

Sea Kayaking along Croatia's Dalmatian Coast

Elaphiti Islands, Croatia

June 14- June 21, 2026



Features

- Village and Island Town Cultural Interaction
- Enjoy Adriatic Culinary Endeavors
- Coastal, and Island Exploration
- Weather Assessment and Passage Planning
- Paddle Along Limestone Cliffs and Lush Adriatic Islands
- Develop Sea Kayak Technical Skills
- Swim and Explore Limestone Reefs and 'Green Caves'
- 5-8 hours a day on the water (we take breaks!)
- 50-55 miles of kayaking

Cost: \$3,195 (includes pre/post trip lodging)

Minimum Age: 18

Historic Age Range: 19-74

Max group size: 12 Participants

1-2 NOLS Instructors

1 Croatian Partner

Trip Description

This trip is set among the Elaphiti Island Archipelago just north of Dubrovnik, Croatia. Traveling the coastline by sea kayak offers a beautiful lens through which to explore the culturally and historically rich region of southern Croatia. The archipelago includes many islands, each with its own historical significance and charm. Along with a tour through time, you will have opportunities to indulge in traditional Adriatic culinary specialties that our island hosts will occasionally prepare for us. As we paddle our way through the archipelago, you will further develop your ocean awareness, technical paddling skills, and sea kayak touring expedition strategies.

On most evenings we will settle into a new guesthouse or hotel on a different island or oceanside village. These establishments could be converted, old stone buildings or somewhat modern hotels. Amenities vary but they are all comfortable. Most places offer double occupancy rooms with double or twin beds. Some places that we stay will have shared bathrooms while others have bathrooms en-suite.

Weather will likely provide challenges and learning opportunities, as there are a variety of regional wind patterns that can settle in. Paying close attention to weather forecasts, and adapting our daily plans accordingly, will play a strong role in this trip.

We aim to have ample time for exploring the islands and towns by foot. The islands that we stay on have a combination of old settlements and a taste of modern tourism. Many areas feel wild and undeveloped but are in fact abandoned olive farms simply neglected and overgrown. We will talk about the history of these areas to give context to some of your independent wanderings.

This trip begins and ends just south of Dubrovnik, Croatia in Mlini. Mlini is a great place to ease into the Croatian coastal vibe. We highly recommend spending some time in Dubrovnik before the trip, but one day is plenty for most to explore the Old Town on your own. Arriving early can also help avoid travel snafus or luggage challenges.

We will meet for a short orientation meeting and some local flavors of wine and cheese at 5:00 pm on the first night. We will discuss the general plan for the week, details for the following days, and chat about gear. After the meeting, you will be on your own for dinner that night.

The next day after breakfast we will transfer via ferry to the island of Lopud. You'll only bring your kayaking gear for the week with you and other luggage can be left behind to be reclaimed on the last night. Once arriving in Lopud, the group will get checked into local accommodations and then spend some time doing kayak orientation and basic kayaking skills. If time allows, there are many hiking or exploration options near the village as well.

Our first travel day will arrive the following morning where we will paddle the kayaks back to mainland and along a sparsely inhabited coast to the coastal village of Slano. This is a beautiful paddle with snorkeling options and a lunch stop at a beachfront restaurant.

The next several days will be spent paddling and hiking amongst the islands in the Elaphiti chain. Limestone cliffs and craggy shorelines make up these islands but they are landscaped with pine trees or overgrown olive farms. This written human history of this area dates back over 700 years with fishing and agriculture being the mainstays of life.

The final paddle of the trip is a hallmark of the trip. It is a long day that you have been building up to but the reward is outstanding. Leaving Kalamata island, the group will paddle south and past the famous walls of Old Town Dubrovnik. This landmark has stood since ~ 1272 and has become an icon of the Adriatic coast. Once past the main city you will continue south to Mlini and end the trip on a small beach in front of our original guesthouse.

Participants should bring an extra measure of flexibility, good cheer and "Expedition Behavior" to help our sea kayak expedition succeed. As with all expeditions, there may be minor logistical wrinkles or plan change due to weather. All great ocean travelers learn to adapt to the challenges that come their way and embrace adversity with a positive attitude!

