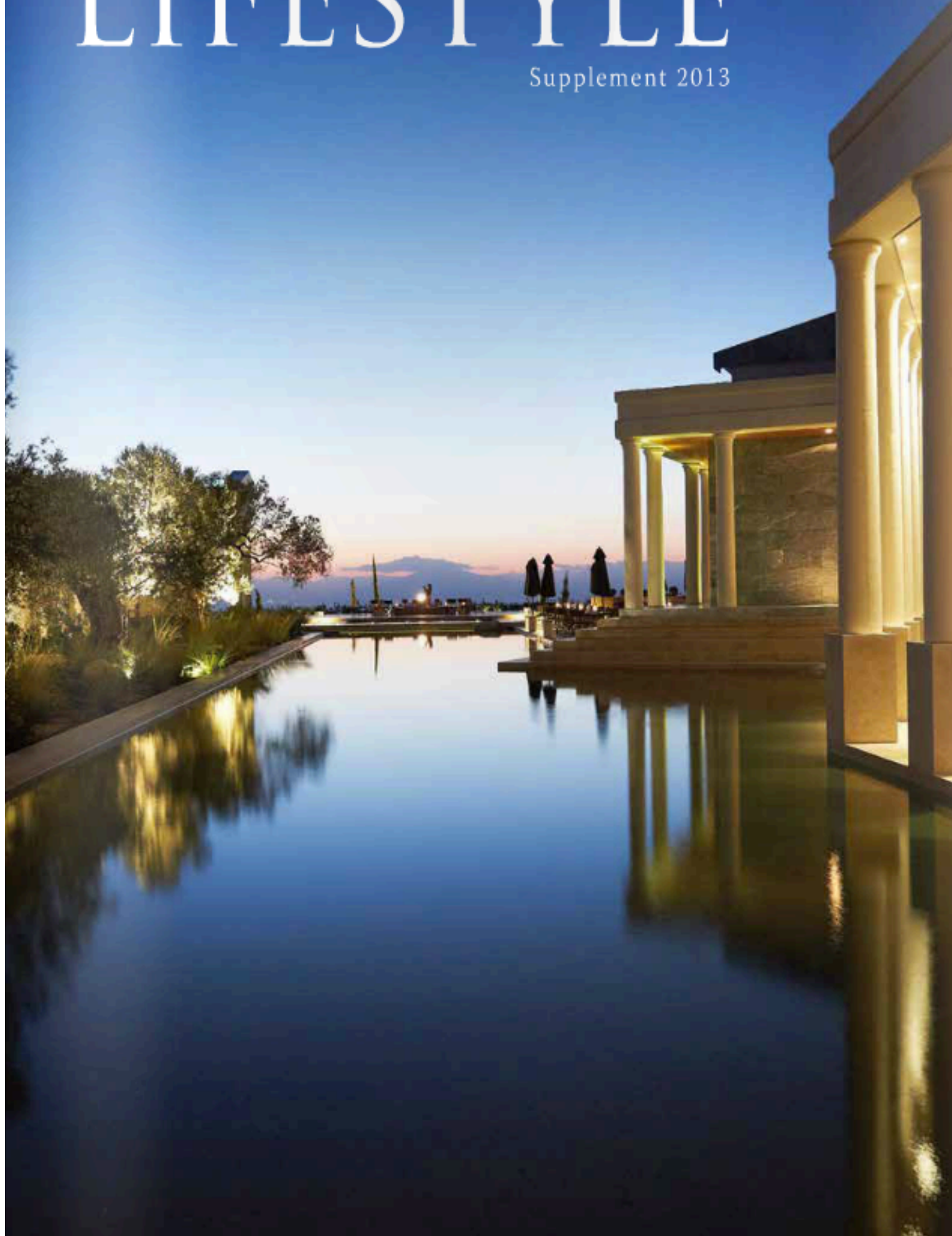


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# LIFESTYLE

Supplement 2013





# A PLACE IN THE CROATIAN SUN

BY CLAIRE STRICKETT

FOR CENTURIES, THE CITY-STATE OF DUBROVNIK GUARDED ITS INDEPENDENCE FIERCELY – AND NO WONDER. THE ANCIENT STONE WALLS OF THE OLD TOWN ENCIRCLE STREETS OF UNPARALLELED BEAUTY AND ELEGANCE; THE TERRACOTTA ROOFS SHELTER ARTISTIC TREASURES TO MATCH ANY IN EUROPE; AND THE TURQUOISE WATERS OF THE ADRIATIC PROVIDED A LUCRATIVE TRADE ROUTE BETWEEN EAST AND WEST THAT MADE DUBROVNIK ONE OF THE MOST PROSPEROUS AND CULTURED CIVILISATIONS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN. AT ITS HEIGHT, IT WAS RIVALLED ONLY BY VENICE IN POWER AND MAGNIFICENCE.

