

**Opatija Tourist Information Centre**  
 Maršala Tita 101  
 Tel. 27 13 10  
**www.opatija-tourism.hr**  
 Open: 08:00 – 15:00,  
 Sat 08:00 – 14:00,  
 Closed Sun.

# Welcome to Opatija

## Opatija in history

Opatija gets its rightful name from an abbey that was established here in the late Middle Ages by Benedictine monks. The Croatian word for abbey is Opatija, and this same abbey was abandoned by the early nineteenth century, although its centre-point, St James's Church (Crkva svetog Jakova), still stands by the seashore today. As people sort shelter across Europe, a civilian settlement grew up around the abbey some time in the sixteenth century - although it wasn't until the nineteenth century that Opatija was discovered as a potential health resort, and it was then that its development and infrastructure really began to expand.

Opatija's history as a tourist destination begins in the 1840's when a merchant from the nearby city of Rijeka, Iginio Scarpa built the Villa Angiolina which served as both a family retreat and a venue for high-society gatherings. With members of the Austro-Hungarian aristocracy included on Scarpa's guest list, the appeal of Opatija as a holiday destination rapidly spread.



Tourists back in the nineteenth-century were not interested in sunbathing, bungee-jumping, and drinking themselves silly. They saw travel as a health-improving activity which took them away from smoky cities and provided them with a dose of fresh sea air. Opatija, with its warm climate and mild sea breezes, was the ideal destination.

Opatija had got its major breakthrough under the rule of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which was expanding its railway networks. Urged on by the advice of top doctors; notably the Austrian laryngologist Leopold Schrötter, who found the local sea air to be an excellent cure for throat complaints, the Southern Railway Company or Südbahn had built a direct line from Vienna to Rijeka. The construction of hotels was next on the agenda which was seen as a major requirement in order to meet the needs of a growing tourist industry. In 1884, the Südbahn had opened Opatija's first sanatorium, the Kvarner which continues to operate today under the name Kvarner Hotel.

Since its early days, Opatija was always seen as an exclusive resort for the horse-and-carriage set and it had soon become popular amongst the Austro-Hungarian royal family. Emperor Franz Josef himself was a regular visitor, and was joined here by his German counterpart Kaiser Wilhelm II in 1894. Franz Ferdinand (the Archduke, not the 80's pop rock band) would venture down to Opatija to indulge in a spot of bird-shooting at nearby Preluk.

With Opatija developing into a kind of Adriatic Monte Carlo, leading cultural figures were drawn here too. Playwright Anton Chekhov, composer Gustav Mahler, Nobel-prize-winning novelist Henryk Sienkiewicz and dancer Isadora Duncan were just some of those who had chosen Opatija as the place to reinvigorate their creative traits.

During the inter-war period, when this part of Croatia was under Italian occupation, Opatija was host to a European Operetta Festival which attracted Franz Lehár and other top composers.

After 1945, Opatija was the favoured resort of Yugoslavia's communist top brass. The resort received a fresh injection of glamour in 1958, with the inauguration of a pop-song festival modelled on that of San Remo in Italy. The Opatija festival is still going strong, although it is nowadays known as Dora and takes the form of a competition to choose Croatia's representative in that year's Eurovision Song Contest. The Croats take Eurovision rather more seriously than many of their west-European counterparts, and most major stars take part in the selection process – making Dora one of the top showbiz events of the year. Don't worry if you can't get a ticket – it's invariably transmitted live by Croatian TV.

## The Opatija Riviera

Many would say that the Opatija Riviera initiated Croatian tourism as a whole. Ever since the aristocracy of the Austro-Hungarian upper class saw this coastal town as a top quality resort 120 years ago, the string of settlements on the Kvarner Bay has never really looked back. At its centre is Opatija, a belle-époque seaside resort clinging to the slopes of Mount Učka. To the north is the fishing village of Volosko, a picturesque huddle of houses gathered round a dainty port, while to the south lies Lovran, with its appealing mixture of medieval alleyways and art-nouveau holiday villas. As all three are situated within a mere 20-30 minute drive from Rijeka, getting around is a piece of cake.

