

## Poreč

The ancient settlement of Poreč, with its treasured sixth-century **basilica** and seaside views, is overrun by tourists and the businesses that cater to them. Small shops selling costume jewellery or T-shirts with bawdy jokes cram **Decumanus**, a 2,000-year-old stone-paved thoroughfare. Nearby **Trg Marafor**, and the ruins of the temples of Neptune and Mars, are further evidence of the Roman occupation. The harbour contains reminders of Venetian dominance until the 18th century, when Poreč was ruled by Napoleon and then the Habsburgs. The Venetians also built a town wall, which stretched from the harbourside Round Tower, now occupied by a bar, to the inland Pentagonal Tower, now a restaurant.

### Euphrasian Basilica & Bishop's Palace

**Sv Eleuterija** (052 431 635). **Open** 10am-5pm daily. **Admission** Church free. **Belfry** 10kn. **Museum** 10kn. The basilica, built in the sixth century by Bishop Euphrasius, is an important surviving example of Byzantine art. Of the wonderfully preserved gold-gilt and mother-of-pearl mosaics, the largest and most stunning is in the apse, above and behind the altar, depicting a procession of saints and angels around the Virgin Mary holding the baby Jesus. Euphrasius built his three-nave basilica on the foundation of a fifth-century church. Mosaics from earlier churches are still visible in the floor of the northern nave. Alongside is an eight-sided baptistery, and beyond a belfry, which you can climb for a view of the surroundings. Next to the church is the former Bishop's Palace housing a museum that contains mosaics gathered from earlier churches.

## Beaches & excursions

Walkways follow the coast, past rocky or pebbly beaches. Some stretches are reserved for hotel residents, but most are open – and packed. The stroll south, toward **Plava Laguna** and **Zelena Laguna**, can be the most rewarding. You can also take the tourist train from Trg Slobode down the 6km (3.5-mile) walkway to Zelena Laguna, to join the masses on the pebbly beaches. South of the Hotel Delfin, the beaches are rocky but more private.

For a little more privacy, take a taxi boat (every 30mins, 7am-11pm daily, 12kn) over to **Sv Nikola**. Here you'll find pine-shaded paved and pebble beaches, the most notable being the circular one of **Oliva** near the Fortuna Island Hotel (see right).

**Venezia Lines** (B Milanovića, 52 422 896, www.venezialines.com) runs day trips to Venice. Tickets include a guided tour of Venice. The journey time is two hours each way, with a five-hour stay in Venice.

## Where to eat

Restaurants are found by the harbour, along **Decumanus** and on **Trg Slobode** and **Trg Marafor**. A bad place wouldn't last long in this competitive atmosphere, so most choices are likely to please, with outdoor seating and decent seafood options. Service is of a high standard and friendly staff earn their tips.

### Dvi Murve

**Grožnjanska 17** (052 434 115/www.dvimurve.hr). **Open** Feb-Dec noon-11pm daily. **Credit** AmEx, DC, MC, V. This popular *konoba* has a large, shaded terrace with a busy grill in one corner. They cook up fine seafood, such as sea bass baked in salt and lobster in spaghetti. It's also a good place to stray away from the standards and opt for traditional Istrian dishes such as stew with dried lamb, goulash and noodles, wild game or a plate of grilled meats.

### Tri Ribara

**Zelena Laguna, near Hotel Zorna** (052 410 508). **Open** 11am-midnight daily. **Credit** AmEx, DC, MC, V. A decent choice in Zelena Laguna specialises in fish and has some fancier seafood offerings, like lobster and sole. Pizzas and pastas are also handled well. The terrace and the grounds are pleasantly surrounded by greenery and next to the sea.

### Ulixes

**Decumanus 2** (052 451 132). **Open** noon-midnight daily. **Credit** AmEx, DC, MC, V. Step off crowded Decumanus, down a few steps, and into a cool, cavernous old stone room, charmingly cluttered with antiques and old shipping paraphernalia. The garden behind, in a secluded courtyard, is equally attractive. The speciality is the Istrian version of 'surf and turf': seafood and truffles. Surf includes calamari, octopus salad and fresh fish, and less common varieties like ray and sole. Truffles can be had in pasta or as part of starters such as sheep's cheese or carpaccio.

## Where to drink

**Trg Marafor** has terrace cafés, including **Mango Mambo**, a cocktail bar with a slightly hipper vibe. **Yesterday** is a strange find.

