



— 2026 — **BALKANS EXPLORER**

INCLUDING ADRIATIC CRUISE

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BALKANS EXPLORER

including Adriatic Cruise

Tour Length: 30 Days

Tour Departs: 18 August 2026

Tour Ends: 16 September 2026

OVERVIEW:

There are so many spectacular sights to see as we journey through the region. Visiting the Balkan States of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia and also Romania. These lesser visited countries will have you in awe of the beauty in the countryside, learning more about history and admiring the architecture of bygone eras. We visit many UNESCO World Heritage sites en route to Dubrovnik, where we join our ship and spend a week sailing the Adriatic, enjoying the crystal clear, warm water and calm currents. We finish in Croatia's capital of Zagreb before heading home. A truly fascinating tour with some magnificent scenery!

Serbia: rich in history, home to tantalising Eastern European cuisines, and generous with its natural beauty, it stirs curiosity and satiates it in equal measure. We visit some historical and stunning cities such as Petrovaradin and Nis.

Romania: visit the legendary Dracula's Castle. Learn about the history that led to the myths and legends of vampires. We also see amazing architecture and buildings from the 15th century. There are castles aplenty.

Bulgaria: the country is remarkable for its variety of scenery; its rugged mountains and relaxing Black Sea resorts attract many visitors. Like other nations of the Balkan Peninsula, Bulgaria claims a mix of Eastern and Western cultures, and the mingling is evident in its cuisine, its architecture, and its religious heritage. We see stunning cities such as Plovdiv, Sofia and Rila.

Bosnia & Herzegovina: it's hard to believe there are parts of Europe that still feel wild, but the jagged mountains that run the entire length of Bosnia and Herzegovina mean there are plenty of

TOUR COST PER PERSON

Share Twin or Double Room
NZD \$24,000.00

Supplement for Single Room
NZD \$8,500.00

Total Cost for Single Room
NZD \$32,500.00

wide-open spaces. We visit the beautiful city of Mostar with the Balkans most photographed bridge as well as the lovely capital city of Sarajevo.

Montenegro: carrying the title of the smallest fully recognised Balkan country and one of the smallest countries in Europe. Being the seventh country in the world with the largest number of UNESCO protected areas per square meter, Montenegro is a home to deepest canyon in Europe and the second in the world just after the Grand Canyon – Tara River Canyon, the longest sand beach of the Old Continent – Ulcinj, southernmost fjord in Europe and one of the most beautiful bays in the world – the Bay of Kotor.

Croatia: we explore the walled city of Dubrovnik before heading on a relaxing 7-night cruise to explore the islands off the coast. Concluding our cruise in Split, we finish our tour with a trip to the stunning Plitvice Lakes and onto Zagreb.



Adriatic Cruise for 7 nights aboard the "Arca"

We board our ship in Dubrovnik and spend 7 nights sailing to Slano, Mljet National Park, Korčula, Biševo, Vis Island, Hvar Island, Trogir and finally on to Split. Enjoy laying back and unpacking once while we admire the scenery from the luxury small group ship.

During the cruise enjoy:

- Supreme category ship in a cabin with private facilities, A/C & TV
- Professional English-speaking Cruise Manager throughout
- Daily cabin servicing, fresh bed linen and towels midweek
- Complimentary Wi-Fi on board
- Sumptuous cuisine – breakfast daily, 6 x lunches, welcome dinner & captain's dinner. Beverages available for purchase
- Some included shore excursions

TOUR COSTS

Included:

- Economy Class Air Travel from Auckland
- Upgrade to Business Class Air Travel available at additional cost
- Ocean View Staterooms on the Adriatic Cruise
- Superior hotel accommodation
- Air-conditioned coach transportation
- Meals as indicated in the itinerary (B=Breakfast, L=Lunch, D=Dinner)
- Prepaid airport/government taxes, security and fuel surcharges (as at 01/09/25)
- Sightseeing & entrance fees as indicated in the itinerary
- English speaking local hosts/guides in each country
- Tips/gratuities to guides, drivers & staff
- Baggage handling of one (1) piece per person, where possible
- Fully escorted by a Maher Tours Leader

Excluded:

- Any meals and sightseeing tours not specifically mentioned in the itinerary
- Shore Excursions during the cruise
- Travel insurance – advice and assistance offered
- Items of a personal nature such as drinks, room service, laundry, telephone charges etc.

