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PLACING SECOND in Sunday's World Cup, the national soccer team of Croatia had a tumultuous week, as have its legions of fans. But with a thousand islands scattered along their country's jade-green Adriatic coast, from deserted flyspecks to hipster outposts, there's no shortage of places to lick one's wounds—or bask in silver-medal glory. The international jet set has long crowded about Hvar, where the main town features a postcard-perfect harbor and raucous nightlife, while more budget-minded beachgoers and water sports enthusiasts gravitate to Brač. History buffs tend to seek out Losinj, a favorite retreat in the days of the Habsburg Empire, and little-known Ciovo is starting to catch on with trendsetters. As proof that Croatia's tourism draw isn't letting up, stylish seaside hotels keep springing up. For a guide to island hideouts, read on.

To Hvar and Hvar Not

If you want to get your groove on in Croatia, drop anchor in the town of Hvar on the namesake island. Come summer, sailboats and yachts swarm the medieval town renowned for its round-the-clock revelry. But beyond Hvar Town's beach parties and full-moon shindigs, the islands sprawls across some 115 square miles and encompasses a clutch of quiet hamlets, pine-backed pebble beaches and fields of lavender.

Staying There Little Green Bay hotel, just 3 miles outside the hubbub of Hvar Town, hugs a small bucolic cove. It opened in 2016, the passion project of a French interior designer and her brother who previously owned and ran restaurants in Paris; they restored an old farmhouse and turned it into a 15-room, earth-toned retreat. All rooms come with a balcony or terrace overlooking Lozna Bay, and you can loll water-side on giant beanbags or rattan lounge chairs. If you're feeling antsy, the hotel's speedboat will ferry you to nearby Pakleni archipelago to swim, kayak or tuck into a beachfront lunch on one of the tiny islands or zip you over to Hvar Town to mingle with the party people. *From about \$450 a night, littlegreenbay.com*

Getting There Fly into Split airport and take a ferryboat (roughly two hours) or catamaran (one hour) to Hvar island; check the boat schedules at www.jadrolinija.hr. Alternatively, arrange for the hotel's boat to pick you up from Split.

Get Sporty on Brač

Among the largest of the Dalmatian islands and closest to the mainland, Brač is home to Zlatni Rat, one of Croatia's rare sandy beaches. Popular with windsurfers, Zlatni Rat also accommodates all manner of beach toys, from water skis to banana boats. The beach anchors one of the island's biggest towns, Bol, home to a number of medieval sites and art-filled churches, as well as unexceptional hotels.

Staying There Hotel Lemongarden, which

opened two summers ago, perked up the sleepy fishing village of Sutivan, on the other side of the island from Bol. Guests stay in one of a trio of 300-year-old stone buildings, including a 16th-century Renaissance mansion, that surround a garden draped in bougainvillea. All 35 rooms of the hotel are decked out with handcrafted wood furnishings, Brač marble floors and designer touches like Murano chandeliers. The property's restaurant takes a rather formal approach to local fare, with dishes like rack of lamb coated in Dalmatian spices and grilled Adriatic tuna with onion marmalade. There's a wellness pavilion (for massages or a shvitz in a cedar sauna), a swimming pool and, farther afield, a private beach, accessible by one of the hotel's complimentary bikes or the golf cart shuttle service. Guests in the mood for a field trip can hike up Vidova Gora, the tallest peak of Brač, affording panoramic vistas of neighboring islands. *From about \$340 a night, lemongardenhotel.com*

Getting There A 50-minute ferry ride from the Split harbor will deliver you to the town of Supetar. From there, you can arrange for a private transfer to Hotel Lemongarden. Or book a direct transfer from Split via the hotel's speedboat.

Long-Lost Losinj

Largely off the radar these days, 29-square-mile Losinj sits on the northern stretch of Croatia's coastline in the Kvarner Gulf. Long ago, the Austro-Hungarian elite frequented the island, drawn by its agreeable microclimate and a profusion of exotic plants brought over in the 19th century by sea captains from their worldwide travels.