### Atelier

**Obala Maršala Tita 3A** (052 428 880). **Open** 10am-2am daily. Sited next to a flight of steep steps, this popular bar is tucked away behind the sea front. It's a contemporary venue known for its exhibitions and live music events.

### Epoca

**Obala Maršala Tita 24** (no phone). **Open** 10am-2am daily. Good music, friendly staff and a sociable buzz sets this place apart from the other harbourside bars. Dancing breaks out in the evening – it's a mainly foreign crowd.

### Lapidarij

**Sveta Maura 10** (052 431 595). **Open** noon-midnight daily. Within the City Museum's garden is a pleasant courtyard bar that provides sanctuary from the crowds in the Old Town. It hosts concerts, particularly Wednesday's jazz residency, bringing the best practitioners of all its various forms – from swing to acid jazz – into Poreč for jam sessions.

### Yesterday

**Park Olge Ban 2** (098 190 662 mobile). **Open** Summer 7am-1am daily. **Winter** 7am-11pm daily. A Beatles theme bar, run by the son of an Oldham-born fan who met Paul McCartney in 1965. Jackie Carnihan then met a local while on holiday here and got married. Local acts play here on Fridays.

## Nightlife

The discos can feel part of a package tour. You'll be mingling with fellow tourists and some nights you may not find a crowd unless you bring your own. The best spot is the **Colonia Iulia Parentium** (Šetalište A Štifačica), south of the Old Town, before Brulo. The **International Club** near the Hotel Delfin draws holiday crowds. An alternative is the **Plava** near the Hotel Laguna Galijot.

## Where to stay

The 30 hotels and hundreds of rooms for rent around Poreč provide thousands of beds. Many hotels have been taken over and revamped by the local **Valamar** group (www.valamar.com), including the

**Valamar Diamant Hotel & Residence**, the **Fortuna Island Hotel** on Sv Nikola, the **Jadran Residence** and the **Parentino Residence**. Rooms can be arranged with **Atlas** (Eufrazijeva 63, 052 434 933, www.atlas-croatia.com).

### Hotel Hostin

**Rade Končara 4** (052 408 800/fax 052 408 857/www.hostin.hr). Rates €39-€85 single; €52-€122 double. **Credit** AmEx, DC, MC, V. The Hostin chain only has one hotel in Poreč, and it offers competitive luxury at decent prices. Amenities include a pool, sauna, whirlpool, steam room, gym and nearby pebble beach. Diving, boat and bike rentals are nearby.