Booking Conditions:

Initial Deposit - Due at time of booking

- NZD \$3,000.00 per person

Second Deposit - Due Wednesday 18 February 2026

- NZD \$3,000.00 per person

Final Payment - Due Thursday 04 June 2026

- Balance

To register for this tour please contact us at
0800 500 518 or tours@mahertours.co.nz



DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

Tuesday 18 August

Home – Doha

We commence the tour with an overnight flight to Doha.

Wednesday 19 August

Doha (D)

We arrive in Doha early this morning and after clearing Customs and Immigration formalities, we are met and transferred to our hotel for a two-night stay. Mid-afternoon, we discover the best that Doha has to offer as we embark on a sightseeing tour through the Qatari capital. We explore the main highlights of the city including the National Museum, Souq Waqif, and Pearl Island. We also get a closer look at Qatar's history and culture with a visit to the Katara Culture Village. We return to the hotel late afternoon.

Thursday 20 August

Dubai (B,D)

Many visitors to Qatar never see its northern reaches, which offer up historical buildings, traditional ports and sweeping beaches. On our tour today, we get to see its best bits as we visit the former pearling hub of Al-Khor Harbour, explore UNESCO-listed Al Zubara Fort and observe the wildlife-filled mangroves at Al Thakhira beach. Returning to our hotel in the afternoon, the remainder of the day is at leisure, until we meet up again for dinner this evening.

Friday 21 August

Doha - Belgrade (B,D)

An early start this morning as we transfer back to Doha Airport in time to report for our morning flight to Belgrade. We arrive just before lunch and have the afternoon at leisure to explore Serbia's capital city. We have a 3 night stay here.

Saturday 22 August

Belgrade (B,D)

Today we enjoy a sightseeing tour of Belgrade. We will visit the Museum of Yugoslavia which is dedicated to the former leader of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito. We drive past the Red Star stadium on the way to the temple for the city's Patron Saint Sava.

Continuing onto Slavija Square, Republic Square, Serbian National Parliament, White Palace and Saint Marks church. We take a wander down Knez Mihailo Street which is the main pedestrian and shopping area. We visit to the Orthodox Cathedral Church of Saint Michael the



Archangel and learn about the "Question Mark" tavern, before seeing Kalemegdan Park and the Belgrade Fortress.

Sunday 23 August

Sremski Karlovci & Novi Sad (B,L)

Today we take a field trip further afield to Vojvodina. Enjoy the scenery as we head through the wine region to the "Serbian Holy Land", home to 17 orthodox monasteries. We have the opportunity to stop at Krusedol where you can purchase wine and rakija made by the monks.

We can't visit the wine region without sampling the local wines, so we do that before enjoying lunch along the banks of the Danube River. We continue to Novi Sad admiring the key landmarks and enjoy a visit to Petrovaradin which is known as Danube's Gibraltar. The first fortification of this city was built around 5,000 years ago and is where we can stop and admire the panoramic views of the river and the city. We return to Belgrade in the late afternoon.



Monday 24 August

Timisoara & Sibiu sightseeing (B,D)

Today we leave Serbia and head to Romania. Our sightseeing tour will take us to Timisoara before settling in Sibiu for an overnight stay. Timisoara was the first European city to have electric street lighting and is known today for its vibrant cultural scene and distinctive architecture. We will check out Unirii square to admire the medieval buildings including the Catholic Cathedral of Saint George. We'll see Liberty and Victoria Squares with the Romanian National Opera and National theatre as well as the gothic 15th century Huniade Castle. Heading through to Sibiu which was once the largest and wealthiest of seven fortified towns established by German settlers in the 12th century. Before heading to our hotel, we will see the Brukenthal National Museum, the council tower, the Bridge of Lies, Stairs Passage and the Orthodox Cathedral of the Holy Trinity. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

Tuesday 25 August

Sighisoara & Medieval Brasov (B,D)

After breakfast we head to Sighisoara in Transylvania. This is the birthplace of Vlad III, also known as Vlad the Impaler or Vlad Dracula. His birthplace is marked with a placard "Casa Vlad Dracul". We visit the castle tomorrow and learn more of the history and legends of Vlad. Today, we visit the Church of the Dominican Monastery, the clock tower, Saint Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, the Tailors tower, Covered Stairway and other important sights. Then, it is onto Brasov for our overnight stay,



DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

the 13th Century town is one of seven walled citadels founded by the Teutonic Knights. We explore the main square and Casa Sfatului before heading down the narrow streets to the Biserica Neagra (Black Church) which is a gothic style cathedral. We also visit the only original city gate from Medieval times left standing, Catherines gate. Brasov is home to medieval towers, baroque buildings, churches and charming cafes along Piata Sfatului.