Initially Opatija was a winter resort, catering for landlocked central Europeans in need of Mediterranean warmth and maritime air. Nowadays it is very much an all-season destination, offering neatly manicured parks, stylish cafes crammed with delicious mouth-watering sweets, traditional souvenir boutiques and Croatia's densest concentration of top-class restaurants.

They say that location is the key – and it is evident that the key to Opatija's success is its position at the foot of Mount Učka, which protects Opatija from the North and West with the intruding cold air, whilst the islands of Krk, Cres and Lošinj protect Opatija from the East and South as they deviate the winds that come in from the open sea.

Over the years Opatija has been labelled as the perfect getaway, a place to relax and seek leisure through its natural surroundings and tourist attractions. These days this gorgeous coastal village is undergoing something of a boom in spa and wellness tourism, with almost every hotel in the 4-to-5 star bracket now offering indoor pools, saunas, steam-baths, massage rooms, and a full range of state-of-the-art beauty treatments. With major European centres such as Munich, Vienna and Milan located within a 500 kilometre radius, Opatija is one of the most accessible year-round health-and-lifestyle resorts in Europe.

The business sector hasn't been forgotten as their a multiple facilities to cater for congress tourism: the Grand Hotel Adriatic's 600-seat auditorium has been hosting top international meetings for several decades while the Hotel Kvarner's Kristalna dvorana (crystal room) is a near-legendary venue for high-level receptions and showbiz events. The Ambassador, Grand Hotel 4, Opatijska Cvijeta and other local hotels are also endowed with amenities to accommodate business meetings and seminars of all numbers and sizes. Everything to suit the customers needs.







**Volosko**  
Volosko is the oldest of the settlements along the Opatija Riviera and it still retains its sleepy fishing-village charm, with a cluster of stone houses scrambling up the hillside above a sheltered little port. Volosko's strong fishing tradition may help to explain why it boasts some of the best seafood restaurants in the country. A fistful of high-class eateries are clustered around the Mandrač, the sheltered inner harbour which provides moorings for small boats. Plavi Podrum is one of the more established venues for classic fish and seafood backed up by an impressive wine list, while the nearby Le Mandrač enjoys a country-wide reputation for its fusion of modern European and traditional Croatian cuisine.

**Lovran**

Sitting in a tiny little pocket six kilometres south of Opatija is Lovran, the most picturesque of the Riviera's resorts, with a historic centre of medieval stone houses grouped around the fourteenth century Church of St George, and a surrounding girdle of Italianate nineteenth century villas – many of which have been renovated and now serve as guesthouses or boutique hotels. A sort walk south of Lovran is the lovely cove of Medveja, the site of an impressive rather small crescent pebbly beach.

**Opatija Events**

**February**

- Carnival 2009**
- 15th Balinjerada** Carnival race with carts on ball bearings instead of wheels, Opatija
- 15th Carnival Parade** Lovran
- 21st Zvončari Festival** Traditional carnival characters, the "bell-ringers", Matulji
- 25th Burning of the Pust** Mošćenička Draga
- 20th – 22nd International Carnival Cup 2009**
- 27th – 28th Dora** Selecting Croatia's entry for the Eurovision Song Contest

**March**

- Wellness Open Days**
- 01st Miss Universe Croatia Contest**
- 03rd Opatija's Serenade** Retrospective of Opatija's Festivals
- 07th Evergreen Best Of** Crystal Hall, Kvarner Hotel, Opatija
- 21st – 23rd Hairstyle News 2009** International hairdressing festival
- 21st – 23rd Exhibition of Opatija's Riviera Camellias** – Juraj Šporer Art Pavilion
- 28th – 29th Cosmetic News** 16th International cosmetics fair



**Essential Opatija**

**Villa Angiolina**

Built in 1844 and seen as a landmark in the town's development as a high-society resort. Fittingly, the high and mighty figures of the populace would relish in the villa surroundings, attending lavish balls and receptions. High-ranking guests included the governor of Croatia Josip Jelačić (1851), Archduke Maximilian von Habsburg (1859), and Emperor Franz-Jozef's mother, the Empress Maria-Ana (1860).