Dubrovnik's days of independence may be long-gone – a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it's now one of the jewels in Croatia's crown - but everything that its citizens treasured about this stretch of ruggedly beautiful coastline remains to discover: fresh Mediterranean cuisine; a rich history and culture; crystal clear seas; brilliant, purifying light, and a quality of life that feels like a remnant of simpler times.

Sit on a hillside that slopes down to meet the Adriatic is Dubrovnik Sun Gardens, an award-winning resort that takes the very best of this traditional Croatian lifestyle, and combines it with modern, world-class facilities. Alongside the 5-star Radisson BLU hotel and more than 200 privately-managed holiday residences, you'll find an award-winning spa, three pools, a sports centre, and a selection of bars and restaurants.

These days, Dubrovnik Sun Gardens provides the perfect retreat





from the strains and stresses of modern life— but today's visitors are far from the first to seek sanctuary here. One of the first to take refuge on this coast was the Florentine statesman Piero Soderini, driven into exile by the Medici family in 1512, and who is said to have settled in the stone palazzo amidst what are now the grounds of Dubrovnik Sun Gardens. That palace still stands, a picturesque focal point among the carefully-tended mature gardens.

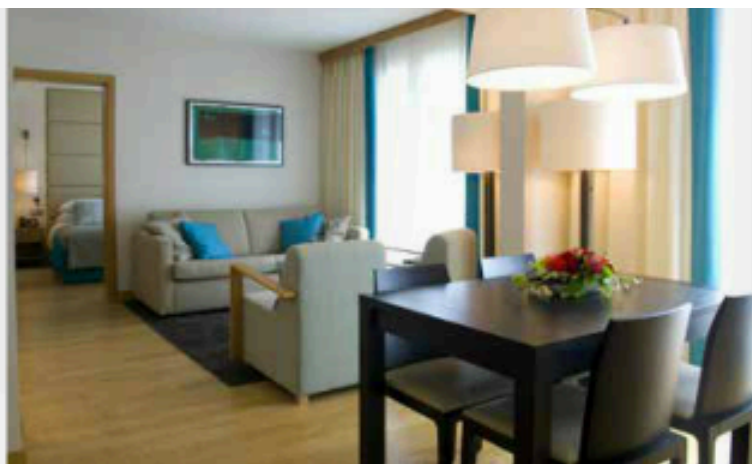
Built across 22 hectares in a traditional style modeled on Croatian village architecture, the feel of Dubrovnik Sun Gardens is dominated by bright, airy spaces, Mediterranean colours, and above all, spectacular views at almost every turn. The location – right on the coast, with Dubrovnik's Old Town just 11km away – is unparalleled, and, due to strict planning regulations introduced to preserve the beauty of the coastline, is unlikely to be bettered.

Since opening in 2009, Dubrovnik Sun Gardens has already been crowned Europe's Best Beach Resort in the World Luxury Hotel Awards 2012, while the real estate offering has been recognised on multiple occasions with Gold Awards from Overseas Property Professional, the leading industry voice in overseas property. The success of the resort is part of a wider story that has seen Croatia re-emerge from its troubled recent history to become one of Europe's most desirable holiday destinations. It's testament to the region's determination to re-establish a reputation based, above all, on its stunning scenery, rich culture, and a long tradition of hospitality.

With interest in this area of Europe booming, the real estate opportunities offered by the Residences at Dubrovnik Sun Gardens are a rare chance not only to secure a beautifully-designed second home in the Dalmatian sun, but to reap the benefits of the Residences' investment potential as rental properties. Prices for one-bedroom apartments start at €184,000, with larger premium properties priced at up to €608,000. Buyers here benefit from exclusive mortgage rates offered by Erste Bank of 80% LTV and a fixed interest rate of 3.3% for the first five years of the 15-year term. Owners can capitalize on the resort's exceptionally high levels of occupancy throughout high season by renting out their property, and can reasonably expect rental returns of 4% after annual fees.

The resort appeals to couples, families and independent travellers alike: Croats are a deeply family-orientated people, something which is reflected at Dubrovnik Sun Gardens. The resort's Kids Club gives children a new place to make friends (and allows parents some precious moments of peace), with toddlers, younger children and teenagers all separately catered for. A children's playground provides a safe place to play, while those without families will appreciate the tranquility of the adult-only pool.

