



Find your perfect Croatian island



Croatia has 1246 islands, and while many of them are mere rocks jutting out of the Adriatic that still leaves dozens of excellent options to agonize over while you're planning your summer escape. Here are some tailored options, listed from north to south, to get you started.

Best for escaping the crowds: Cres

For an English speaker, the biggest stress about Cres is trying to master its name (it's pronounced 'tress'). The largest of the Croatian islands, Cres is a blissfully under-populated, steeply contoured, green expanse punctuated by pebble beaches and tiny walled settlements. Only Cres Town has over 100 inhabitants, but with a population of around 3000 it's hardly the big smoke. This Venetian harbour town is a good place to base yourself, but for even more peace and quiet, try historic Osor, the seaside village of Valun or the hilltop hamlets of Beli and Lubenice.



Blissful, undeveloped Vis, the furthest inhabited island

Best for active holidays: Brac
Croatia's third-biggest island is home to the nation's most famous beach, Zlatni Rat, a spit of white pebbles that tapers gracefully into the sea near the attractive holiday town of Bol. Not only does Bol have some excellent restaurants, hotels, campsites and a custom-built hostel, there's a smorgasbord of activities on offer including tennis, windsurfing, diving, parasailing, kayaking and mountain biking. Base yourself here for hikes to the island's highest peak, Vidova Gora (778m), and the isolated Blaca Hermitage. Supetar, Brac's biggest town, also offers diving, boating and beaches. It's worth hiring a car or, if you're hardy, a bike to explore the pretty harbour towns of Pucisca and Milna, and the villages of the rocky interior.

Best for secluded coves: Vis
Blissful, undeveloped Vis is the furthest inhabited island from the mainland. Its two ancient towns drape themselves seductively along the water's edge, while the mountainous interior is crisscrossed with hiking trails and dotted with taverns serving rustic meals. Of the many little beaches, some sandy and some pebbly, tucked into the crimped coastline, the most spectacular is Stiniva, set within a circle of cliffs with only a narrow opening to the sea.-www.lonelyplanet.com

Best all-rounder: Losinj

Joined to Cres by a short bridge over a Roman-built canal, Losinj offers a potpourri of attractions including museums, historic churches, pebble beaches, kayak and catamaran hire, cycling and walking tracks, diving and windsurfing. The main town, Mali Losinj, is large enough to support a range of resorts, hotels, restaurants and even a modicum of nightlife. Neighbouring Veli Losinj also has some

good places to eat and a Marine Education Centre dedicated to protecting the resident population of dolphins and sea turtles.

Best for young families: Rab

Much is made of Rab's sandy beaches, and they certainly look irresistible in photos. However, they're also extremely shallow - painfully so, if you're an adult after a decent swim, but heaven for toddlers. Paradise Beach in Lopar is the best of them, with gelato stands and pizzerias at hand to replenish little bellies after a productive day spent building sandcastles and splashing in the shallows. Older holidaymakers can hit the biking and hiking trails, dive to historic shipwrecks and soak up the beauty of Rab Town's venerable architecture.

Best for yachters: Kornati Islands

With no ferry services and a total population of around 20 people, the best way to experience the barren beauty of this cluster of 140 islands and islets is under sail. The 89 southernmost islands and their surrounding waters are afforded environmental protection as part of Kornati National Park. Accommodation is limited to only a handful of rental cottages but, despite this, there are a surprising number of restaurants catering to the passing boat traffic.

