



**Left:** Porto Timoni beach in Corfu, Greece

As a brand, Virgin is renowned for not following a conventional path, and this also filters down to Virgin Voyages, the cruising arm of the company. Its newest ship, *Resilient Lady* — which sails along the Adriatic Coast to popular Croatian port towns, through Montenegro, then rounding off at a famous Greek island — is the perfect way to experience this beautiful part of the world, along with all that the ship has to offer. From relaxing in hammocks on your Sea Terrace cabin balcony to a choice of over 20 restaurants, and from a tattoo studio to a plethora of nightlife, it's clear Virgin has gone out of its way to create an extraordinary cruising experience. Oh, and it's exclusively adult, too — so all that's left to do is hop on board, relax and experience a world of adventure and excitement.

# Greek gems

From *Game of Thrones* destinations to dramatic mountainous backdrops, some of the best ports along the Adriatic coast can be explored with Virgin Voyages, says Rebecca Hall

# &

IMAGE: ALAMY

# Adriatic adventures



ATHENS

Greece's capital is a 30- to 40-minute taxi ride from the cruise port of Piraeus. Once you set foot in Athens, you can marvel at the ancient wonder that is the Parthenon, wander the cobbled streets of the Plaka neighborhood, experience the hourly Changing of the Guard outside the Parliament Building in Syntagma Square and taste its world-famous cuisine. The National Gardens, a short walk away from Parliament, is a peaceful respite of 38 acres of parkland with a small petting zoo, lakes, peacocks, parakeets and a couple of cafes to relax in as you sip your ubiquitous Greek frappe. If you've got time, a 10-minute drive from the city centre will take you to Mount Hymettus, a gorgeous spot with plenty of walks and hikes among nature. Hidden in its pine-clad depths are some beautiful remains of 11th-century Byzantine monasteries. With more time, head along the Athens Riviera to visit the Temple of Poseidon, the Ancient Greek temple on Cape Sounion with commanding views across the landscape and sea, the spot where myth maintains that Aegeus, King of Athens, fell to his death.