Wednesday 26 August

Dracula's castle – Bucharest (B,D)

Bran Castle has been home to legends about the modern-day Count Dracula. Bram Stoker took inspiration for this character from dark legends of the Carpathian Mountains where Vlad the Impaler was once held prisoner. This was a former residence of the Romanian Royal Castle. After learning about the legends, we head to Sinaia and Peles Castle constructed

during the Neo-Renaissance era. Featuring elaborate turrets, panoramic mountain views with the interior boasting stained glass windows and intricate sculptures. We spend two nights in Bucharest.

Thursday 27 August

Bucharest sightseeing (B,L)

Romania's capital city is well known for its tree lined boulevards, Belle Epoque buildings and a reputation of lavish living. Combining French, Byzantine and communist architecture in its buildings. We will view the Piata Unirii and view the Palace of the Parliament. In the medieval Old Town, we have the Old Princely Court, Stavropoleos Monastery, Lipscani Street and the National Museum of Romanian History. As we wander down Calea Victoriei Avenue, be sure to admire the French style buildings while we learn about the communist rule in Romania at Revolution Square. Enjoy the afternoon at leisure.



Friday 28 August

Bucharest - Veliko Tarnovo (B,D)

Saying "La revedere" to Romania as we head to Bulgaria. We visit the Rock-Hewn churches of Ivanovo which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. These were carved by hermits in the 12th century and showcases 14th century murals created by Bulgarian artist. After a photo stop in Arbanski, a small village with an open-air museum dating back to Ottoman times, we head onto the Second Bulgarian Empire's Capital, Veliko Tarnovo. After a stroll through the cobblestone streets learning about the city's history under Turkish rule and its architectural masterpieces and craftsmen's guild, we head to the hotel for an overnight stay.



Saturday 29 August

Veliko Tarnovo – Plovdiv – Sofia (B,L)

We visit another museum this morning on our way to Sofia. This is an open-air museum and features water powered installations and houses with workshops showing architecture and the way of life as well as the economy of central Bulgaria during the national revival. Heading onto Plovdiv we visit the architectural complex, the ancient Theatre of Philippopolis built in the 2nd century with perfect acoustics where various cultural events are still held. We also visit the Roman Stadium and churches of Saint Constantine and Helena. We finish the tour in Kapana which is the creative heart of the city with shops, restaurants and galleries before heading to Sofia for our 2-night stay.

Sunday 30 August

Sofia Sightseeing & Rila Monastery (B,D)

Today we enjoy a guided tour of Sofia which is one of Eastern Europe's most vibrant capitals, well known for its mix of communist style architecture, Ottoman mosques and onion domed churches. Some popular landmarks are the Saint Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, Church of Saint Nicholas the miracle maker, Ivan Vazov National Theatre, Church of Saint George, banya Bashi Mosque, Sofia Synagogue, National Palace of Culture and Largo. In the afternoon, we visit Rila Monastery, the largest and most famous Eastern Orthodox monastery in Bulgaria.

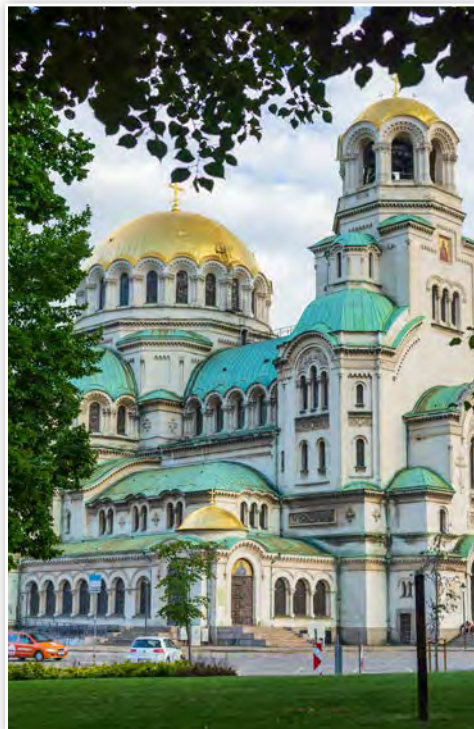


DAY TO DAY ITINERARY

Monday 31 August

Sofia – Nis – Zlatibor (B,D)

