



Pearl of the Adriatic

Villa Dubrovnik, Dubrovnik, Croatia

A SHORT *vaporetto* or bus trip away from old Dubrovnik, you'll find Villa Dubrovnik, its pristine white façade at elegant odds with its rocky perch and the Adriatic below.

The old town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and was, impressively, a free state from the 14th century up until 1808, thanks in part to more than a mile of defensive walls. The city has since expanded and modern architecture, including that of the hotel, now frames the protected older part.

On paper, it shouldn't work, but Villa's clean lines, Modernist architecture and pared-back bedrooms are a welcome escape from the Mediterranean heat and the older, crowded stone streets.

There are 55 bedrooms, a smattering of spacious suites—the central ones on the third floor are some of the best—and a series of villas, separate from the main building, which offer guests maximum privacy alongside all the benefits of staying in a luxury hotel.

These include a spa—from next year, it will use locally sourced products—and a private beach, where you can enjoy a generous helping of pistachio ice cream from your sunbed.

The onsite Restaurant Pjerin is definitely worth a visit—or even two. It's arguably one of the best in the area—I highly recommend

the scallops—and there's an excellent choice of often-overlooked Croatian wine. *RP Villa Dubrovnik is part of Mytha Hotels—seven five-star hotels across the Mediterranean, including Rome, Capri and Bodrum. Rooms from £220 per night (00385 20 500 300; www.mythahotels.com/villadubrovnik)*

While you're there

• **Take the boat to the islet of Lokrum, directly opposite the hotel and once the holiday home of Austrian nobility. A guide can introduce you to the botanical gardens and monastery as well as the resident peacocks and large rabbits**

• You must walk the length of the old walls, for a spectacular bird's-eye view and to understand the extent of the shelling damage in the 1990s. Go first thing to avoid the midday heat and crowds

• **Blink and you'll miss it—Buza Bar is**

accessed through a tiny hole in the side of the city walls. Its alfresco terraces are often crowded, but the views more than make up for it

• The hotel can organise a walking tour of the old town. Guides are a font of local knowledge, hugely proud of their city and can point out myriad hidden gems and local artisan shops

• **Have a nightcap on the hotel's rooftop bar—it boasts picture-perfect views of the medieval town, illuminated at night, and also serves up moreish small plates**