Museum in the Tower of Redzepagici in Plav. Overnight in Plav.

**Hike duration: 5-6 hours, 8 km ↑400 m ↓400 m**

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## Day 8

### **Grebaje Valley Hike**

After breakfast, we will be transferred (40 min drive) to Grebaje Valley. Grebaje Valley is one of the most awe-inspiring in the Balkans, a narrow valley, wedged between the karst towers of Karanfili (2461 m). The valley is U-shaped, surrounded by high sharp peaks resembling a titanic jaw of a Balkan wolf. Here is a true paradise for outdoor lovers! This is a place you should not miss if you are hiking in Montenegro, it is really a must-see and something you will never forget.

We start the hike by ascending through shaded beech forest, a last steep climb takes us to the double peak of Popadija and Talijanka (2.056m). From the top, there is a magnificent view first to the nearby Karanfili peaks, and then to the Prokletije massif (or the Albanian Alps) with all the highest peaks and down to the beautiful valley of Grebaje. Here the craggy peaks across us seem almost within our reach and the gaze wanders across the border between Montenegro and Albania into the Kelmend region of Albania. We will proceed walking on a ridge that will bring you back to the track down offering staggering views of the craggy Karanfili Mountains, nicknamed – with good reason – the “Dolomites of Montenegro”. During return, we will pass by the rock carvings (petroglyphs) dating from the Neolith Age of 6000 years B.C. There is a primitive drawing showing a wolf attacking a child, as well as other Paleolithic carvings. In a restaurant garden on the valley floor, we celebrate the adventure before dinner and overnight in our accommodation.

**Hike duration: 6-7 hours, 10 km, ↑950 m ↓950 m**

## Day 9

### **Ropojana valley, Eye of the River Skakavica, Waterfall of the River Grlja and Alipasa's Springs**

The Ropojana Valley belongs at the top of the list of natural beauties in the region of Plav and Gusinje and is a pleasure we should indulge in. Besides, without a visit to Ropojana,

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our stay in this magical world on the northern side of Prokletije would not be complete. The Ropojana Valley is a spectacularly beautiful place – jagged limestone peaks, rolling green pastures, high passes and beech forests - the perfect postcard picture. Hidden deep in the valley and surrounded by a dense forest, the karst spring of Eye of the River Skakavica (or Sava's Eye) attracts visitors with its crystal-clear water through which every stone can be seen, and which constantly changes its color from shades of blue to green throughout the day. Fed by water from this spring, the River Skakavica, after slightly more than two kilometers of its course, suddenly disappears under the surface, forming a 30-meter high waterfall of the River Skakavica, one of the largest and most beautiful waterfalls in the Prokletije Mountains. We continue with the tour to Alipasa's springs. It is said that the famous Ali-Pasha of Gusinje used to come here every morning to enjoy the beauty and serenity of this place in which a magnificent play of nature created a large karst spring comprising 25 minor springs.

During farewell dinner, we celebrate the eventful trek with our new friends, recalling the past days of travel and celebrating the memorable journey through the Montenegrin mountains.