Alumni trips are more relaxed than a typical course; however, it is not a vacation or a guided trip. Trips are self-reliant in remote areas where evacuation to medical facilities can take several days. During the trip, you will stay in guesthouses, help prepare occasional group meals, and care for yourself and others. The expedition emphasizes hands-on learning and application of new skills.

Trip Environment

Spring and early summer in Croatia is a beautiful season— the days are lengthening, the weather is not yet too hot, and the colors of the landscape catch an onlooker's eye. We will likely experience the typical Maestrale or consistent diurnal breeze as well as some challenging winds produced by what is known as the Bora and Jugo wind patterns. The Bora and Jugo are typically winter wind patterns that can blow at any time of the year, but are at generally slower speeds during the summer. Average high temperatures are in the low to mid 70's degrees F, while the average lows fall into the 50's F. This is

typically a dynamic time of year to paddle throughout the islands; occasional rain showers are to be expected, and typical early summer water temperature is in the 60's F.

NOLS Staff

Our staff are employees of NOLS and trained and certified accordingly. This means they maintain certifications in wilderness medicine and are trained to NOLS' high standards in risk management. They are senior staff at NOLS who have spent years working and teaching in backcountry environments all over the world. Additionally, our staff specialize in bringing together groups of strangers and building the group culture and camaraderie that makes NOLS trips great.

On this trip we will paddle and work with a local Croatian Guide. NOLS has been partnering with this Croatian company for many years to provide quality kayaks, manage some of the logistics, and provide a local to travel with us.

A Day in the Life

Most days we will wake up and eat breakfast around 7:30 a.m. After breakfast, we will shuttle personal gear and boats down to our launch area, and after a weather assessment, get on the water. Paddling will be at a casual pace and typically consist of 5-8 hours of kayaking. During the day we will stop along the way for a group lunch that will typically consist of snack foods, fruits, and/or sandwiches.

Many days we will have opportunities to stop and explore an area while we paddle along the stunning coastline of the islands. The weather will dictate our options more than any other variable.

After our day's paddle, we will store our boats for the evening, get checked into our lodging and clean up a bit. Typically, we will have time to explore our new surroundings and enjoy an ice cream (very popular in Croatia) or a drink before dinner. Dinner will occasionally be family style as we all sit down together to enjoy local cuisine.

There will be no structured evening program, but instructors will present the plan for the next day, and folks often enjoy socializing, walking into town or playing games with each other.

Difficulty Scale

This trip is rated 3 out of 5 on our difficulty scale.



We use a difficulty scale to help participants evaluate if a trip is right for them. It considers probable weather conditions, physicality of activities, and food and accommodations. You don't need to be a honed athlete, but pre-trip work to improve your strength, flexibility and endurance, is highly encouraged to improve your enjoyment of the place. If you have specific questions regarding physical preparation and your readiness please reach out to the Alumni Trips Department.

Food on the trip

There will be plenty of food provided on the trip for everyone. We are happy to ensure that folks who have reasonable dietary needs and/or preferences are well taken care of throughout the entire trip. Listing those needs on your registration paperwork is critical for our success here.

If you would like to bring your own snacks along, that is highly encouraged. We all have treats that we enjoy and bringing something special is a great way to keep motivation high and not have to rely on the group's schedule for your munchies.

Curriculum

The skill focus on this trip will be on basic to intermediate kayak strokes. Boat propulsion and control will be the primary areas of skill focus, but there will be time to learn a variety of more advanced strokes. Participants will practice wet-exits and assisted re-entry techniques in a controlled environment and could pursue additional, more complicated skills, such as the Eskimo roll, if desired.

Understanding weather and building travel plans are part of any NOLS trip and while instructors will carry the bulk of the responsibility here, participants can join in as much or little as they desire. This route provides great opportunities to interpret how weather, sea, and land influence group travel.

Alumni trips, though more relaxed than a typical NOLS course, are not full-on vacations or guided trips. They are self-reliant trips through remote areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the trip, you will travel outdoors and care for yourself. The expedition format emphasizes hands-on learning and application of skills in a variety of situations.

About Croatia

After years of sporadic and bitter fighting, Croatia formally declared independence from the Communist state of Yugoslavia in 1991 and in 2009, joined the NATO alliance. The Republic of Croatia has a population of 4.5 million people and the official language is Croatian. However, English is becoming more widely spoken, especially in the tourism industry. The country's utterly impressive transition from being war-torn to being primarily hospitality and tourism-focused has made it a truly worthwhile destination.

