



**Modern family** Living next door to my ex-husband — and his new wife

# Weekend

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**Love, grief and the little dog my sister left behind**

The cool guide  
to Croatia



The best boutique  
hotels



City breaks and  
island hopping



Chic escapes on  
the coast



# Travel

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**'The beaches are excellent, the views sublime — I'm happy and aimless, with a cold beer'**

Sean Thomas falls for Calabria in the south of Italy



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## The 30 coolest hotels in Croatia

From an ornate palace in Dubrovnik to a hip beach house with a stylish spa in Trogir, **Annabelle Thorpe** picks the best places

### Best for culture and history

#### 1 Salona Palace Hotel Solin

Opening in April, the Salona Palace is next to the ancient Roman city of Salona, giving guests access to the extensive ruins and precincts walked by Julius Caesar. The hotel will also open Joe's Beach Lounge and Bar on nearby Kasjuni beach, with paddleboarding and kayaking on offer. Solin is 5km from Split, making it an ideal base for visiting Diocletian's Palace.

**Details** Room rates are yet to be set ([salonapalace.com](http://salonapalace.com)); fly to Split

#### 2 Martinis Marchi Hotel Solta

The imposing tower and fortifications of this striking hotel date from the early 18th century when the Republic of Venice granted permission to colonise the west of the pretty Dalmatian island of Solta. The sense of history is strong, with thick stone walls, sweeping staircases and elegantly decorated rooms named after ancient dukes. An alfresco restaurant serves seafood and steaks on a terrace overlooking the marina.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from about £335 ([martinis-marchi.com](http://martinis-marchi.com)). Fly to Split



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#### 3 Judita Palace Split

Few cities offer the chance to eat, drink and sleep among Roman ruins, but the vast remains of Diocletian's Palace are home to restaurants, cafés and hotels — including the Judita Palace. This is a delightful 16th-century building converted into an 11-room hotel, with original exposed walls and a chandelier-decked restaurant. When you've had enough sightseeing, Bacvice beach is a ten-minute walk away.

**Details** A week's B&B costs from £904pp, including flights and transfers (0800 9709149, [completelycroatia.co.uk](http://completelycroatia.co.uk)); fly to Split ▶



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#### 4 Brown Beach House Trogir

An ideal place to stay if you want to explore Split's spectacular historic sites without being in the middle of a city, Trogir got its first real boutique hotel last summer with the opening of Brown Beach House. There are 25 designer suites in the converted tobacco warehouse; roomy and chic with angular, retro-style furniture and clean, cream decor. Outside, the sizeable infinity pool overlooks the hotel's beach and the sea beyond. The spa and restaurant, Cartina, will open this summer.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £121 a night (00 385 21 355 450, brownhotels.com); fly to Split



#### 5 Pucic Palace Dubrovnik

The only hotel within the walls of the old town in Dubrovnik, this former nobleman's mansion houses a 19-bedroom hotel with many of the original features and antique furniture. Ideally located for exploring the historic sights before the cruise crowds arrive (and after they leave), it's also the best place to stay during the city's summer festival (July 10 to August 25).

**Details** Three-night breaks cost from £798pp B&B, including flights and transfers (020 7593 1899, kirkerholidays.com); fly to Dubrovnik

#### 6 Villa Pattiera Cavtat

The former private home of a renowned Croatian opera singer, Villa Pattiera is a 19th-century property with 12 rooms that sits at the heart of Cavtat's picturesque harbour. The village is built on the former Roman site of Epidaurum, and

there is a scattering of Roman remains to explore as well as the Renaissance Prince's Palace. Dalmatian art and folklore can be discovered in the nearby village of Cilipi, which hosts folk dances each Sunday.

**Details** A week's B&B costs from £598pp, including flights (01425 480400, prestigeholidays.co.uk)

#### 7 Esplanade Zagreb

It doesn't come more glamorous than this opulent hotel, built in the 1920s as a stopover for guests on the Orient Express. All of the capital's main sights are within easy reach, including the 19th-century National Theatre and neogothic cathedral. The hotel is an art deco work of art itself, with marble-clad walls, restored antique furniture and three elegant restaurants.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £88 a night (00 385 1 4566 666, esplanade.hr); Fly to Zagreb



6 The port in Cavtat

#### Best for families

#### 8 Family Hotel Amarin Rovinj

Newly opened for 2017, this large resort is a few minutes' drive from picturesque Rovinj, but also sits on a kilometre-long stretch of beach, making it ideal for beach babies as well as teenagers who want to shop. Flexible and connecting rooms cater for all ages, as does the swimming pool complex, with separate pools for babies, children and parents.

The Marwell Spa offers a wide range of treatments and there are three restaurants, including a buffet.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £112 a night (00 385 52 800 250, maistra.com). Fly to Pula

#### 9 Amfora Grand Beach Resort Hvar

If you want to bring the children to Hvar, Amfora is the hotel to choose, with a private beach, children's pool with waterslides, and a kids' club. Ideal

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apartments with well-equipped kitchenettes. There are two Scott Dunn Explorers' Clubs and six restaurants, offering everything from pizzas to freshly caught seafood.

**Details** A week room-only costs from £600pp, including flights and transfers (020 3733 7731, scottdunn.com)

### 15 Hotel Liburna Korcula

Korcula is one of the best options for an island escape with the family. It is a buzzy old town with plenty of beaches and a regular shuttle boat to the mainland. The Liburna is a Yugoslavia-era hotel, but it has been nicely restored — and upgraded last year — with clean white communal spaces and comfortable blond wood and cream bedrooms. There's a kids' club, tennis and mini-golf, although you may have trouble getting your children off the beach.

