

(insider's  
guide)

# SPLIT PERSONALITY



Where to eat, stay and play in the Croatian city of Split, brimming with art, culture and a serious dose of history.

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The largest city on Croatia's Adriatic coast and the main transport hub for island-hopping, Split glistens like a pearl in the year-round sunshine. It unfurls around the remains of a 1700-year-old palace, built for the Roman emperor Diocletian. Centuries of foreign rule has also left its mark on the city, and forms a stunning backdrop for Split's buzzing cultural and social life.

With a plethora of trendy restaurants, traditional festivals and about 200,000 friendly locals, Split harbours the best of two worlds. It pulses with the spirit of the past, but at the same time it is endowed with the swagger of a major European metropolis, all wrapped up into one laid-back package. No matter what time of year you visit, you are sure to be rewarded with rich cultural offerings — all with a side of Split charm.

**GETTING THERE** To book your flight to Europe, visit [www.virginaustralia.com](http://www.virginaustralia.com) or simply call 13 67 89 (in Australia).



**Culture shock** Diocletian's Palace (Old Town) was built more than 1700 years ago for the Roman emperor of the same name and is now a UNESCO World Heritage-listed site. This fascinating architectural pastiche of narrow alleys, Roman arches and ancient temples is now inhabited by some of the city's best shops, restaurants and galleries. Galerija Meštrović (Setalište Ivana Meštrovića 46; +385 21 340 800; [www.mestrovic.hr](http://www.mestrovic.hr)), just outside the city centre (above), is a garden-girdled villa overlooking the sea filled and with works by Ivan Meštrović — Croatia's most notable sculptor. His famous work *Gregory of Nin* can be found at the Golden Gate entrance to



## Fare ground

Wining and dining is the social glue of Split. The city's love affair with the sea, along with its Greek and Roman roots, makes eating out a wonderful experience.

**ONE Konoba Hvaranin** (top; Ban Mladenova 9; +385 91 5477 946) is not much to look at from the street, but this local favourite is a knockout. Enjoy a wide range of authentic Dalmatian dishes such as octopus salad and *pašticada*, a sublime slow-cooked marinated beef stew served with gnocchi.

**TWO Trattoria Tinel** (above; Tomica Stine 1; +385 21 355 197; [www.trattoria-tinel.com](http://www.trattoria-tinel.com)) is one of the city's recent additions, quickly rising to the top of the local restaurant scene. Freshly plucked seafood and Italian specialities, such as green pasta with salmon and scampi, are stand-out dishes and explain the eatery's popularity.

**THREE** With more than 50 different wines by the glass and a vast selection of Croatian and international cheeses to go with them, **Paradox Wine & Cheese Bar** (Poljana Tina Ujevića 2; +385 21 395 854) truly is an oenophile's dream. As for the name? "We realised nobody else [in Split] had a bar or restaurant like this and, as Croatia is a wine and cheese country, we thought that was kind of a paradox," explains co-owner Zoran Pejović.

Diocletian's Palace (there are two other versions of the statue in Varazdin and just outside Zadar). Be sure to rub his big left toe for good luck while you're there. The Cathedral of St Domnius (Kraj Sveti Dujе 5), also known as St Dujе, is a magnificent structure named for the patron saint of Split and houses many valuable sacred artefacts. It is composed of three parts built at different times: the mausoleum, built for emperor Diocletian at the end of the third century; a Romanesque bell tower, which was added in 1100; and the chorus, which was built in the 17th century. Climb to the very top of the tower to enjoy a sweeping view of the city.



## Beds and beyond

Whether travelling for business or pleasure, seeking an historic setting or a banana lounge by the sea, Split is the perfect place to have it all.

**ONE Hotel Luxe** (top; Kralja Zvonimira 6; [www.hotelluxesplit.com](http://www.hotelluxesplit.com)) exudes a futuristic vibe with rooms dressed in a colour palette of white and purple. “Cigar lounge and bar aside,” says hotel manager Josip Culić, “the best hotel feature are the rooms with balconies, where you can enjoy sunsets over the port with a glass of your favourite wine.”

**TWO Radisson Blu Resort** (above; Put Trstenika 19; [www.radissonblu.com](http://www.radissonblu.com)) has a toes-in-the-Adriatic location, sprawling sundecks and views over the sea across to the islands of Brač and Solta and beyond, making it the ideal antidote to a hustle-and-bustle lifestyle. The sea is just as much a part of the decor as the modern tables and chairs, with floor-to-ceiling windows affording those glorious sweeping views.

