**Split**

Yvonne Gordon explores an enticing blend of history, culture and cuisine on Croatia’s Dalmatian coast.

**Sleep at ...**

**HISTORY** Set on Split’s main square, Hotel Vestibul Palace is the Palace Judita Heritage Hotel - a beautifully preserved property with exposed stone walls, elegant furnishings and some rooms overlooking the Palace. Rooms are named after legendary local figures. Double rooms from €109. (Narodni trg 4, +385 21 420 220; hotel-atrium.hr)

**BOUTIQUE** Hotel Vestibul Palace is a tiny, luxury hotel inside the walls of the Diocletian’s palace, with a mix of Romano-Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque elements such as original Roman walls. Rooms have a modern interior design and handmade furniture, as well as a pleasant outdoor terrace for drinks. Double rooms from €80. (6a Vestibula 4, +385 21 329 329; vestibulpalace.com)

**CONTEMPORARY** If you’re looking for a modern, five-star luxury hotel with a pool, Hotel Atrium is it. It’s not right in the centre but is well equipped, and an interesting feature is the chance to see part of the Diocletian Aqueduct (built in the 3rd century) in the hotel basement. Double rooms from €400. (Dumovinskog rata 49a, +385 21 200 000; hotel-atrium.hr)

**Don’t miss ...**

**VIEWS** Exploring and getting lost in the streets of the 1,200-year-old Diocletian’s Palace is a highlight, but, to get your bearings and for beautiful views over the palace and the harbour, climb the 52-metre high bell tower of St Domnius Cathedral. The octagonal cathedral was originally designed by Diocletian as a mausoleum and consecrated in the seventh century.

**BEACHES** On the southside of the palace, Rivka is Split’s waterfront promenade, the place for strolls, people watching and sunset cocktails. For swimming, head to the sandy Bačvice Beach, which is a short walk from the harbour. For something quieter, pack a picnic and head to one of the beaches at the foot of the forested Marjan peninsula such as Kašjuni or Kaštelet.

**ISLANDS** Take a ferry, boat tour or picnic cruise to one or two of the Dalmatian Islands just off the coast of Split. Brac is popular for its golden sandy beaches, the resort of Brela is where the jet set hangs out, but has plenty of secluded beaches and coves, while Solta is a lovely quiet place for nature and swimming.

**Eat at ...**

**CREATIVE** Tucked away in a corner of the Diocletian’s Palace - in a 15th century villa - is the restaurant Augusteo Conge. Food is traditional Mediterranean with a modern twist. Dishes might include monkfish with black truffle sauce and flavoured polenta with tomatoes, or sea bass on a sweet beetroot cream. (Dvoriška 1, +385 99 323 9671)

**POPULAR** Set over two stories in an old hardware store, Bokeria Kitchen & Wine is a large, bright dining space that has taken its inspiration from Barcelona’s famous market. The menu includes everything from tapas to full main courses, with seasonal produce and local fish, a good selection of Croatian wines and live jazz music some nights. (8 Domaldova, +385 21 355 577)

**RUSTIC** Crown a small alleyway beside the Palace, Konoba Varoš is a cozy, old-style restaurant with wooden beams and fishing nets on the ceiling hinting at the seafood on offer. Sea bass, bream, stuffed calamari and octopus feature, plus an excellent choice of meats and risotto - house specialties are prepared, Dalmatian-style, under a baking lid. (Ban Mladenova 6, +385 21 341 082; konobavaroš.com)

**Drink at ...**

**DESIGN** With everything from barbecue food to cocktails, plus a menu of more than 50 beers, Fabrique is a vibrant venue set in a huge space inside the old walls, with brick walls from the old Diocletian Palace, archways and beautifully designed lighting as a feature. It also turns into a late club with DJs. (Tg Franje Tuđmana 5, +385 98 175 127; fabrique.com/hr/flyby.com)

**CENTRAL** Lvxor is right in the palace’s central square to take a cushion and enjoy coffee or drinks on the steps for some people watching or listening to live music in the evening. The café takes its name from Luxor in Egypt as the palace was once guarded by 30 sphinxes. (Ring Sv. Ivana 4, +385 21 424 060; lxvor.hr)

**SMART FLIERS** Take a short hike up the hill of the Marjan Peninsula to here and you’ll be rewarded with views of the city, the harbour and out to the islands from the outdoor terrace of Terasa Vidića. (Prilje Vladića Nazora 1, +385 99 871 879)

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