

Croatia – May 2012

Following my recent trip to The Istrian Coast of Croatia with Essentially Prestige Holidays I have to say what a fabulous Holiday destination. Croatia after a chequered history is now one of the hot European destinations to visit which is why Westway Travel wanted a staff member to experience the country. I really enjoyed my trip and would recommend it to Couples, Families and clients travelling on their own.

I flew from Stansted airport to Pula with Ryan Air on a direct flight which took only 1 hour and 45minutes and this daily flight gives us the chance to tailor holidays to depart on any day or for any duration. Alternatively there are flights available from London Gatwick Airport on a charter service twice a week.

I visited a variety of resorts in Croatia and they all have something different to offer. Beaches are not its strong point, mainly pebble beaches or rocky promenades but the water is crystal clear and lovely to swim in. You are on a sunshine holiday, but what is exciting about the area is the History and architecture of the towns along with a wide excursion programme. My report will include a short description of the areas I visited and my thoughts and recommendations on Hotels

Pula

Pula is the capital of the Istrian region and is famous for its Roman Amphitheatre built in 30BC. It would host gladiator battles but nowadays they host open air concerts. Pula has a good selection of bars and restaurants and a nice selection of hotels on the coast outside of town which means they are relatively quiet during the day and you can get into the hustle and bustle of Pula in the evening.



The Valsabbion a lovely boutique hotel about 15 minutes from Pula , all the rooms are decorated individually and there is a small enclosed pool on the top floor, a small gym and they also offer a variety of treatments from massage to rejuvenating skin treatments. I would definitely go back to this hotel for a romantic break . I would say this boutique style hotel is no suitable for a family holiday . The hotel is just across the road from a small beach and offers sunbeds to relax on. The hotel has no restaurant but Pula does have a good selection

The Park Plaza was not open for guests as it was undergoing a total refurbishment. What I did see however was a bigger resort style hotel with lovely gardens, nice pool area and new modern rooms. This hotel was going to reopen at the end of May and I expect the reviews will be excellent and I will keep an eye on its progress as I think this could be a firm favourite of ours.

Porec

This is a lovely resort and about 20 years ago when Croatia was known as Yugoslavia this was a favourite with lots of English clients .The coastal road is full of restaurants and hotels all along the sea front and boats going across to Saint Nikola which is only five minutes away. There are no beaches in Porec so you have to pay for the boat trip over to Saint Nikola. You can sunbathe on the island there is a little bit of sand and the rest is large pebbles and a bathing platform which you can sunbathe on the rocks. They charge around £12.00 per day for sun beds and an umbrella on Saint Nikola.

One of the most exciting things to do from Porec is to visit Venice for the day on a high speed service which takes around 3 hours each way and cost around £40.00.

If you go back a couple of street from the sea front you will find the Basilica of Euphrasius which is a Unesco World Heritage site.



The **Grand Palazzo hotel** in Porec is a beautiful hotel , it has lovely views out to sea and is near the ferry port for the boats trips to the beach or a Day trip to Venice.



The hotel is very grand in style and has a lovely reception area at one end and a bar at the other end. The restaurant is very imposing and carries out on to an outside terrace where we had breakfast each morning. They offer a good choice of cereals cold meats and cheese and hot food. The Grand Palazzo is the only hotel in town with a pool although it is very small and only has a few sunbeds but my suggestion would be to take the boat to the beach. The hotel has a spa with only a few treatment rooms and the prices were quite reasonable. You must be careful when booking your room as not all of them have full balconies, some have the French style with iron bars across them so you open the doors and can't sit out on them. Some of the other rooms with full balconies look out to sea and also look over the spa area with the air con units, so not a very pretty view. Having been to the hotel I will try my best to make sure you get the right room choice.

Grand Palazzo is a wonderful hotel and I would go back and stay another time.



The Hotel Mauro Waterfront is a lovely small boutique style hotel on the waterfront of Porec with only 21 rooms. Whatever you do NEVER BOOK THE SINGLE ROOM it is really really small just like a box room that you would not be able to move around in. All the rooms are nicely decorated and the best rooms are on the top floor with large balconies that you could sit outside and people- watch as well and see the boats go out for day trips etc. The only thing I would mention is that there could be noise from the public walking past and from people eating and drinking on the terrace of the hotel but if you can accept this, then this would be the room to stay in.



The first floor rooms have the French style balcony that you can open the window but they have the metal railings across so you cannot sit outside. The rooms at the back of the hotel are very nice but none of them have balconies, they have windows that open and you would look out on to the roof tops of other hotels and houses etc. The hotel has a restaurant inside and a terrace outside where you can eat meals. They offer free Wi fi in public areas and bikes are available for hire from the reception. As this hotel is on the waterfront they do not offer a swimming pool so if you wanted to sunbathe you would have to buy a ticket and go across on the boat to the bathing platform which only takes around 10mins each way. I thought this was a lovely hotel and I would come back and stay. You can just go into the restaurant of the hotel and have an evening meal which would cost around 95 KN which is about £11.00 for a three course meal plus drinks on top.