The primary islands that comprise the Elaphiti Island Archipelago are Olipa, Sipan, Lopud and Koločep. They are a beautiful string of islands that lay guardian to the ancient city of Dubrovnik. The three inhabited islands of Sipan, Lopud and Koločep, are canvassed in 100-year old pine groves, carol-trees, and olive groves. You can also find gardens of lemon and orange trees throughout. These islands are scattered with ruins of Pre-Romanesque churches, monasteries, and nobleman residences. They have laid claim to many great seafarers and shipbuilding has also played an important role on Koločep during the Republic of Ragusa era.

The origin of Dubrovnik is widely debated by historians and scientists. It was first mentioned in lore as an island providing shelter for refugees and was then founded by Greek sailors; it is an area that has developed throughout the ages. Steeped in maritime trade history with large fleets of merchant ships trading throughout the world, Dubrovnik has always been a significant port and center of commerce. Over the years, it has seen many different periods of reign and controversy, yet it continues to thrive in the modern world with tourism as a primary industry.

Expectations of Participants

The alumni trip atmosphere is more relaxed than a typical NOLS course; however, it is not a guided trip—we call it an educational, participatory vacation. Alumni trips are self-reliant adventures through remote areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the course, you will live outdoors, help to prepare meals and care for yourself. The expedition emphasizes hands-on learning and application of new skills in a variety of situations, and you are expected to take part in the kayaking curriculum.

Unlike our standard expeditions, Alumni trips do allow electronics and alcohol for those that are of legal age in the country of the trip. We believe that these luxuries can add to a course experience and local flavor. Excessive alcohol consumption is not a part of the culture of Alumni trips.

Trip Itinerary (This plan might be reversed due to logistics needs or weather patterns)

June 12	Depending on connections and pre-trip plans, many participants will depart the US on this day.	
June 13	This is a great day to explore Dubrovnik on your own.	Lodging is on your own
June 14	Wine and cheese orientation at 5pm	Lodging in Mlini: provided by NOLS. Dinner on your own, possibly with new friends after wine sampling!
June 15	We will take a ferry to Lopud island to meet our kayak fleet for the week. After arriving, we'll check into our accommodations, have a kayak orientation and maybe some hiking.	Lodging in Lopud Island
June 16	After breakfast we will pack up and launch on our first travel day! We'll stop along the way for lunch at a lovely beachside restaurant. ~ 9.5 miles	Lodging in Slano
June 17	Leaving this morning we will head back to the islands, first for a picnic lunch and then to Sipan island for the next 2 days. ~ 8 miles	Lodging in Sipanska Luka
June 18	Layover day on with some day paddling or skill development possible. There is also outstanding hiking and the possibility for a vineyard tour on the island.	Lodging in Sipanska Luka

June 19	With luck, we will paddle the outside of the islands today heading back to Lopud. ~7 miles	Lodging in Lopud
June 20	This is a short paddle day as we move to the next island in the chain, Kalamata, but there is lots of coast to explore along the way. Optional afternoon hikes are often a highlight on Kalamata. ~ 6 miles	Lodging on Kalamata
June 21	We will finish the trip with our longest travel day! This day will have us cross to the mainland and paddle past old town Dubrovnik on our way back to Mlini. It is a long day on the water and a highpoint of the trip. ~ 15 miles	Lodging and dinner in Mlini.
June 22	Return home or travel onward on your own.	Breakfast included with hotel.

Travel Logistics

Arriving into Dubrovnik International Airport (Cilipi Airport)

Multiple airlines provide service to Dubrovnik, Croatia connecting through several major European cities.

To get to the lodging you have a couple of options:

Option 1:

Take a taxi or an Uber from the airport to the hotel. It should take about 15-20 minutes for a taxi ride and cost less than 40 Euros.

Option 2:

There is a public bus stop in Srebreno (right next to Mlini). This can be a great way to get from either Dubrovnik or the airport to the vicinity of the hotel. It is a short walk from the bus stop to the hotel.

[Libertas Dubrovnik](#) operates the bus system and you will use the East Suburban Timetable to navigate this system if you choose to do so. The bus system in this area works quite well and is a reliable source of transportation but don't count on the bus driver speaking much English.