ITINERARY

- Day 1

Piraeus (Athens), Greece
- Day 2

At sea
- Day 3

Dubrovnik, Croatia
- Day 4

Split, Croatia
- Day 5

Kotor, Montenegro
- Day 6

Corfu, Greece
- Day 7

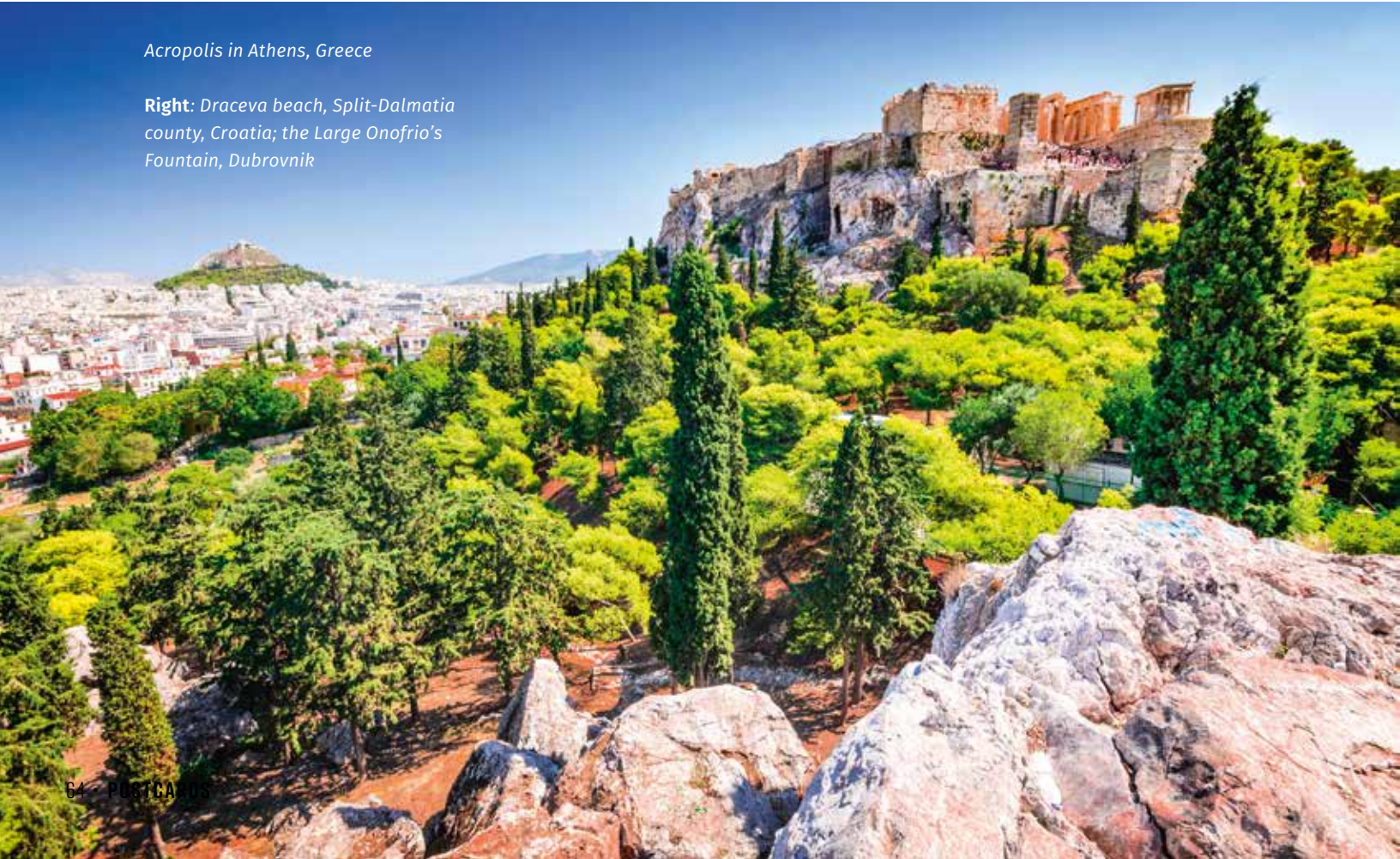
At sea
- Day 8

Piraeus (Athens), Greece



Acropolis in Athens, Greece

Right: Draceva beach, Split-Dalmatia county, Croatia; the Large Onofrio's Fountain, Dubrovnik



DUBROVNIK

Referred to as the unofficial capital of Croatia's Dalmatian Coast, it's easy to see why the fictitious exterior of King's Landing from *Game of Thrones* was set here. A fishing village turned fortified port, merchants and seafarers have passed through Dubrovnik since the seventh century. For those who are keen to explore on foot, be sure to pack sturdy shoes as no visit here is complete without a walk around its City Walls — Dubrovnik's defining feature.

The three main entrance gates, Pile, Ploce and Buža, all had drawbridges that back in the day were raised at sunset when the doors to the town behind the castle walls locked.

It's a right of passage to spend time in the Old Town and castle walls of this city. Don't miss the 15th-century Large Onofrio's Fountain — with its 16 stone carved masks and statue of a dog — which provides locals with potable spring water. Dubrovnik can get very busy, especially during peak season, so for a more relaxing experience, head to the six Elaphiti islands by boat where you can swim and explore lesser-known caves, visit small churches, a botanical garden and wineries.

SPLIT

If you want to relax on the beach, tuck into delicious seafood or explore UNESCO World Heritage Sites, then Croatia's second largest city is for you. Lovers of ancient architecture will be in awe of the UNESCO-listed Diocletian's Palace on the harbour. Built in the late third-/early-fourth century, it's one of the world's most impressive Roman monuments outside of Italy. Under the arched cellared entrance, traders tout their wares of locally made goods in what was once the palace's sewer.

More adventurous travellers can explore the Dalmatian Hinterland — inland from Split — on a half-day all-terrain vehicle (ATV) tour, with a guide who'll help you understand the local flora and fauna and point out otherwise inaccessible trails. Nature fans will love trekking in Krka National Park, about an hour north of the city, where guests can hike at leisure and swim in pools made from waterfalls. One of the most popular day trips from Split is the Blue Cave and Vis Island boat tour. Admire the cobalt oasis conjured up by the natural wonder of the cave, then relax in the small fishing and wine-growing island of Vis — inhabited since around 3000 BCE and now becoming more popular as a tourist destination due to its pristine beaches.





## TOP EXPERIENCES ON RESILIENT LADY

### 1 Enjoy long port times

Virgin Voyages encourages its Sailors — which is how the passengers are described — to really explore and get a feel for a place, valuing quality over quantity. Therefore, minimum time in port is usually eight hours, sometimes even overnight, giving guests the opportunity to explore during the day and experience the local nightlife at any late-night stop.

### 2 Go behind the scenes

Ever wondered how a ship is kept running so smoothly? Find out on a 'Behind the Scenes' tour of the inner workings of the vessel. You'll get to go backstage and visit the costume/dressing area, the galleys of all restaurants, the often overlooked but fascinating engine room, and the pièce de résistance, the bridge, to speak with senior crew and see the navigation instruments. The tour costs \$275, but is worth it to gain a different perspective of life at sea. Book early as tickets for the tour sell out quickly.