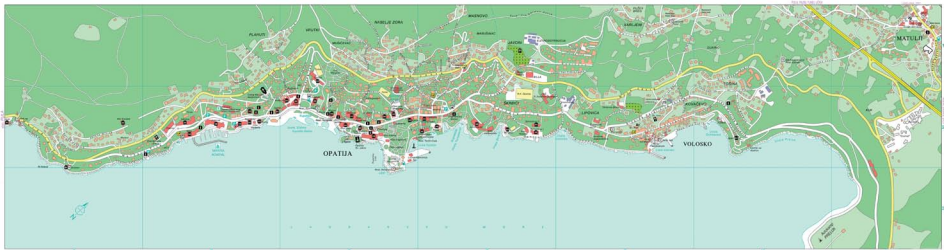
The villa now serves as the Museum of Croatian Tourism (Hrvatski muzej turizma, Park Angiolina 1, tel. 099 239 14 46, open Tue – Sun 10:00 – 18:00, free admission) – well worth visiting not least because it gives you the chance to peek inside the villa's ornate entrance hall, complete with intricate mosaic floors, painted ceiling and Corinthian-style columns. Displaying old photographs, antique guide-books and resort posters, the museum itself provides a colourful and entertaining introduction to the history of the travel industry.

**April**

- 03rd – 05th Coffee Festival**
- 07th Marking World Health Day** Admiral and Ambassador Hotels
- 08th – 10th Croatian Gastronomic Jewel**
- 08th – 11th Kvarner Expo** Exhibition and selling of souvenirs
- 12th Mid-day promenade concert** Terrace of the Imperial Hotel
- 13th Easter Concert** Church of Saint James
- 17th – May 04th Days of Cres lamb** Dedicated to fine lamb meat from the island Cres, Admiral Hotel tavern
- 29th World Day of Dance** Kvarner and Imperial Hotels
- 30th – May 03th Flower Festival**

**May**

- 01st Labour Day Celebrations and Gathering In Veprinec**
- 01st – 03rd Our World Is Music** Festival of wind orchestras (Opatija, Lovran)
- 01st – 04rd Flower Festival** Opatija Summer Stage
- 17th – 31st Days of Lovran Cherries** Kristal Hotel, Opatija
- 28th – 31st The 13th Croatian Radio Festival** Opatija summer stage
- 30th Concert Big and little ones for Opatija** Hotel Kvarner, Opatija





### The Juraj Šporer Art Pavilion

Occupying the site of the former Benedictine monastery buildings, this elegant colonnaded structure originally served as a seafront café. Lovingly restored, and named after one of the pre-World War I medical men who popularized Opatija as a health resort, the pavilion now hosts contemporary art exhibitions. Park sv.Jakova 1, tel. 27 22 25, free admission.

### The Girl with a Seagull

Definitely one of the most pictured motifs through which Opatija presents itself to the world is the sculpture of a girl with a seagull on her hand. It was made in 1956 by the academic sculptor Zvonko Car. It was placed on the same spot where the sculpture of the Madonna used to stand. Originally, the sculpture of the Madonna was put there in memory of Arthur Kesselstadt, who tragically died at sea in 1891. Due to wear and tear from the conditions near the sea, the sculpture had been damaged and was later transferred and restored. It can now be seen in St James's Church above the Riviera.



### The Croatian walk of fame (Hrvatska ulica slavnih)

Initiated in 2006 and has become a must see spot on the city tour. This educational and tourist project honours renowned and famous Croatians who have been promoting Croatia to the world through sport, science, culture and arts success. Marble stars have been carefully placed along Opatija's Slatina promenade and home the likes of poet Dragutin Tadijanović, tennis great Goran Ivanišević, handball player Ivano Balić, actor Pero Kvrgić and others.