Today we stop in Nis, Serbia, the birthplace of legendary Roman Emperor Constantine the Great. On our sightseeing trip we see the Mediana and Skull tower made with nearly 1,000 human skulls. We also visit Nis Fortress before enjoying some free time – be sure to visit Tinkers Alley, the city's old market. We continue on to the mountainous region of Zlatibor, where we spend two nights.



Tuesday 01 September

Zlatibor (B,D)

Today we visit Drvengrad (the Wooden Town), also known as Küstendorf and Mecavnik. It is a rustic and picturesque village built entirely of wood. It was constructed by Serbian filmmaker Emir Kusturica as a set for his film "Life is a Miracle" from 2003 to 2004 but has since evolved into a cultural and tourist attraction. Drvengrad is a blend of Serbian heritage, art, and architecture, reflecting Kusturica's distinctive style and passion for preserving traditional values. We then head into Tara National Park where we board the 'Nostalgia' train. This runs along the narrow-gauge heritage railway Sargan Eight. Sit back as we pass through tunnels, viaducts and catch glimpses of the mountain scenery. This train was originally part of the railway from Belgrade to Sarajevo in the early 20th century which is why it is known as the Nostalgia train, as it is like taking a trip back in time. We return to Zlatibor in the afternoon.

Wednesday 02 September

Zlatibor – Sarajevo (B,L)

Today we cross the border into Bosnia and Herzegovina. We venture to Visegrad, where we enjoy a photo stop and lunch, before heading to Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. Our sightseeing tour of the city will take us to visit landmarks such as the Vijećnica (City Hall), Bascarsija (downtown area) the Gazi Husrev-bey mosque and the Latin Bridge where the Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated, sparking the first world war. We will also visit the historic



sights of the Orthodox church, Sahat Tower and Europe's first public bathroom. Time permitting, we will also visit the Bezistan market complex the Ferhadija pedestrian zone and the Sarajevo Synagogue.

Thursday 03 September

Sarajevo – Mostar – Trebinje (B,D)

Today we travel to one of the most beautiful cities on the Balkan peninsula, Mostar. On our walking tour, we will see the iconic Old Bridge which is a UNESCO protected landmark and one of the most photographed sights in the country. We will also visit the crooked Bridge and Tabharna which is the old tanner's quarter. Enjoy some free time for lunch on the Neretva River bank while enjoying the bridge views. We continue onto Blagaj to enjoy views of the monastery built by dervish Sari Satluk beneath the cliffs on the shores of the emerald-green river Buna. We spend the night in the picturesque town of Trebinje. We see the Arslanagica Bridge and walk to 'Poets Square' where we can relax under 115-year-old trees.

Friday 04 September

Trebinje – Bay of Kotor – Dubrovnik (B,L)

We depart this morning and head to the Bay of Kotor in Montenegro. Enroute, we stop at the beautiful Perast known for baroque architecture. From here we enjoy a boat ride along the bay to Our Lady of the Rocks, an island with a church adorned with paintings and artefacts. When we arrive in Kotor, we enjoy a walking tour of this UNESCO World Heritage Site. We will visit some cultural landmarks, churches and enjoy lunch before continuing our journey to Dubrovnik for our overnight stay.

Saturday 05 September

Dubrovnik – Join Cruise (B,D)

The morning is at leisure until we transfer to the port, where embarkation begins at 2pm. There is time to settle into our cabins before we enjoy an early evening walking tour of Dubrovnik. Walk through Stradun – both a street and a square, the most famous place inside the town walls, enlisted as UNESCO's World Heritage site, where our guide will show us the most interesting sights of Dubrovnik and visit the Franciscan Monastery with its Pharmacy. After returning to ship, we enjoy a welcome reception followed by dinner this evening.