**Clockwise from top left:** *Virgin Voyages* terminal; Aquatic Pool Club; karaoke on board; the test kitchen; Pink Agave restaurant

**Previous pages:** *The Mega RockStar Massive Suite*

IMAGES: VIRGIN VOYAGES

### 3 Eat to your heart's content

When it comes to onboard cuisine, the Virgin way is to offer up a choice of over 20 restaurants, with menus curated by world-class chefs. Are you a fan of Italian food? Head to Extra Virgin restaurant for a plate of its delicious antipasti and handmade pastas. Want to go for something Asian-inspired? Then Gunbae has you covered — this Korean barbecue joint at sea offers a great selection of vegetables, seafood and meats. And, of course, there's just about everything in between; from a multi-outlet eatery with burgers, all-day breakfasts and salads to the pastrami bar, you'll be spoilt for choice. Some restaurants on board offer time slots easily booked through your downloaded Virgin App.

### 4 Get techie with it

Those who are into tech won't be disappointed on this voyage. With each cabin assigned its own tablet, you can control mood lighting, curtain closure and TV controls all from one handy device. And, with reliable wifi as well as TV and film choices rivaling that of in-flight entertainment, having a night in just got better.

### 5 Relax in your hammock

There aren't many cruise companies that offer a hammock on their balconied cabins — but it's the perfect way to relax and forget troubles during days at sea. It's also the ideal romantic place to watch the sun set while sipping a glass of chilled Champagne.

### 6 Soak up the nightlife

The line-up of entertainment and nightlife activities on *Resilient Lady* is on another level. Firstly, there's the list of productions produced specifically for the ship, including the likes of *Persephone* (a rock'n'roll retelling of the Greek myth), *Mind Mangler: Member of the Tragic Circle* and *Lola's Library*. Then there's The Manor the two-level epic nightclub at sea with a wealth of themed nights and carefully curated supper clubs, which combine cabaret with delectable cuisine. Whether you want to dance the night away or sign up for a spot of stargazing, or simply sit back and enjoy a world-class show, the organizers behind the voyage's entertainment include the likes of North American playwright Randy Weiner and Canadian artist collective The 7 Fingers.





**Left:** Kotor's Stari Grad (Old Town) and the Bay of Kotor, Montenegro

## KOTOR

Although growing in popularity, Montenegro still remains a lesser-visited destination. The UNESCO-listed Kotor on the country's Adriatic coast is a must-see — for breathtaking views, stand on your balcony while the ship is pulling in. Kotor has remnants of ancient Greek and Roman civilizations scattered around its medieval town. Behind the castle walls lie winding streets opening up to smaller squares where you can sit under a plane tree and sip a coffee. There's even a cat museum to celebrate the many felines that roam Kotor's streets. It's also worth taking a 40-minute boat trip to the islet of St George — with its 12th-century Benedictine Monastery and the man-made islet next to it, Our Lady of the Rocks. Keep your camera handy to photograph the stunning backdrop of the surrounding Orjen and Lovcen mountains and the 13th-century fishing village of Perast — on the mainland just opposite. Back in Kotor, walk the 3.1 miles around the Old Town castle walls — be careful as the path can be rough. From 918 feet above sea level, gain a new perspective of this ancient city.

## CORFU

The queen of the Ionian Sea, Corfu is a lushly green Greek island. It's known for its swathes of golden beaches — but look beyond the sands and you'll find a rich tapestry of history and culture. Like most of the Ionian Islands, Corfu has a strong Venetian influence. That's evident in its Old Town, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Centre. A visit to the Liston — an old arcade with influences from Italy and Paris — is a must. Duck into a cafe here to while away an hour or two, just as locals do, then head out to the Old Fortress. On a small island near the Old Town's esplanade, it's surrounded by sea but accessible via a bridge. The fortress's moat is still used to dock fishing boats, and you'll find its bastions, artillery, citadel and church intact. A half-hour drive away, in the village of Gastouri, is a summer palace built by Empress Elisabeth of Austria in 1891. She named it Achilleion to honour her favourite mythical hero, Achilles, a recurring figure throughout the three-storey building, notably the *Dying Achilles* statue in the gardens, which also feature fountains and gorgeous views across to the Old Town. □



## BOOK IT NOW

Book this Virgin Voyages itinerary and discover the Mediterranean in luxurious style on the seven-night, round-trip Adriatic Sea & Greek Gems sailing. With late departures and overnights on almost every exclusively adult trip, your day extends even longer. Book a Mega RockStar Suite for complimentary access to the spa and access to the rooftop members-only sundeck. *Resilient Lady* departs Athens, Greece, on July 7, 2024.



## CALL US

Contact our agency to book your cruise vacation.