Lodging

NOLS provides single-gender paired lodging starting on the first night of the trip and running through the last. We will start and end at a small villa in Mlini. Reservations have been made for these nights.

The address of our lodging for before and after the trip is:

[Villa Carmen](#)
 Setaliste Marka Marojice 18
[Mlini Zupa dubrovacka, 20207](#)
[Croatia](#)
 +385 98 166 3161
vivadoinfo@gmail.com

On trip lodging:

It is important to know that Croatia has many lodging arrangements that are considered European double beds. These are typically 2 single beds that are pushed or fixed together. The beds will have independent sheets and mattresses, but are right next to each other. This will be a common style of lodging on the trip and participants should expect to share a space like this with a same-gender person who is on the trip if traveling solo. Double beds with shared sheets will often be available for couples traveling together but will not be needed for anyone not requesting that sleeping arrangement. While on the trip, flexibility is greatly appreciated as securing lodging for the trip in the bed arrangements that we desire is often the hardest part for NOLS.

Storage of Personal Belongings

Luggage that you do not want to bring with you kayaking can be left behind in secure storage at our hotel. We try to minimize the amount of things that we bring with us in kayaks.

Currency

Croatia converted to the Euro as of January 1, 2023.

Euros are easy to get in ATM's throughout most of the trip as cash is commonly used on the islands. Credit cards are more and more ubiquitous but it would be smart to have a small amount (\$50-100) of Euros with you as well.

ATM's will often offer you an exchange rate, this rate will be substantially worse than the current rate, do not accept it. Choose to "Deny the Rate", you will still be able to proceed with the transaction and your bank will define the rate at the current exchange.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance is worth exploring in case unforeseen events cause you to change your plans or if NOLS has to cancel a trip for any reason. Check with your personal insurance carrier and credit card to understand what you already might have or check out cat70.com for a wide variety of options.

Cancellation and Transfer Policy

For your reference, here is the [Alumni Trips Cancellation and Transfer Policy](#). When enrolling on a trip, you will need to agree to this policy.

Carbon Footprint and Offset

Current estimates are that the Travel Industry accounts for ~8% of global emissions. This percentage includes everything from transportation to accommodation and shopping. NOLS recognizes that our business contributes to this problem but we do not have a comprehensive strategy at this point.

If you would like to offset part or all of the carbon emissions related to your Alumni trip, we recommend [South Pole](#). [Their calculator](#) can help easily calculate your footprint and choose a project to contribute to. [Here is a link to their calculator.](#)

Tipping

Tipping is standard in Croatian culture. In restaurants 10% is normal. If you choose to tip our local guide, \$50-100 Euros per person would be a reasonable budget for this expense.

While tipping is common in the outdoor guiding culture, your NOLS Instructors are not driven to excellence by tips but rather a love for taking people outdoors. You are welcome to tip the Instructors if you choose, but many instructors are honored by [a donation in their name to the NOLS Annual Fund](#) which supports scholarships for future NOLS students.

Immunizations / Vaccinations / Travel medications

International travel poses special health considerations. NOLS strongly advises that all participants traveling to international locations carefully consider what vaccinations or inoculations are required, recommended, or suggested for their specific travel itinerary. Consulting with a physician, travel medicine specialist, or other healthcare professional is strongly advised.

Visa / Passport - Attention International European travelers - **Must read... Action Required**

If your travels have you **entering or transiting (passing through or laying over in) the UK**, you will need to apply for and have an approved Electronic Travel Authorization (ETA) to continue to your destination.

This [article](#) explains that starting Jan 8, 2025, US and Canadian citizens will need to apply for the ETA to enter the UK.

Here's [the link](#) for how to apply.

As well, for NOLS International Alumni trips, your **passport must be valid for a minimum of 6 months post trip**. For example, if your trip in Europe concludes on July 30, 2025, your passport must be valid through January 30, 2026.

At some point in the future (July 2025?) Europe (EU) will be requiring a travel authorization for most countries that are visa-exempt. This includes USA citizens. Once this system goes into effect, you will need to apply using this new system before traveling and pay a small fee for the authorization.

[You can read about this new program, check your requirements, and view the most up to date expected implementation date here.](#)

Electricity stuff

Every night there will be electricity available at our lodging. You will need a Type F adapter in order to plug your things into the plugs at the lodgings.