**Hike duration: 4-5 hours, 5-6 km ↑200 m ↓200 m**

## Day 10

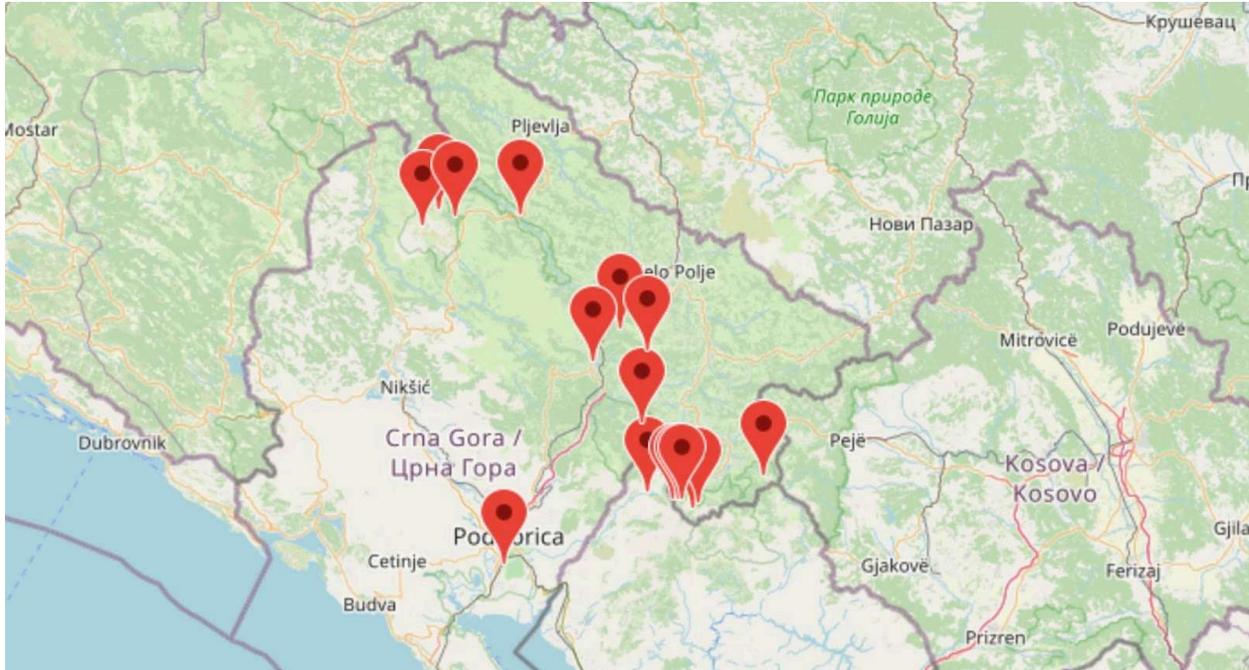
### **Transfer to Podgorica Airport via Cem River Canyon**

After breakfast, a transfer to Podgorica Airport is arranged (75 km, 2 hours drive). Shortly after the border crossing between Montenegro and Albania, we will be greeted with a breathtaking view of the valley of the Cem river (Montenegrin: Cijevna) and the mountains of Montenegro and Albania. It is worth stopping at the lookout point! The road winds its way over numerous, tight curves towards the valley floor. The River Cem is a river that rises in Kelmend, Albania, and after nearly half of its length, crosses into Montenegro where it pours into Moraca near the capital city Podgorica. The river's basin is a source of very high biodiversity, and hundreds of plant and animal species live along its banks. The marble trout is one of the 22 fish species in the river, which consistently ranks as one of the least

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polluted rivers in Albania and Montenegro. River Cem passes mostly through limestone terrain where many karst formations are observed. The terrain through which it flows in its 60 kilometers course, is at an elevation of more than 1200 m and can reach as low as 50 m. Throughout its declining elevation, it passes through narrow valleys and steep canyons, where waterfalls are formed before it reaches the Zeta plain and Podgorica. Tamare is the main settlement in the Albanian region of Kelmend and has been restored over the last few years with international support. The pretty village square invites us to stop for a coffee in one of many restaurants. After crossing the border between Albania and Montenegro, and a 40 min drive we arrive at the Podgorica Airport (TGD). Departure.

*Note:* In case you are arriving/leaving one or two days before/after the group departure do not hesitate to contact us for organizing your stay, activities and/or transfers.



*Tour locations*

## **INCLUDED**

- 9 nights / 10 days
- All accommodations
- All breakfasts & farewell dinner
- Lunch on 1st and 10th day and homemade traditional Montenegrin lunch on the 3rd day
- Packed lunches during hikes
- All transfers – minivan and driver from and back to the airport, as well as local transfers, in accordance with the program
- English-speaking licensed tour guide
- Parks entrance fees
- Rafting on Tara River
- Local tourist tax

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## **NOT INCLUDED**

- International flights tickets
- Travel insurance (obligatory)
- Lunch outside of the program
- Your own trekking/hiking gear
- Personal expenses such as phone calls, alcoholic beverages, souvenirs, extra transfers, tips, etc.
- Optional gratuities to your guide(s)
- Any items not explicitly mentioned in the program

## **Additional Information**

### **Getting There**

Recommended airport for this trip is Podgorica Airport (TGD) (Montenegro). You will be met on arrival by our representative and taken to your vehicle (air-conditioned van/minibus). Return transfer to the airport is included in the trip cost.