Hotel Valmar Riviera Waterfront belongs to Valamar Hotels and resorts group; they have a number of hotels in Croatia. This hotel is a couple of doors down from the Mauro so again on the Waterfront of Porec. There is a lovely terrace area at the front of the hotel where you can sit and have a drink or meal and just watch the world go by. There are over a 100 rooms and some are sea facing with French style balconies that you can open the windows but not sit out. You would get some noise if you had a room with the sea view at the front of the hotel with people walking past etc. But it is a lovely view .If you were to have a room at the back of the hotel again you would get the view of the different colour Rooftops with the locals washing hanging up. Sorry, there is no swimming pool at this hotel but as a guest of Valamar Resorts they offer the complimentary ferry service over to the island of St Nikola which only takes 10mins by boat and you can go and sit on a sun lounger on a rock rocky platform. The hotel offers bed and breakfast with Prestige holiday, I asked how much an evening meal was and they offer a buffet dinner for around 95Kn which is around £11.00 I think this is very reasonable for the quality of food they offer.

Valamar Tamaris Part of The Valamar Resorts Lantern Peninsula



Valamar Tamaris this is a great hotel for a family holiday. It is very bright and airy. Nice size rooms and some interconnect for children, only three or four floors, so quite low rise, it had a really nice feel to the resort. I would call it more of a resort than a hotel with lots going on through the day and evening. They have tennis courts, children's club and lots of different water sports. The resort has a large family pool and also a quiet pool for adults. The resort offers all inclusive lite which means breakfast, lunch and dinner with drinks at lunch and dinner i.e. soft drinks and beer and wine, whilst any other drinks you have throughout the day you would have to pay for. The main restaurant at the hotel is buffet service but they also have an Istrian Restaurant in the style of a Greek Taverna, and also offer an a la carte restaurant. I would definitely go back to this hotel for a holiday with the family or I would even suggest it for a couple that like activities and water sports etc. And the beauty of it is that you are only 10 minutes from Porec old town.

The Kempinski Adriatic in Savudriga

Lovely hotel at the Northern Tip of the Istrian Coast bordering on Slovenia. This hotel is ideal for a golf break as there is an 18hole championship golf course just across the road from the hotel. The hotel has a beautiful spa over 3000 square meters open from 9am till 9pm, offering a variety of treatments. So while your partner is playing golf you can go and be pampered. The rooms at this hotel are light and contemporary with either a balcony or terrace and all the modern amenities that you would expect from the Kempinski Brand. There is a large freshwater swimming pool and if you fancy going on the beach it would take you around 6 minutes' walk down to the pebble beach there is also a restaurant close to the beach so you don't have to come back to the main part of the hotel if you choose not to. We had a beautiful lunch at the main restaurant, the food was excellent. You could eat inside or out on the terrace. I would definitely come back to this hotel for a long weekend.



Rovinj



Rovinj is the most picturesque resort in the Istrian Region of Croatia . The above picture shows the church of St Euphemia on the top of the hill overlooking the town .Rovinj has plenty of water side cafes and restaurants to choose from and you can wander through the narrow cobbled back streets and take some great pictures. Each year in the month of June Rovinj host the Croatian Sala Festival so if you love Salas you must take a visit to Rovinj .

The Eden Hotel Rovinj



The Eden Hotel is a large hotel situated in the centuries old park forest **Zlatni Rt**. You walk to the hotel and it gives a very bright and airy welcome with a spacious reception, it also has a terrace area where you can sit and take in the scenery of the Forest. The hotel has a lovely lobby bar and a nice seating area where you can sit and relax with a drink. The hotel has two restaurants, we ate in the buffet style restaurant and I have to say the choice was excellent .The hotel has a good size swimming pool surrounded by pine trees. The rooms at the Eden are bright and modern with balcony or terrace the only thing I would mention is the bathroom had a shower over the bath so maybe not suitable for the less agile The hotel is about a 20 minute walk into Rovinji .

The Monte Mulini

What a fabulous hotel I would love to go back to this hotel and stay for a week or so .The hotel has a lovely swimming pool where you could just sit and look out at the beautiful views of Lone Bay and about a 15 minute walk will bring you into the town centre of Rovinj. The rooms are a good size and of contemporary design. The Mediterraneo restaurant offers Mediterranean cuisine and stunning sea views. There is also a beautiful Wine Vault Restaurant this has been designed in the style of a wine cellar. They have an excellent wine list with over 500 labels to choose from. They also have a spa called Art Wellness. The team here at the spa will help you choose the most appropriate treatment for you.



Summary

I really enjoyed my recent visit to Croatia. I was pleasantly surprised by the quality of the various hotels all over the Istrian Region and found vibrant seaside towns packed with lots of waterside restaurants and ice cream parlours and country side with beautiful scenery . Croatia also offers a very interesting excursion programme therefore I would say it's a destination that offers something different to most of the other destinations in the Med along with being exceptional value.

If I can help in any way please give me a call 01702 588555

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