Trip Registration

The best way to register is through the trip information page on the [nols.edu](#) website. A non-refundable deposit secures your spot on the trip. If any issues arise, please call the NOLS Alumni Department at (800) 332-4280. Your enrollment is complete with receipt of your full tuition and your completed application forms; these are **due 60 days before the start of your trip**.

All participants are required to submit registration materials, including a medical form. These forms highlight the intersection of your trip's anticipated physical rigor and your current health and fitness status while also providing NOLS information about things like your dietary needs.

NOLS is not responsible for additional costs incurred by late arrivals or evacuations. Those expenses are the responsibility of trip participants and we recommend purchasing travel insurance to mitigate the impact of unforeseen circumstances.

Do not book travel greater than 60 days before the start of the trip unless you have confirmed with NOLS that the trip will run. On rare occasions, we do cancel trips due to low enrollment.

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Recommended Dubrovnik Activities:

If you are able to arrive early for the trip, here are some recommended activities for the Dubrovnik area:

- Dubrovnik City Walls - great walk up on top of the walls that surround the Old Town.
- Maritime Museum - if you are a maritime buff, you might really enjoy this space.
- Walk the Placa - this is the main street in Old Town and surrounded by restaurants and historic buildings. Specifically, the National Archives and a number of cathedrals are worth the visit.
- [The Dubrovnik Card](#) is a great deal if you are spending a day seeing the sights, it will get you into all of the most famous attractions with a fair amount of savings.

Eat Ice Cream (gelato)! Dubrovnik has a plethora of great gelato shops with a huge variety of flavors.

Equipment List

Group Gear provided by NOLS			
Kayaks, both doubles and singles	Dry bags for your personal gear	Spray/Paddle Jackets	PFD's (Personal flotation device)
Paddles	Spray Skirts	Local Charts	First Aid kits

Upper Body Clothing	
Equipment	Notes
1-2 Base layers (light or midweight)	Wool or synthetic
Top layer (fleece jacket, or puffy)	Medium weight fleece or a light-weight puffy layer
Long sleeve shirt	Important for sun protection, synthetic or wool

Wind shirt (optional)	A lightweight, breathable, durable nylon wind shell, in either pullover or parka style
Rain jacket (optional)	A sturdy, waterproof jacket with a hood. Both coated nylon and breathable fabrics such as Gore-Tex® are acceptable
T-shirt (1-2)	A lightweight synthetic or merino wool t-shirt
Sports Bra (2-3)	Synthetic or wool sports bra/top
Warm Hat	Synthetic or wool
Sun hat	Baseball cap or full brim
Lower Body Clothing	
Equipment	Notes
Base layer (light or midweight)	Wool or synthetic
Casual Pants	Lightweight pants or jeans for around town
Rain Pants (optional)	It does commonly rain in this area
Hiking shorts	Nylon, quick dry shorts
Bathing Suit	This can also be paddled in, some folks like swimming tights
Underwear (2-3 pairs)	Wear what's comfortable; cotton, silk, or synthetics are fine
Footwear	
Equipment	Notes
Approach or Hiking Shoes	You will need a sturdy pair of shoes to hike in. Consider trail hiking shoes or approach shoes for something lighter than traditional boots.
Water shoe	Something with a closed toe to paddle in. Neoprene boots or old tennis shoes are great.
Sandals (optional)	Many people enjoy having flip flops around town
Socks (1-3 pairs)	½ crew to crew length socks for around town.
Miscellaneous Personal Gear	
Equipment	Notes
Small day pack (optional)	Great for town explorations
Water Bottles / bladder	Bottles or bladder with a total capacity of at least 2 Liters
Lip Balm (1-2)	SPF 15 or greater
Sunscreen	SPF 30 or greater
Sunglasses	Good-quality sunglasses, polarized is nice on the water
Headlamp	Not heavily used, but might be handy
Toiletries	Toothbrush, toothpaste, tampons, etc. Travel or trial sizes are enough. Ear plugs and eye covers can be nice

Optional Items	
Paddling Gloves	Some folks like these for sun protection
Book or e-reader	Bring something fun to read
Camera	We would love to see your photos post-trip!
Casual Clothes	Shirt/pants/skirt for dinner or hanging out around town
Pack Towel	Most places have towels, but some folks enjoy having their own
Umbrella	Favored by our instructors to keep the rain off