



Nudist holidays are not for everyone, but more and more couples (and even families) are embracing the “back-to-nature” uninhabitive spirit this type of holiday provides - and Croatia is a good place to experiment...

Story by Jane Foster



socialite Wallace Simpson. The couple bathed naked at Kandarola, a 1.5km-long rock-and-pebble beach, an event that featured in the gossip columns of many newspapers at the time. Edward abdicated in December the same year, but Kandarola, which has ever since also been known as Engleska plaža (English beach), had found its niche. Today it is Rab’s top nudist beach, complete with a bar and two restaurants, and is served by regular taxi-boats from Rab Town through summer.

For the uninitiated, there’s more to naturism than just running around with no clothes on. Europe’s modern nudist movement can be traced back to the late-19th century, when, with the rise in

Since then the concept has grown, and today 37 countries (spanning all five continents) have their own nudist federations, which come under the umbrella of the INF (www.inffni.org). Founded in 1953 and based in Austria, the INF defines naturism as, “A way of life in harmony with nature characterised by the practice of communal nudity, with the intention of encouraging respect for oneself, respect for others and respect for the environment.”

Back to Croatia, which saw the opening of Europe’s first nudist resort, Koversada (www.campingrovinjvrsar.com), on the Istrian coast in 1961. Celebrating its 50th anniversary this

NO JACKET [OR ANY OTHER CLOTHES, FOR THAT MATTER!] REQUIRED

Overlooking the clear blue waters of the Adriatic, Croatia was the first European country to pioneer organised nudism.

It all began in 1934, when Richard Ehrmann from Vienna, who was later to become the first president of the International Nudist Federation (INF), opened a nudist bathing area on Rajska plaža (Paradise beach), a blissful sandy beach giving onto warm shallow water, backed by pinewoods, close to Lopar on the island of Rab.

But it was the wayward British king, Edward VIII, who really drew public attention to Croatia’s burgeoning nudism scene. In August 1936, just a few months after having been crowned, he holidayed on Rab with his fiancé, American divorcee and

industrialisation, northwest European cities were becoming increasingly overcrowded and polluted. Cue the avant-garde intellectuals, who realised that we were losing touch with nature, much to the detriment of both our physical and psychological health. They proposed a return to basics – outdoor activities with plenty of fresh air and sunshine. At the same time, certain doctors were advocating heliotherapy – exposure to sunlight for the treatment of diseases such as tuberculosis, eczema, psoriasis and rheumatism. Before long, naturism had established itself as an alternative lifestyle in countries such as Germany, France and England, with private nudist clubs advocating nudity, and some also encouraging vegetarianism and regular workouts.

summer, Koversada is now one of Europe’s largest nudist resorts, accommodating up to 6000 guests. Set in beautifully landscaped grounds, planted with pinewoods, olive groves and lush Mediterranean shrubs, it encompasses camping sites for a staggering 1700 tents, 119 self-catering apartments, and a row of villas with 215 double en-suite rooms. It has a 5-km coastline made up of rocky coves, pebble beaches, concrete waterside bathing platforms, and one long sandy beach, ideal for children.

For many visitors, the loveliest place to stay at Koversada is the secluded camping site on the small pine wooded island, which is linked to the rest of the complex by a long bridge that extends out over the sea. Facilities throughout are excellent: you can play tennis on

CROATIA



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one of the four clay courts, try your hand at beach volleyball, or hire a paddle boat, canoe or bicycle. There are also smart clean toilets and hot showers, two supermarkets, and five restaurants - the only areas where guests are required to wear clothes.

So how popular is it and who goes? "In 2010, we received 33,000 arrivals, mainly from Germany, Austria, Italy, Slovenia, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic", says Vanja Mohorovi, Marketing Assistant at Koversada. "The majority of guests are over 40 years old and come with their partners, their average stay is nine days". But families with children are very welcome too – there are no age restrictions.

The opening of Koversada coincided with the emergence of Croatia as a tourist destination in the 1960's. During this period, with the rise of the hippy movement in Europe and North America, the back-to-nature philosophy surged again. Flower Power embraced peace, love and the environment, and with it public nakedness seemed like a good idea. Croatia was then part of Yugoslavia, ruled by President Tito (1945-1980), who kept good relations



with both the communist East and the capitalist West. As of 1967, foreigners were free to enter Yugoslavia without visas, unlike the Eastern Bloc, which lay behind the so-called Iron Curtain.

In 1972, Yugoslavia hosted the INF congress at Koversada, and the Yugoslav Tourist Board began

promoting its naturist camps to foreign holidaymakers. In addition, certain beaches were designated as clothing-optional. So you didn't have to stay at an organised naturist resort to get an all-over tan. Still today, along the Croatian coast and on the islands, there are plenty of isolated clothing-optional beaches, marked FKK, which stands for the German Frei Koerper Kultur, or "free body culture", the term used by the early German naturist pioneers.

For example, visitors to the stunning UNESCO-listed medieval walled city of Dubrovnik might bathe naked on the tiny nearby uninhabited island of Lokrum, while those residing in fashionable Hvar Town can head for the pine-scented Pakleni islets. Holidaymakers based in Bol on the island of Bra, close to the amazing Zlatni Rat beach, can walk a further five minutes to indulge in naked swimming off the rocky shore, and people staying in the popular seaside resort of Makarska can hike southeast of town, along the lovely coastal path, to arrive at Nugal, an FKK pebble beach in a sheltered cove backed by sheer cliffs.

And if you want to explore the Croatian coast in the best way possible, aboard a sailing boat, you can also do this with no-clothes-on. Several companies offer one-week 'naked' sailing trips aboard traditional wooden boats, departing either from Opatija in the Kvarner region or from Split in Dalmatia.

Today Croatia has 17 official naturist resorts listed by the INF, many clothing-optional beaches, and an estimated one million people visit the country each year specifically to enjoy this freedom. "Croatia has much to offer with particularly clear water for swimming. It has a number of large naturist resorts with a combination of caravan emplacements, tent pitches and villas and apartments for rental, which makes it ideal for longer stops", says Mick Ayers (Vice-president of the International Naturist Federation). "It also has a long tradition of accepting naturists, so the relaxed attitude to nude sunbathing is one of its greater attractions." ☺



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The Croatian coastline is a dramatic, mountain fringed stretch of coastline studded with 1000's of islands. It's a stark arid region where fishing villages and historic towns cling to a narrow coastal strip rich in figs, olives and subtropical vegetation.

- If it's culture you're after, the Istrian Peninsula will be your highlight - Venetian towns, and sleepy hilltop villages, lush forests – truffles, wines.
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- For pure beauty and enchantment the Dalmatian Coast will be your highlight – the Old Fortress of Dubrovnik and the walls surrounding this Medieval city are truly breathtaking.

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