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Top 10 Romantic Hideaways

Croatian intensity & alpine America

By Ethan Gelber

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Dalmatian Coast, Croatia

The 250 miles of glittering Dalmatian coast are not yet fully back on the world's tourism-radar after so many years of conflict in the region. What a shame for the world, but what a bonus for a pair of heart-set lovebirds looking to fly the coop. There are few coastal stretches in Europe more rapturous than the reaching hills behind the ancient, contemplative, and historic cities of Zadar, Sibenik, Trogir, Split, and Dubrovnik. Offshore brood the diffident but appealing (and no less historic) Adriatic islands of Brac, Hvar, Korùla, and Vis. From the Medieval walled city of Dubrovnik, cosset yourselves with a cultural road trip—by car or by bicycle—that will unclothe a land as intense as it is enthralling. Detour to the island haunches, or up the stunning high-walled Neretva Valley to sobering, war-scarred Mostar (of destroyed-bridge fame), and perhaps even to Sarajevo. Between Trogir and Split, try the "Road of Castles" and take in some of the many vineyards ramping up the windswept lower slopes of the Dinaric Alps.



Dubrovnik's ancient, protective walls. (Ethan Gelber)

Eureka Springs, Arkansas

An alpine town in the Ozark Mountains? Yes, it is possible: all the year-round hot chocolate and mountain comforts that vacationing hand-holders could ever desire, all hidden in the American heartland. Eureka Springs, Arkansas, is a soft-spoken haven of natural splendor surrounded by an expanse of lakes and rivers known as Eureka's Waterworld. Endless courses of navigable water (Beaver Lake, Table Rock Lake, Kings River, Roaring River, to name but a few) await, but locals claim that one of the most romantic things to do is a 13-mile lethargic float from Beaver Dam down the White River to Beaver Town (and beyond). Let the river dictate your pace, although you're at will to stop for a leg stretch and wander in the woods. Once you're done drifting, head back to the grand old Victorian

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hotels of Eureka's historic downtown, listed as a whole on the National Register of Historic Places, to enjoy the curious mix of New Orleans and Switzerland deep in America's heart.

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Ethan Gelber, a freelance travel writer based in New York City, most appreciates the world from the saddle of his bicycle.

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