### **Accommodation**

You will mostly stay in 3-star hotels or in private lodgings (guesthouses) that are especially appealing (4-star hotels on request, where available). We have selected small family-run hotels and cozy guesthouses whenever possible for their intimate atmospheres, as well as for their ability to share with you the history and culture of their specific Montenegrin region and they put a little extra effort into the food. Generally, rooms in Montenegro are double or triple rooms (we will assign you a roommate of the same gender, if possible) with private bathrooms. If you request single accommodations, you will be required to pay the single supplement fee. Please be advised there are a limited number of single accommodations available. The accommodations we choose offer some of the best in regional and haute cuisine, with inspired menus and a unique array of local wines and

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beverages. Please note that we have not reserved accommodations as proposed in this offer. We will make the reservations after we receive a deposit from you. If a room in your hotel is unavailable on your arrival (due to an event beyond our reasonable control) then we agree to provide a room, and subject to availability any equivalent in another hotel.

### **Meals**

Breakfast is included. When no restaurant location is available on the route, packed lunches will be preordered. Dinner is available either in the restaurant in your hotel or restaurants and taverns in the village near your accommodation. Vegetarian, vegan, and gluten-free meals are available upon request.

### **Transfers**

All transfers from and back to the airport, as well as local transfers, in accordance with the programme, are included. Luggage transfer also is included, and your bags will be transferred by private transfer to your next accommodation. Baggage limit 25 kg per person.

### **Difficulty Grade: MODERATE**

Suitable for more regular hikers who are generally fit. Moderate grade itineraries include longer walking days and steeper accents and descents. May include longer stretches of uphill climbs and descents or a number of shorter steeper uphill and downhill sections along route. Terrain may be mixed including rocky areas and mixed surfaces underfoot.

Moderate grade holidays include on average 5-7 hours of hiking per day (up to 15 km of walking).

Each evening your guides will inform you about the next day's activities and answer any questions you may have.

### **Documents & Credits Cards**

- Valid passport and ID card
- Money, and/or credit card (currency in Montenegro is the Euro - €)
- Travel health insurance certificate

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We recommend taking sufficient cash for your daily requirements. Banks and ATMs are available, and credit/debit card payments are widely accepted in towns but might be limited in some of the villages we visit.

### **Medication**

If you require any medication, please take adequate supplies for the duration of your holiday. It's advisable to carry your medication in your hand luggage instead of packing it in your suitcase (backpack).

### **Climate & Country Information**

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 cold winters with 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. Average temperatures from May to October are generally in the mid 20's (in °C) but can reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August.

Typically, you can expect excellent weather in Montenegro from April to November.

- Time difference to GMT +1
- Currency - Euro (€)
- Religion - Christian (mainly Orthodox)
- Language - Montenegrin, English is widely spoken
- Electric supply and plugs - 220V, 50Hz, two-pin round plugs

### **Clothing Tips**

The right equipment for walking tours is important for a convenient holiday. Take care that you wear comfortable clothes to meet the climate of the region and season.

The key to staying comfortable while on an active trip is layering. To get maximum comfort with minimum weight, you need versatile layers that mix and match to create the right amount of insulation, ventilation and weather protection.

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## **Luggage**

Bring one main piece of luggage and a 25-35 liter day backpack is recommended. You will need to carry what you need for the day which may include a rain jacket, fleece, t-shirts, camera, sun-cream, water and picnic lunch. On hot days you will carry fewer clothes but more drinking water.

## **What to pack?**

This gear list has been created to help you in choosing your equipment for the trip. Try to bring only what is necessary, this will help you and the field staff.

- Backpack (25 – 35 l) with raincover
- Hiking shoes (mid-to high-cut models)
- Hiking socks (synthetic or wool)
- Hiking pants (convertible, quick-dry, lightweight)
- Long sleeve shirts (synthetic, lightweight)
- Jacket (hooded, lightweight, waterproof, breathable)
- Fleece/Wool Jacket or sweater
- T-Shirts (synthetic)
- Shorts
- Hat or cap – sun protection is important!
- Swimwear and towel
- Hiking poles (if you usually use them)
- Reusable water bottle(s) 1.5 – 2 L per person
- Small backpack pharmacy
- Casual clothing and shoes for travel and town wear
- Camera and accessories
- Mobile phone and charger
- Headlamp
- Sunglasses, sunscreen/sunblock and lip balm
- Insect repellent
- Travel pillow
- Toiletries