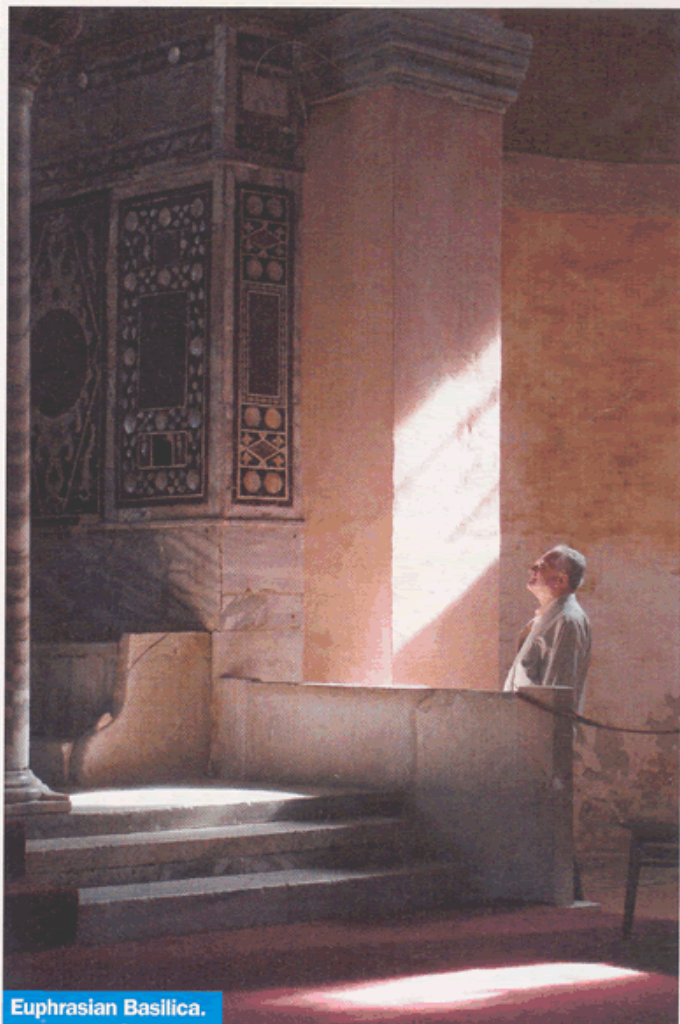
## Resources

### Poreč Tourist Office

**Zagrebačka 9** (052 451 293/www.istra.com/porec). **Open** 8am-10pm daily.

## Getting there

The nearest airports are in **Pula** (see p75) and **Trieste** (00 39 0481 773 224). The **bus station** is at Rade Končara 1, 052 432 153). Call a **taxi** on 052 432 465 or 052 438 347, 098 209 675 mobile.



Euphrasian Basilica.

## Novigrad

Firmly committed to quality tourism, **Novigrad** has taken significant steps in the last 12 months. First is the opening of the **Hotel Nautica**, a five-star hotel and marina. Sited on the far side of the harbour, it does nothing to detract from the gentle, old-world charm of the historic town centre. Secondly, Novigrad gained recognition from the International Dark Sky Association (IDA), based in the USA. Working closely with the nearby, world-ranking **Visnjan Observatory**, Novigrad is aware of the ongoing effects of light pollution. The town will switch off its entire public eco-lighting system for a couple of nights this season, so that visitors can fully enjoy Istria's spectacular night sky. And thirdly, the **Museum Lapidarium**, specifically built to house Roman remains, opened at the end of 2006.

Called Cittanova under the Venetians, Novigrad also contains a surprising number of decent bars, hotels and restaurants for a community of fewer than 3,000 people. The more modern part of town stretches less than a kilometre east, as far as the bus station and a small hotel complex. Between town and facilities, you can walk along the main road of Murve or the pleasant seaside promenade of Rivarella. Even in high season, tourists are light compared to nearby Poreč, the hub for buses from Zagreb or Pula.

The Venetian-style campanile beside **St Pelagius**, a baroque 18th-century church built on the foundations of a medieval basilica, rises over the modest network of streets. Here in the main square, **Veliki trg** and the main street of **Velika ulica**, stands a Venetian loggia, containing the Town Hall. North of town at Karpinjan, near the marina, is the **Rigo Palace**, built in 1760. As well as a gallery, it has a display of old tombstones and Byzantine fragments.

### Gallery Rigo

**Velika ulica 5 (052 757 790)** [www.galerija-rigo.hr](http://www.galerija-rigo.hr). Open varies. One of Istria's most important independent galleries has a fast-moving programme of contemporary exhibitions throughout the year. A highlight in 2007 (24 Aug-30 Sept) will be 'Salt Dress' by Alen Hranitelj. Currently one of Europe's most exciting theatrical costume designers, Hranitelj is best known for his recent metal dress that required a crane to place it on the model. He is designing a new dress, created for the Rigo, made entirely of salt, said to reflect the age-old relationship between man and the Mediterranean.

### Museum Lapidarium

**Veliki trg 8A (052 726 582)** [www.muzej-lapidarium.hr](http://www.muzej-lapidarium.hr). Open Summer 10am-noon, 5-10pm daily. Winter 10am-noon, 5-8pm daily. Admission 10kn; 5kn concs; free under-14s. No credit cards.



### Hotel Nautica

The **Hotel Nautica** (see right) is an uncompromisingly modern hotel.

The spacious, sumptuous complex has an ongoing nautical flavour. Its bespoke, dark wood, leather and brass furniture is styled after on-board outfittings – even extending to the ship's wheel bedheads. With an excellent restaurant, large lounge bar, indoor pool and spa, it's a welcome addition to Istria's rapidly improving range of accommodation. For those on sailing holidays, the ship to shore facilities could not be better.

Istria's first purpose-built museum is a first-class example of successfully siting modern architecture within the context of an old town. Lapidarium was built to house Roman architectural remains, dating from the first century AD, discovered in the locality. Superbly exhibited, this small museum sets a world-class standard in Istria.