Staying There Opened in 2015, Boutique Hotel Alhambra has brought a whiff of the Habsburg heyday back to the island. Overlooking the seaside promenade of Cikat Bay and a forest of ancient Aleppo

PHOTO: ASSAF PINCHUK



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CHECK IN

BROWN BEACH HOUSE CROATIA and HOTEL LEMONGARDEN, CRO

On the Coast, Stunning Pools and a Mediterranean M

By ANJA MUTIC

Before a tourism surge elevated Croatia to the top rungs of European beach destinations, hotels along the Dalmatian coast had lingering whiffs of socialism in their dusty design and no-frills vibes. Now, two boutique waterfront properties showcase wow-worthy swimming pools: the chic Brown Beach House Croatia in a repurposed tobacco warehouse in the ancient town of Trogir and the stunning Hotel Lemongarden in a sleepy fishing village on Brac Island.

Hotel Lemongarden

Rates

From 300 euros (high season), about \$370.

Basics

When the hotel's Austrian owners visited Sutivan 15 years ago, they swooned over this tranquil fishing village on Brac Island. Illic Dvor, a Renaissance mansion from 1505, was the first building they bought and renovated. Over the years, they restored two nearby buildings that also had long histories, the seafront-facing Vesna and the tucked-away Definis with its stone terraces and passageways. What steals the show is the swimming pool lined with tall palm trees and fragrant gardens with roses, bougainvillea and hibiscus. The 23 suites and 12 rooms, many with private terraces overlooking the garden or the sea, showcase wood furniture by island craftsmen and floors made of renowned Brac marble. Designer finishes like Murano chandeliers and silk fabrics and carpets by Missoni and Paul Smith, together with bold flashes of color inspired by local herbs, give the décor a decidedly Mediterranean mood.

Location

The hotel is on the car-free waterfront of Sutivan on the northwest coast of Brac, a short ferry ride from Split.

The Room

I booked a maisonette but got upgraded to a duplex suite, with a coral and sea theme reflected in the color of the carpets and furniture. The marble-floored living room had two windows facing the Adriatic Sea. The seafront-facing bedroom had an armchair, a king-size bed and a walk-in closet stocked with beach towels. A cozy attic bedroom had its own walk-in closet and a bathroom.

The Bathroom

Both bathrooms were clad in wood and marble. The downstairs one had a roomy shower with a Naturals hair and body wash dispenser, a bidet and, surprisingly, a urinal. The upstairs bathroom had a tub, a shower and a two-sink counter.

Amenities

In the living room, a minibar was stocked



ABOVE, ASSAF PINCHUK; BELOW, CH



From top: the pool at Beach House Croatia on the Dalmatian coast at Hotel Lemongarden in a sleepy fishing village on the island of Brac.

Hotel Lemongarden, Peric a Kala 1, Sutivan, lemongardenhotel.com

Brown Beach House | Put Gradine 66, Trogir, brownhotels.com/cr

with snacks and drinks. Wi-Fi was free but spotty. The hotel's private pine-shaded beach was a 10-minute bike or golf cart ride away (both complimentary).

Dining

The rates included breakfast and dinner, served at the seafront restaurant and a few tables on the edge of the sea. Breakfast was all made to order; freshly baked croissants hold you over until food arrives. The four-course dinner showcased Mediterranean classics with a contemporary twist. Vegetables come from the hotel's organic farm above Sutivan, and the seafood picked from the fishermen's morning catch. The lounge bar served a great white wine spritzer with lemons and herbs from the hotel's garden.

The Bottom Line

An island standout etched into the fabric of

a Dalmatian fishing village, this ancient compound blends heritage with luxury but with a slight bend toward kitsch.

Brown Beach House Croatia

Rates

From 250 euros (high season), about \$308.

Basics

Riding the wave of small boutique hotel openings on the Dalmatian coast, Brown Hotels opened Brown Beach House Croatia in 2016, the group's first venture outside Israel. Chic and playful, it features 42 rooms and suites on three floors of a former tobacco warehouse inside a white-stone building with green shutters. Though the beach across the road is a pretty fab affair (with a full bar, sun chairs and a D.J. setup) — and

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