



## Family friendly in Portugal

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# travel

## Scene of Thrones



**THE  
SETTING:**  
Dubrovnik,  
the backdrop  
to Game of  
Thrones,  
starring  
Emilia Clarke

**E**verything seems new and yet familiar. I know I haven't been to this island before, yet, as we walk through the gardens of the abandoned Benedictine monastery, it feels like I already know it. The reason I probably do is that Lokrum Island in Croatia was used as a location

## Yvonne Gordon discovers the real star of of Game of Thrones – the city of Dubrovnik

for the hugely popular fantasy TV series Game Of Thrones.

The island is peaceful – it's uninhabited except for peacocks and lots of birds, all singing mer-

rily in the cypress and pine trees. In Game Of Thrones, it was part of the fictional city of Qarth – the monastery gardens are where the party for Daenerys Targaryen was

held. Her time in Qarth was not happy – and it turns out that in real life the island is said to have a curse which befalls anyone who lives there or stays overnight. ►

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# TRAVEL

## You go back in time when you cross the moat

► Lokrum is just a short distance by boat from Dubrovnik, which has also been used as the city of King's Landing in Game Of Thrones. And the producers of the HBO series, an adaptation of George RR Martin's series of novels A Song Of Ice And Fire, have really made a perfect choice in selecting their filming locations.

Throughout my visit, I keep feeling that I am actually in a place called King's Landing, rather than just seeing the locations used on a TV show. It's the feeling you get when you stand in a real fortified city and see the massive walls built to protect it against real sea and land invaders. It's when you walk over the drawbridges or inspect the moat running along the walls, stand beside the canons on a fortress or hear the flutter of the flags flying from the battlements.

At the tiny port, a replica galleon is making its way into the dock – it's really no surprise that when the Game Of Thrones producers first saw Dubrovnik, it seemed like King's Landing was already there.

In the books, the fictional city is the seat of the Iron Throne, which several noble families are fighting for. Yet Dubrovnik's

real history also saw it fight off would-be invaders from all corners.

Founded in the seventh century, Dubrovnik became one of the wealthiest maritime republics in the Mediterranean, with its strategic location between east and west. Its wealth meant

that for protection, the city was surrounded by nearly 2km of ramparts – a double layer of walls that are as much as 6m thick and 25m high in places and contain three fortresses, 16 towers and six bastions.

It's easy to go back in time when you enter the old town at

Pila Gate, crossing a stone bridge over a moat and then a wooden drawbridge. Once inside, the entrance ramp is familiar as the scene of a rebellion by King's Landing inhabitants in Thrones, and the door that Sansa runs through before she is attacked.

Inside the Old Town, many of Dubrovnik's most beautiful palaces, churches and monasteries date back to the 16th and 17th century – such as the Gothic-Renaissance Rector's Palace and Sponza Palace (also used as Qarth) – all of which are open to the public.

One of the most recognisable locations in Game Of Thrones is Fort Lovrijenac (St Lawrence's Fortress), an 11th-century castle set on a rock just outside the city walls, where many of the

battle scenes took place. It's a steep climb up lots of steps to get there, but it's well worth it for the views of the red rooftops of the old town.

Walking around the city walls is a must-do – as well as walking on the forts and towers and seeing superb views of the town and the Adriatic, you can peer down into narrow streets and hidden gardens. At the southern end, you can see into St Dominic Street where the 'market scene' took place, or peer into Fort Bokar, which was used for battle preparation. Fans will also recognise Minčeta Tower as the House Of The Undying.

**THRONE STAR:**  
Lena Headey as Cersei Lannister



### GETTING THERE

A three-hour Game of Thrones walking tour in Dubrovnik with Viator costs €55 per person, [www.viator.com](http://www.viator.com). A three-hour walking tour of Game of Thrones locations with Gulliver costs €80 (or €110 for an extended tour), see [www.gulliver.hr](http://www.gulliver.hr) or call 00 385 20 410 816. The Discover King's Landing package costs from €259 per room at Hotel Bellevue (including airport transfers) or at Hotel Excelsior from €241 per room, see [www.alh.hr](http://www.alh.hr). Aer Lingus flies from Dublin to Dubrovnik from €73 one way until October 25, see [aerlingus.com](http://aerlingus.com).

**FANTASY LOCATION:**  
The city at night, main picture; Yvonne, below right, sits on a pier used in Game of Thrones, right



**DRAMA:** St John's Fortress, above; left, King Joff (Jack Gleeson) and Margaery Tyrell (Natalie Dormer) take aim in Game of Thrones

part was used for battle preparation scenes, the lower part for where Daenerys's dragons were imprisoned. Ariana then brings us through narrow back streets of the town to Fort Lovrijenac.

Ivana Radić says the production brought lots of positive energy to the city. And it's certainly exciting to see the locations,

but for me – and for most visitors – the city doesn't have to be transformed into a TV location to make it special. Just visiting Dubrovnik and soaking up its atmosphere, hearing the bells echo from the bell tower or looking out from a fortress while a real flag flies overhead – that's all fairytale enough.



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## Is this the end of

Room service has never held much appeal for me. Probably because I don't really understand why you would stay in a hotel room when you could be out experiencing the local grub, or, at the very least, people-watching in the hotel bar or restaurant.

It's not that I have never indulged in the practice, but, to be honest, I can only remember two occasions when I ever deemed it necessary. The first of those was in the Astoria Hotel in St Petersburg on a wintry night back in the Nineties. I had injured my foot while out walking earlier that day, and so, after spending the afternoon hobbling around the room, from bed to armchair to bed, I realised that even making it down to the bar to eat wasn't going to be a goer. And so, a steak sandwich, if I remember correctly,



**Roslyn Dee**

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was ordered up. It did the job but it was a) not much of an experience and b) far more expensive than it should have been. No shock there, of course.

The other occasion was in Portugal in May 2007. The count was on back at home in the General Election and so we checked into the hotel that evening, showered and slipped into the bathrobes provided, set up the laptop on the dressing-table – and ordered up burgers and salad from the room service menu. I can still see the look on the face of the

## room service?

young man who delivered our food – admittedly we hardly lifted our eyes from the screen, but we realised later that he probably thought we were engaged in some kind of unsavoury cyber activity!

So, I can honestly say that the room service menu is not one that I ever look at in an hotel. But lots of people do. Now, however, it seems that hotel chains may be considering their value – and the demise of room service is on the horizon.

I have already heard of hotels (and not budget ones, either) where you can no longer order up food to your room. But now comes the official news that Hilton are on the case. They have already withdrawn room service from their Waikiki hotel in Honolulu and have now announced that their huge 2,000-room Hilton Midtown hotel in New York is also to discon-

tinue the option later this summer.

Why? Well, room service, in spite of the high cost of items on the menu, often makes no money for hotels. It's down to the labour costs involved. The withdrawal of the facility in the New York hotel (the largest in the city) will, for example, result in more than 50 redundancies.

In the end, though, room service is inevitably such an anonymous and soulless experience. It will probably remain an option in business-oriented hotels around the globe. But for those who travel for pleasure it won't be any great loss. That Hilton Midtown hotel is located in prime tourist territory in New York – why on earth would you want to dine in your room when you could be out there, eating on the streets of one of the greatest cities in the world?

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