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Croatia summer holidays guide: villas

How to book the best Croatian self-catering holiday, with advice on great villas and houses, our expert's favourite properties, and the best booking agents and tour operators. By Telegraph Travel's Croatia expert, Jane Foster

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The seaside resort of Opatija has some beautiful villas.
AP



Jane Foster
Destination expert

Jane Foster is a travel writer based in Athens and Dubrovnik. She has written guidebooks on the Balkans, Croatia, and Greece and writes for various UK and US newspapers. She has a degree in Architecture and speaks English, Italian, Croatian and Greek.

An interesting option, and a sensible one for families, is renting a villa. Some of Croatia's most beautiful properties are up in inland Istria, where many old stone farmhouses have been carefully restored and tastefully furnished to make comfortable holiday homes set in gardens with swimming pools.

Overlooking the Kvarner Gulf, tiny **Lovran**, a neighbour to the fin-de-siècle seaside resort of **Opatija**, is known for its Vienna Secession villas set in lush gardens giving on to the seafront promenade.

Down in Dalmatia, the villa rentals market is slightly less developed, but catching up fast. Here, villas are less likely to have swimming pools, the basic premise being that any normal person would rather swim in the sea. Nonetheless, in **Dubrovnik** and on the island of **Hvar**, you'll find Croatia's most expensive and sought-after villas.



Under Dubrovnik's red roofs are some of Croatia's most sought after villas.
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The further you get from the popular tourist destinations, the more authentic and less expensive villas tend to be. Holiday properties are normally rented on a weekly basis (Sat–Sat) and come with a fully-equipped kitchen, with bed linen and towels provided. Their owners are normally more than happy to offer recommendations for things to do and see in the area, as well as places to eat. The more upmarket villas provide extras such as a welcome hamper of basic provisions and a bottle of wine, and some can supply a maid, chef or babysitter, and arrange boat rental, massage and guided tours.

Tour operators and booking agents offering villas in Croatia



Villas Poli Svetega Antona combine pretty, comfortable bedrooms in simple traditional style with a shared pool and vineyard setting. AP

Croatian Villa Holidays (01494 671359; croatianvillaholidays.com) is a long-standing specialist of some 30 years offering apartments and villas.

Croatian Villas (0208 888 6655; croatianvillas.com) offers villas close to Dubrovnik and in the Istria region, many with private pools.

James Villa Holidays (0800 074 0122; jamesvillas.co.uk) features properties overlooking the sea and on the islands, including five on Hvar.

i-escape (i-escape.com) offers a select choice of private villas and small hotels, including several properties in Croatia.

Vintage Travel (01954 261431; vintagetravel.co.uk) has a selection of villas with pools in Istria.

Local companies offering luxury villas in Istria and Dalmatia include **Exclusive Travel Croatia** (exclusivetravelcroatia.com) and **Luxury Croatian Villas** (luxurycroatianvillas.com). Also **Villas of Croatia** (00385 99 2673 115; villasofcroatia.com) which has nine luxurious villas in Dalmatia on its books.

Biggest direct booking agencies include HomeAway.co.uk which handles over 45,000 properties in Croatia, and holidaylettings.co.uk, with around 14,000 apartments and villas. See also ownersdirect.co.uk and villarenters.com.

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