**Details** A week's B&B costs from £679pp, including flights and transfers (01425 480400, prestigeholidays.co.uk)

### 16 D-Resort Sibenik

The opening of D-Resort, a curved, modernist new-build with 63 starkly stylish bedrooms and a bar and restaurant with stunning views, put the small town of Sibenik on the map. The hotel is next to the marina, offering the chance to charter a motorboat or sailing yacht to explore the nearby archipelago, with diving also on offer. The hotel's state-of-the-art spa is perfect for post-yachting pampering and there's a good kids' club.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £112 a night (00 385 22 331 452, dresortsibenik.com). Fly to Split

### Best for foodies

#### 17 Vinotel Gospoja Krk

A dramatic new-build, perched on a clifftop, the Gospoja is owned and run by the Toljanic family, who bring their heritage as producers of Krk's trademark Zlahtina wine into every aspect of the hotel. The 23 rooms and suites are named after grape varieties, with grape-print ceilings and sleek, pared-down furnishings. Guests can join wine tastings, try vinotherapy treatments or sample different vintages in the two restaurants.

**Details** Two-night breaks cost from £130pp B&B, including two wine tastings (00 385 51 669 350, gospoja.hr). Fly to Rijeka

#### 18 Hotel San Rocco Istria

Repeatedly voted Croatia's best hotel, this inland bolt hole has 14 rooms, all oozing country-house class, with velvet



armchairs, polished-wood floors and soft, cream linens. It's something of a gastro-haunt, with an award-winning restaurant, and is ideally placed for exploring Istria's wine, olive oil and food producers, who dot the countryside. There are walking trails near by and the coast is five miles away.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £103 a night (00 385 52 725 000, san-rocco.hr). Fly to Pula

#### 19 Bevanda Opatija

One of the new breed of contemporary hotels opening up along the Croatian coast, Bevanda has ten rooms and seems almost to balance on the rocks, with a glass-fronted restaurant right on the water. Each room has a private terrace with sea views, as does the hotel's bar, which offers spectacular views across to Rijeka and neighbouring islands. The renowned restaurant is one of the best in Croatia.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £139 a night (00800 08251010, relais-chateaux.com). Fly to Rijeka

### Best for activities

#### 20 Art Hotel Kalelarga Zadar

The hippest hotel in what is arguably Croatia's hippest city, the Kalelarga has ten stylish rooms, an in-house bistro and a terrace that makes the most of its location on the city's most famous street. Zadar's waterfront location makes it ideal for fishing and sailing trips, as well as for visiting the beautiful Kornati archipelago, which you can explore by kayak or bicycle. There's great canoeing on the nearby Zrmanja River.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £90 a night (00 385 23 233 000, arthotel-kalelarga.com). Fly to Zadar



Continued next page

for parents who want to feel a little spoilt too, the Windows on Hvar restaurant has panoramic views and an upscale vibe, while the two other eateries are more child friendly. The Sensori O spa offers ocean-side treatments, so you don't have to move from your lounge.

**Details** A week's B&B costs from £691pp, including flights and transfers (0800 2404867, kuoni.co.uk)

### 10 Bluesun Hotel Elaphusa Brac

The real joy at Elaphusa is that it is ten minutes' walk from Croatia's most-photographed beach, Zlatni Rat. An activity-packed family resort, flanked by pine woods and facing the sea. The Thalasso Wellness Centre is ideal for exhausted parents and comes with a kids' club (May-September), with plenty of sports facilities, including tennis, bowling and water sports.

**Details** A week's half-board costs from £630pp, including flights and transfers (0871 2314691, thomson.co.uk)

### 11 Valamar Club Dubrovnik

Simpler than many of Dubrovnik's resort-style hotels, the Valamar Club is also the city's only hotel designed for families. Interconnected and family rooms offer flexibility for all ages, and children have their own pool, three kids' clubs and a separate section of the evening buffet. The beach is a stone's throw from the hotel, offering a wide range of water sports, and the Dubrovnik old town is only a five-minute bus journey away.

**Details** B&B doubles cost from £64 a night (020 3411 0469, valamar.com); fly to Dubrovnik

### 12 Ethno Houses Plitvica Selo

Take the family on a rural adventure with a stay at the chalet-style Ethno Houses, an easy walk from Plitvice Lakes National Park — one of Croatia's biggest draws. Kids will love the petting zoo, which has a pony, goats and chickens, as well as the play area and the Hansel and Gretel-style wooden rooms (the deluxe suite sleeps four). The restaurant serves hearty, traditional dishes and the staff are delightful.

**Details** B&B doubles are from £112 a night (00 385 91 123 4175, ethnoplitvice.com). Fly to Split

### 13 Alana Beachclub Paklenica

The Alana, which opens this year, is Neilson's first beach club in Croatia, and is ideal for active families. The beachfront location means dinghy sailing and wakeboarding are on the menu, while the proximity to the Paklenica National Park allows for rock-climbing and hiking. The 160-room resort has a children's pool and kids' clubs and can provide the usual baby-friendly paraphernalia.

**Details** A week costs from £615pp, including flights, transfers, most meals and some activities (0333 0143351, neilson.com)

### 14 Sun Gardens Dubrovnik

If you're looking for something a little more upscale near Dubrovnik, the Sun Gardens, on the outskirts of town, will hit the spot. The hotel steps down a hillside to the sea, with accommodation ranging from classic hotel rooms to