It's in part the proximity of Dubrovnik Sun Gardens to Dubrovnik itself that draws tourists from around the world, and a short hop on the resort's own shuttle bus, limousine service or boat will take you directly to the Old Town. Here, the cobbled alleys, shady squares and bustling pavements provide the perfect place for a touch of culture, a spot of shopping, or even just people-watching on the Stradun, the limestone-paved avenue that is the city's focal point. Lined with the town's finest cafes, restaurants and boutiques, this main street provides an elegant stage for citizens and visitors alike to promenade each evening, meeting, greeting, and showing off their finest attire.



When you need a rest from strolling the town's busy streets, however, Dubrovnik Sun Gardens provides the ideal retreat. The resort is a private sanctuary perfect for whiling away lazy days by one of the three pools, or relaxing into the warm evenings as the sun sets over the sea, while lights begin to twinkle in the villas along the coast, and on the yachts moored for the night.

This is a landscape rich in natural bounty – you'll notice that figs, olives, carob trees, lavender plants and vines abound. The restaurants and bars at Dubrovnik Sun Gardens draw on the richness of the surrounding land and sea to serve fresh local and international cuisine.

Croatian food is worth taking the time to discover: this is a classically Mediterranean cuisine, with seafood and grilled meats taking pride of place alongside sun-ripened vegetables, dressed with the peppery local olive oil and brightened with fresh herbs and lemon juice. A few weeks' stay is barely time enough to fully sample all of Dubrovnik Sun Gardens' restaurants – from the Origano and Tartufo restaurants and the Maraska Lounge & Bar for elegant dining, to the more casual eateries of the Market Place, a promenade of specialist cafes and bistros that provide a convenient pause from shopping in the adjacent boutiques. All serve fresh, locally-sourced or artisan produce, while owners of the Residences benefit further from a year-round 20% discount at all the resort's restaurants and bars.

The natural goodness of the Adriatic coast is further harnessed by the award-winning Spa by OCCO. The winner of the SPA Traveller Awards for two years running, in 2011 and 2012, Dubrovnik Sun Gardens' spa draws on the therapeutic properties of potent organic



local ingredients in its range of treatments and products. It's hardly surprising that this is one of the most sought-after spas in Croatia, with twelve treatment rooms, both coal and salt saunas, a hammam, an aromatherapy steam room, and a lagoon pool, plus a refreshing juice bar. (Again, owners of the Residences benefit from a 20% discount on their treatments.) But perhaps the most restorative aspect of all is the one that truly can't be replicated anywhere else – the unbroken views over the sparkling Adriatic Sea from the sun terrace and spa pool.

While relaxing on the terrace, you might spot a group of small, lush green islands scattered across the sea, just off the mainland. This is the Elaphite archipelago—comprising the three main islands of Koločep, Lopud, Šipan, plus innumerable other islets—which lies just off the coast to the north-west of Dubrovnik. Taking their name from the Greek for 'deer', an animal to which they were once home, the islands' history is closely bound up with that of Dubrovnik. Traditionally, the Elaphite isles were home to retired captains of the Republic's famous sea-fleet – brave sailors whose service the city-state recognised by granting the right to see out their days in this idyllic setting.

Today, fewer than 1000 people inhabit these sleepy islands, but boats depart regularly from Dubrovnik Sun Garden's own boat transfer dock, putting them within easy reach. With their lush vegetation, olive and citrus groves, sheltered bays, tiny churches dating back to the 9th century, elegant summer residences and quaint quayside villages, exploring the Elaphite islands makes for a rewarding and relaxing excursion. Contemporary art lovers will particularly enjoy a trip to Lopud, the location of 'The Art Pavilion Your Black Horizon' – an acclaimed pavilion and gallery space

whose striking modernity both complements and engages with the island's Renaissance landscape.

Exploring the coast inland is simple thanks to the facilities offered by the resort's Sports Centre. Hire a bike or follow one of the walking or jogging trails for a workout among scenery that no gym can match. The Centre also offers a range of indoor and outdoor activities, too, from yoga to five-a-side football, tennis, squash, and a climbing wall. Combine all this with the services of expert personal trainers and professional sports coaches, and every taste is catered for, from the casual participant to those pursuing specific fitness goals.

Croatia is undergoing a remarkable process of rebirth that has swiftly established the country as one of Europe's most desirable, yet still relatively undiscovered, destinations. Dubrovnik Sun Gardens is a symbol of all that the country stands for – elegant living, a relaxed Mediterranean lifestyle, a proud culture – and a justified confidence in the future.

For more information on the real estate and resort at Dubrovnik Sun Gardens, visit [www.dubrovniksungardens.com](http://www.dubrovniksungardens.com) or call +385 (0) 20 361 650.