**THREE** The marble-and-glass, 124-room **Atrium Hotel** (Domovinskog Rata 49A; [www.hotel-atrium.hr](http://www.hotel-atrium.hr)) has a full-service spa, indoor pool and gym, a restaurant and several wired-up conference facilities. It seems as though it’s all business here, but there’s a decidedly urban edge, with muted earth tones and streamlined functionality throughout.

**FOUR** Juxtaposed against ancient history, the boutique **Marmont Hotel** (Zadarska 13; [www.marmonthotel.com](http://www.marmonthotel.com)) hints at romance in each of its 21 rooms, with flowing drapes and fresh flowers, yet still provides guests with state-of-the-art LCD TVs, and free and fast Internet connection.

**FIVE Hotel Vestibul Palace** (Iza Vestibula 4; [www.vestibulpalace.com](http://www.vestibulpalace.com)) is where old world meets modern design. This elegant 11-room hotel in the heart of Diocletian Palace is Split at its most refined, and organises luxury services such as guided limousine tours and yacht odysseys.





## MY CITY

Split-based artist Branko Modic has an art gallery in the heart of Diocletian's Palace (left). There, visitors can linger in the main gallery and visit Modic's workshop, where he creates dry-point (ink rubbed on engraved copper plates and pressed onto paper) scenes inspired by the city's stunning Roman palace, seaside location and leisurely way of life. What do visitors find most surprising about Split? That it's an old town in the middle of a Roman palace. Are there other local Croatian artists who you admire or who have inspired you? I really admire the late Vasko Lipovac, who was a contemporary painter and sculptor, and Zvonimir Mihanović, a Dalmatian painter of oils and watercolours whose style is classified as "contemporary hyper-realism". What is your favourite thing to do in Split when you're not working? When I don't work I usually spend my time on Marjan Hill. It's my peaceful oasis in the middle of the city. Do you have a favourite place to eat in Split? For an authentic, cheap and unique experience, I love to eat at Fife (Trumbićeva obala 11) in the centre of the city. When I want something more than just a restaurant, Leonis at Hotel Le Méridien Lav hotel (Grljevačka 2A) on the marina is great. My favourite dish is pašticada. How is Split a muse for your artwork? Morning coffee with my old friends in the middle of the city; the easy, slow lifestyle with great food — these things boost my energy and creativity.



## TIME WARP

Duck into the small Ethnographic Museum (above; Iza Vestibula 4; +385 21 344 164) for a peek at Dalmatia's rich craft and trade heritage. The intricate embroidery of traditional costumes is particularly impressive, as is the jewellery. The Green Market or pazar (below), near the eastern gate to Diocletian's Palace, is a monument to daily life and it's also where locals come to buy fruit, vegetables and clothes, and specialties such as *soparnik* — a local delicacy of thin crusty dough filled with garlic, Swiss chard and onions. History and art come alive each year at the month-long Split Summer Festival ([www.splitsko-ljeto.hr](http://www.splitsko-ljeto.hr)), which is one of the city's biggest cultural events, and brings dance and theatrical performances to Diocletian's Palace. During Diocletian Days (16–19 August), local residents re-create the olden times and roam the streets in togas and metal breastplates to pay homage to the Roman emperor over four days of festivities.





## BEACH CHIC

Bookended by hundreds of kilometres of crystalline coastline, with a clutch of islands bobbing offshore, Split is ground zero for sun-seekers. Young and energetic party-goers prefer the sandy scene at the main town's Bačvice Beach, lined with bars and restaurants. Kasuni Beach, at the foot of Marjan Hill, is a bit of a walk (or bus ride) from town, but offers a calmer atmosphere with clear blue seas. Alternatively, take a 50-minute ferry ride to the nearby island of Brač, famous for the wind-sculpted Golden Horn Beach (left).

### Do it in a day

About half an hour from Split, 28 kilometres west of the city centre, is **Trogir**, one of Croatia's most seductive seaside towns. It sits on an island just off the mainland and was originally a trading settlement founded by Greek colonists in the third century BCE. Trogir flourished in the Roman period, but the town's architecture reflects Roman, Venetian, Austro-Hungarian, French and German settlers, earning it a UNESCO World Heritage designation. These days, meander through the narrow streets and village squares to discover charming cafes, galleries and shops. 🍷



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