Coming Spring: Highlights of the Adriatic

Join us May 14-24, 2015 for an exciting and different tour to one of the most beautiful parts of Europe: Croatia and Venice. This is Gaston College’s first tour to this spectacular part of Europe.

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Edited by Bob Blanton
DAY 1
Friday, May 14
Relax and enjoy our scheduled wide-bodied flight to Split, Croatia

DAY 2
Saturday, May 15
Our English-speaking guide will meet us at the airport and accompany us on our transfer by private coach to our hotel in Split. Split is one of the oldest cities in Croatia, as made evident by the Greek Influence first seen in the area in the 4th century B.C. the first major development of the area was a private residence, the palace of the Roman Emperor Diocletian, constructed in 304 A.D. The city grew up around Diocletian's Palace before becoming a hotly contested territory with Byzantine forces as well as Croatian and Hungarian dukes and kings vying for ownership. Eventually the city was absorbed into the Republic of Venice in 1420. We will begin our tour by embarking on an Introductory Walking Tour led by a local guide in order to acquaint ourselves with Split and Croatia.

DAY 3
Sunday, May 16
Today we will stroll through Split’s Old Town, where we will visit the basements of Diocletian’s Palace, including the large inner courtyard known as the Peristyle. The tour will also include entry into the sites of Jupiter’s Temple, one of the best preserved Ancient Roman temples, and the Cathedral of St. Domnus, originally constructed in 305 A.D. as the Mausoleum of Diocletian. Next we will visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Trogir, located just outside the city of Split. Trogir is known for the authentic Hellenistic layout of the city that reveals its Greek and Roman origins. The town is further enhanced by the numerous Romanesque buildings added over time as well as the Renaissance and Baroque architecture prevalent during the Venetian period of dominance in the Adriatic. We will get to visit the centerpiece of

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Trogir, the **Cathedral of St. Lawrence**, which, having been built over the course of 400 years, perfectly exhibits the architectural evolution of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

**DAY 4**
**Monday, May 17**
Today we will travel from Split to **Zadar**. En route, we will stop and visit **Sibenik** and the **Krka Waterfalls National Park**.

Sibenik is one of the oldest native cities of the Croats, although it has exchanged hands between the Venetians, the Bosnians, and the Byzantines repeatedly throughout its history. We will enjoy a walking tour of the **Sibenik’s Old Town**, the highlight of which is entry into the UNESCO World Heritage Site of **St. James’ Cathedral**, one of Croatia’s most important examples of Renaissance architecture. Next we will transfer to Krka Waterfalls National Park, where we will get to explore the natural beauty of this pristine natural park on gently sloping hills. We will board a boat for a ride up the river to Skradin, a small town that lends it name to one of the park’s most attractive falls, the Skradinski buk. Afterwards we will transfer to our hotel in Zadar.

**DAY 5**
**Tuesday, May 18**
We will spend the first part of the day exploring Zadar, known for both its ancient and modern sites. We will visit the unique **St. Donatus Church**, a famous round church from the 9th century, and arguably one of the most important Pre-Romanesque churches in the country. We will also see, and hear, the **Sea Organs** that create music using the lapping of the waves against the shoreline. Next we will visit the **Gold and Silver Museum**, where beautiful local artifacts spanning a millennium of Croatian history have been preserved. We will leave Zadar and head towards the **Plitvice National Park** which will be our base for the night. We will spend the afternoon exploring the national park famous for its series of lakes and cascades caused by the confluence of three rivers. This is the national park of superlatives in Croatia: the oldest one, the largest one, the most famous one, the most visited one; and it has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1979. The lakes range in color from grey to green to blue depending on the mineral and biological content of the various lakes. The park is truly a natural wonder featuring incredible biodiversity and a constantly evolving landscape due to the erosive influence of the numerous waterfalls.