Sunday 06 September

Dubrovnik – Slano (B,L,D)

Early in the morning enjoy the magic scenery as the ship cruises around Dubrovnik city walls to continue to one of the Elaphiti islands for a swim stop. Afternoon arrival in Slano, a peaceful



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fishermen's village and our gateway to Ston. Situated on Peljesac peninsula and once fortified, this small village is famous for its oysters, and we will get the opportunity to sample this delicacy on our tour today. Peljesac peninsula is also known as one of the best wine producing regions in Croatia. We return to our ship and enjoy a Captain's dinner on board this evening.

Monday 07 September

Slano – Mljet Nat. Park - Korčula (B,L)

In the morning, we head north to the Island of Mljet. We join our Cruise Manager for a stroll to the famous salt lakes in the Mljet National Park. Continue our cruise towards Korčula island, best known as a birthplace of Marco Polo. Afternoon arrival in Korčula followed by a guided walking tour of this enchanting town surrounded by walls, which is one of the best preserved medieval cities in the Mediterranean. Overnight in Korčula where you can enjoy a gourmet experience at the multiple restaurants and bars.

Tuesday 08 September

Korčula – Biševo – Vis Island (B,L)

Early in the morning we sail to the small island, Biševo to visit the Blue Cave, a magnificent natural phenomenon. Note, this visit is dependent on weather conditions. We then cruise towards the island of Vis, once a strategic naval Yugoslav base and restricted to the public. Due to its isolation, Vis has a special charm – “the Mediterranean as it once was”. Taste some exquisite wine, or visit the remains of the Roman thermal place, the City Museum

or simply take a walk and enjoy the views. We overnight in the port of Vis.

Wednesday 09 September

Vis Island – Hvar Island (B,L)

This morning, we sail to Hvar, the longest and sunniest island in the Adriatic, with a swim stop and lunch on board. We then join a guided tour of the town of Hvar where you will see many historical sights of the town, such as St Stephen's Square and Cathedral, the Arsenal with the theatre built on its first floor and the first municipal theatre in Europe. Above Hvar Town is the impressive fortress Fortica offering magnificent views over the bay and Pakleni islands. Overnight in Hvar or Stari Grad.

Thursday 10 September

Hvar Island - Trogir (Krka National Park excursion) (B,L,D)

Early morning departure to the old Dalmatian town, Trogir. After docking, we join a guided tour. Trogir is sometimes referred to as “miniature Venice” or a “mini-Dubrovnik” because of its ancient walls, or a “floating museum town” - as it has a masterful architecture including some stunning Venetian palaces. Afterwards, we will discover the beauty of the Krka National Park and the small access port of Skradin where the flora and fauna are exceptional. Overnight in Trogir

Friday 11 September

Split (B,L)

Today, we set sail to Split with a stop along the way to swim and relax, if weather

permits, with lunch on board. In the late afternoon we arrive in Split, where we overnight. We join a guided tour of the city, visit the seafront promenade and Roman Emperor Diocletian's Palace. The historical centre of the city is listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Your evening is free in Split.

Saturday 12 September

Split – Plitvice Lakes (B,D)

This morning it is time for an early onboard breakfast, before saying goodbye to the crew and some of our new friends made on the ship. We board our coach and head to the Plitvice Lakes.

By far Croatia's top natural attraction and the absolute highlight of Croatia's Adriatic hinterland, the Plitvice Lakes National Park is a glorious expanse of forested hills and turquoise lakes. Within the boundaries of this heavily forested national park, 16 crystalline lakes tumble into each other via a series of waterfalls and cascades. The mineral-rich waters carve through the rock, depositing tufa in continually changing formations. Enjoy exploring this park today before settling in Plitvice lakes area for the night.

Sunday 13 September

Plitvice Lakes - Zagreb (B,D)

Today we head to Croatia's capital city Zagreb. On arrival, we enjoy a tour of the medieval part of the city, the Franciscan monastery and the 13th century church of Saint Francis. We also visit Ban Josip Jelacic's monument in the square. We enjoy one final dinner together this evening.

Monday 14 September

Zagreb – Doha (B)

Time to say our farewells to Croatia as we transfer to the airport for our flight to Doha.

We arrive in Doha late evening and overnight accommodation is reserved, with a late-check out tomorrow.

Tuesday 15 September

Doha – Auckland

Early evening, we join our aircraft for the homeward flight.

Wednesday 16 September

Arrival Home

Our flight touches down mid-evening.



FULLY ACCREDITED



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