[www.inyourpocket.com](http://www.inyourpocket.com)

## Opatija's parks and promenades



helps the vitality of its flora.

Nature lovers will be pleased to know that Opatija's Mediterranean climate has fittingly helped in the growth and protection of the lush vegetation of its parks and promenades. The close proximity of Mount Učka ensures fresh nights whilst spring tends to be the most pleasant part of the year. Opatija gets its fair share of rain which is vital in maintaining its vegetation. In winter, there is usually no frost whilst snow is very rare and short-termed. As Opatija is protected from the cold and strong winds, this also

### Park Angiolina and Saint James

It just so happens that at the same time as Villa Angiolina was being built; Opatija's central park was also in the making. This horticultural masterpiece of 3.64 acres is divided into two scenic parts: one that resides next to Villa Angiolina itself and the second part which is next to the Church of Saint James. The gardens simply flourish with approximately 150 different plants, the majority of which come from distant parts of the world such as Japan, China, South America, Australia and other countries. Ignio Scarpa, who built Villa Angiolina planted these exotic shrubs and trees thanks to his sea-roving sailors who would scatter across the world and return home with new plants. The cedars, sequoias, ginkgo, palms and oaks are still flourishing today, making this one of Croatia's most important dendrological collections. Amongst the many interesting plants, there is a Japanese Camellia (Camellia japonica), which has with time, become a recognisable symbol of Opatija.



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## The NEW Thalassotherapy Wellness Centre Opatija

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Thalasso Wellness Centar Opatija

### Park Margarita

The second largest horticultural delight is Park Margerita which was founded right after the year 1900. It spans 3.5 acres on the slope above Slatina. Its central part has been entirely preserved, however there has been some devastation done along the surrounding edges due to many renovations, reconstructions and inappropriate building development. Judging by the appearance of some of the plants (oak, planika, Juda's tree and others), you'd think that the park was much older than Park Angiolina, however it is believed that the original plants that were seeded here over a century ago were already of age.

### Franz-Jozef Promenade (Šetalište Franza Jozefa-Lungomare)

One of the non-negotiable and must do activities in Opatija is to walk at least part of the way along the Franz-Jozef Promenade, a pedestrian-only path that runs along the shore from Volosko 3km to the north, or in the opposite direction to Lovran 6km to the south. Winding its way above rocky coves and passing the palm-sprouting gardens enriched with beautiful samples of cypress, oak and palm trees as well as ornate pre-World War I villas; the promenade offers fantastic views across the Kvarner Bay to Rijeka, with the lush Gorski Kotar mountains brooding in the background.

### The Carmen Sylva Forest Promenade

The 5 kilometre forest promenade on Mount Učka starts in Potok (Vrutki) and continues to Vela Fortica (Varljeni). The promenade was set up in 1890 under the name 'Aurora' and broadened in 1901 under the initiative and financial support of the Romanian King Karol and his wife Queen Elisabeth, a poetess who found inspiration there and wrote under the pseudonym Carmen Sylva.



## Wellness

Opatija is filled with excellent choices in wellness facilities. No matter which hotel you choose (Thalassoterapia, Milenij, Mozart, Bristol, Adriatic, Miramar), you can check the variety of wellness offers available on pages 12 of our guide under the category 'Where to stay'.

## Free Wi-Fi Points

Volosko  
City Market  
Opatija port

## Thalassotherapy Opatija

Unless you're a health and wellbeing junkie, you'd be forgiven for not knowing that thalassotherapy is treatment by application of seawater or derivatives thereof. It's taken seriously in the medical world, and Opatija's Talassoterapia centre was founded as a medical institution in 1957. The seawater is indicated for cardiological, rheumatic, musculoskeletal, neurological and dermatological conditions, both as prevention and as cure, and programmes are much used by athletes as well as by working people under stress. You can also enjoy the new, 2500m² wellness area, with health and beauty treatments from aroma saunas to pedicures, and any one of huge range of massages.... A week of that, and you will, literally, be a new person!