**DAY 6**
**Wednesday, May 19**
Today we will depart the Plitvice National Park area and head to **Pula**, located on the tip of the **Istria Peninsula**, and long established as a wine making, fishing and administrative center since the...
Romans conquered the town in the second century B.C. Our sightseeing tour of Pula will include a visit to the Pula Arena, originally built in the first century A.D. to symbolize Pula’s growing importance as a Roman administrative center. It stands today as one of the largest and most well preserved of the ancient Roman amphitheaters. We will also have free time today to relax and explore Pula at our leisure.

DAY 7

Thursday, May 20
Our morning begins with a trip to the nearby town of Rovinj, considered the most beautiful town on the Istria Peninsula. A local guide will lead us on a walking tour of what many consider the prettiest town on the Istrian Peninsula. We will visit the Basilica of St. Euphemia, a beautiful 18th century white church that dominates the heart of Rovinj. Continue to explore the town of Rovinj. This afternoon we will explore Brijuni National Park, where the natural beauty of the islands melds with the area’s extensive historical significance. Upon docking on the island we will board a small train where a guide will take us around the national park and relay the history of the area. The remains of Roman villas, Bronze Age settlements, and a 13th century Knights Templar church allude to the amazing story that the National Park has to tell.

DAY 8
Friday, May 21
Today we will depart Pula by ferry and head to Venice. We will travel across the Adriatic in much of the same fashion as has been done for hundreds of years. A water taxi will transfer us to our hotel in Venice, which will be our base for the next three nights.

DAY 9
Saturday, May 22
We begin our tour of Venice with a Vaporetto Ride along the Grand Canal, which has been described as the world’s finest street. We will view the Rialto Bridge, the most elegant and famous of the bridges that span the Grand Canal, as we make our way to St. Mark’s Square. We will visit St. Mark’s Basilica, featuring the interior walls encrusted with spectacular gold mosaics. Our visit will also include an ascent to the Gallerie to see the original bronze horses, which once adorned the façade, and a stunning view of St. Mark’s Square. We continue next door with a visit to the Doges’ Palace, residence of the rulers of the Serenissima Republic. We will explore the ornate and grandiose rooms of the palace, including a walk across the famous Bridge of Sighs to the cells where Casanova was once imprisoned, as well as the Grand Council chamber, featuring Tintoretto’s Paradise, said to be the world’s largest oil painting.
What is Included in the Tour Package

- Round trip airfare with a major carrier on scheduled flights and guaranteed dates.
- Airport taxes/fuel surcharges (which will not change after time of enrollment for any participant).
- Accommodation in three or four star hotels in twin rooms with private facilities guaranteed throughout.
- A filling breakfast each morning to get the day started well throughout your touring program.
- A hearty three course dinner daily (except nights 3, 7, 8 and 9) reflecting local cuisine on every evening, usually in local restaurants in capital cities.
- A Tour Director to accompany your group from arrival to departure.
- The expertise and perspective of local guides during your tour.
- All excursions, cultural activities and (several pre-booked) admissions as per your itinerary.
- Transportation by private coach for airport transfers and touring.
- The cost of the ferry between Pula and Venice.
- Basic health insurance while on tour (including medical treatment on tour up to $7,500) and $50,000 of coverage for emergency evacuation and repatriation.

What is NOT included in the Tour Package

- Lunches; Dinner on days 8 and 9.; personal beverages with meals.
- Visas (not required).
- Tips and gratuities for the guide and driver.
- Any fees that might be imposed by the airlines at the airport for checked baggage.
- Travel Insurance - We offer and always recommend our Trip Mate travel insurance policy to all participants. This comprehensive policy includes health, property and cancellation coverage at a cost of $149.
- Cost of Gaston College registration.

All-Inclusive Tour Price

$3,949 per person, double-occupancy, based on 24 paying participants.
DAY 10
Sunday, May 23
We will begin our day with a visit to the Accademia, where the glory that was Venice lives on in this remarkable collection of paintings from the 13th to the 18th centuries. The hallmark of the Venetian school was color and more color, and works of its most famous sons (Giorgione, Veronese, Titan and Tintoretto), are all featured prominently in this spectacular gallery. We will continue with a visit to the Church of Santa Maria della Salute, a proud Venetian landmark which represents the pinnacle of the baroque movement in Venice. The church, built by Longhena in the 17th century, was an offering to the Virgin for delivering the city from the plague. Surmounted by a great cupola, the octagonal basilica houses a small art gallery in its sacristy, which includes magnificent ceiling paintings by Titan, and Tintoretto’s The Wedding at Cana, one of his most important works. With our Vaporetto Pass, we will be free to explore the other treasures of Venice.

DAY 11
Monday, May 24
Our enjoyable and rewarding tour will come to an end as our guide accompanies us to the airport for the return flight home.

Meals included: breakfast at the hotel and meals served on flights.

Gaston College Study Tours Program

The Study Tours Program is a unique concept in international travel for our service area. Over the past three decades, Gaston College has planned and escorted approximately 70 educational tours, visiting more than 75 countries/principalities on six continents. These study tours have involved hundreds of students, college staff members, and local community participants. Students have the opportunity to earn college credit while traveling abroad while community participants not interested in college credit may simply audit any overseas travel course. Our professionally escorted tours are carefully planned and customized, and are offered at a wholesale price.

HISTORY
Gaston College was the first community college in the western Carolinas to institute a program of international educational travel, and the college has the longest continuous record of successful study tours abroad in the community college system. The Gaston College Study Tours program was planned and organized by its first and current director, Bob Blanton, and was approved by the college and the Department of Community Colleges in 1977. The first overseas tour was conducted to England and Belgium in June of 1978.

PURPOSE
The Gaston College Study Tours Program enables the college to fulfill its mission as a “community college” in the broadest sense in that it expands our “community” from a local one to a global community. All participants are prepared for international travel by a series of informative pre-departure meetings on the college campus beginning several weeks prior to departure. One of the most important objectives of the overseas study tours program is to develop an attitude of “cultural relativism”. This teaches our participants to be respectful, tolerant, and appreciative of other peoples’ ways and customs that might differ from our own American lifestyle. It also helps participants to understand that cultural differences need not imply cultural “superiority” or “inferiority,” but simply difference.

Our program is motivated by the belief that there is a great demand today in our society for people who possess “international competence” and understanding. It has been proven many times that the most effective path to world peace comes not from politicians, but from personal contact between tolerant and understanding citizens.

The Study Tours Director is assisted by an Advisory Committee, composed of local community members who have traveled with the college and support and understand our program.
Reservation Form

**Highlights of the Adriatic**
May 14 - 24, 2015

Full name (as it appears on your passport):

____________________________________________________

Current address: _______________________________________

____________________________________________________

____________________________________________________

Telephone number: ____________________________________

Email: ________________________________________________

Valid passport number (for airlines): ______________________

Expiration date: _______________________________________

**Note:** Many foreign countries now require that your passport be valid at least 6 months after you end your visit. Make sure yours will meet this requirement.

I wish to room with: ____________________________________

I require a private room at additional cost: _________________

Special dietary/health needs (for hotels/airlines): ____________

☐ I am already covered by my own health/hospitalization insurance policy while overseas.

☐ I plan to purchase health/hospitalization insurance from Worldstrides.

The $149 payment for additional insurance must be included with your initial deposit check.

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**Reservations**

**Highlights of the Adriatic**
May 14-24, 2015

**Reservation Form:**
Please complete all information on this form, detach it and send it along with a check in the amount of $500 per person (plus insurance premium if you purchase our company's policy), made payable to GASTON COLLEGE STUDY TOURS, and send to:

Bob Blanton,
Study Tours Director
Box 76
Gaston College
Dallas, NC 28034-1499

No space can be reserved without receipt of your deposit. Tour deposits are nonrefundable except in cases where we can resell your space on the tour. All prices, based upon a minimum of 24 paying participants, are valid at the time of this printing, but are subject to change. Tours are sold on a first-come, first-served basis. Balance payments will be due approximately 90 days prior to departure.

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**Information**

Contact Bob Blanton,
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Dallas, NC 28034-1499
blanton.bob@gaston.edu

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Gaston College
Opportunities For Life

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