### Višnjan Observatory

**Istarska 5, Višnjan (052 449 212)**.

Open by appointment.

Famous for discovering more than 1,400 minor planets over the last decade, Višnjan is one of the world's most prolific astronomical discovery sites. They are currently constructing a new observatory nearby, called Tican, which will house a one-metre telescope. The Višnjan Observatory is also involved in educational projects, run by students and volunteers.

## Where to eat

Novigrad boasts a trio of restaurants worth writing home about: **Damir i Ornella**, **Mandrač** and the **Konoba Čok**. There are a handful of others on Rivarella with a sea-view terrace and a good kitchen. Menus are often in Croatian, Italian and German only.

### Damir i Ornella

**Zidine 5 (052 758 134)**. Open noon-3pm, 6.30-11.30pm Tue-Sun. Credit AmEx, DC, V.

Commonly acknowledged to be the best place in town, this 28-seat diner is worth booking at least a day in advance. Signposted on Velika ulica, it's set in a narrow side street near the seafront. Inside, a simple, tasteful bare-brick interior is a comfortable setting for raw fish and shrimp specialities. The grilled lobster is excellent too. Desserts include a popular kiwi flan. Expect to pay about 400kn a head.

### Konoba Čok

**Sv Antona 2 (052 757 643)**. Open noon-3pm, 6-11pm daily. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V.

On an enclosed front terrace by a roundabout on the edge of the Old Town, a board reads: 'Welcome from Family Jugovac'. While his son Viljan runs the kitchen, Sergio takes care of guests and the wide range of Istrian wines. On offer are fresh sea bream, sea perch and sole, lobster, and all kinds of shellfish including oysters. Truffles decorate the steak and pasta starters, and meals are generally bookended by a complimentary fruit brandy.

### Mandrač

**Mandrač 6 (052 757 369)**. Open noon-3pm, 6-11pm daily. Credit AmEx, DC, V. The walls of Mandrač's backroom are covered in gastronomic awards and even though there are seats for 200 diners, it's still best to reserve in summer. Fresh fish and grilled meats are well presented on warmed plates, garnished according to the friendly advice offered by the waiter. Despite the high standard of service and preparation, prices are a reasonable 250kn-300kn per kilo of sole, sea bass or sea bream. House wine is an equally reasonable 60kn a litre, although there are plenty of vintages on view in a cabinet in the back. If it's full, try the traditional Sidro (052 757 601) next door.

## Where to drink

Half-a-dozen decent bars dot the town centre, including the superb **Vitriol**. You could make a little barhop leading from the Vitriol, to nearby **Aquarius**, the early-opening **K Ribaru**, **Lite**, and ending up just opposite the Hotel Cittar at the chaotic late-night **Delfin** or grungy **Ara**.

### Vitriol

**Ribarnička 6 (052 758 270)**. Open 8am-midnight daily. Best bar in Novigrad. Its terrace lapped by the sea, overlooking the setting sun, the Vitriol is trendy enough to appeal to week-ending Italians without losing its young, lively, local character. Concoctions have a distinct Italian flavour (Negroni, Garibaldi) but include a zingy Novigrad Beach of gin, Campari and orange juice (35kn). Local wines are chalked up on a board outside, beers include Kriek and Kilkenny and there are enough hot drinks to fill an entire menu. Ideal for a summer's eve or winter's afternoon. Sharp staff too.

## Where to stay

The new five-star **Hotel Nautica** has taken accommodation on to a different level here. The **Cittar** is also noteworthy, one of the best mid-range hotels you'll find in Istria. For a resort holiday, stay at the seasonal **Laguna** or **Maestral** (for both, [www.laguna-novigrad.hr](http://www.laguna-novigrad.hr)), just outside the town centre near the bus station.

### Hotel Cittar

**Prolaz Venecija 1 (052 757 737/fax 052 757 340)**. Rates 560kn-736kn double. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V.

Its exterior built into a section of Venetian wall in the city centre, the Cittar is one of the best mid-range hotels in Istria. Run by a small, friendly team under Sergio Cittar, it contains 14 rooms with smooth, varnished floors, comfortable, big beds and capacious baths. A breakfast of warm croissants, meats and cheeses is taken in the sunny conservatory at the front. Half-board of an extra 75kn per person is offered in summer, when it's best to reserve at least a week in advance.

### Hotel Nautica

**Sv Antona 15 (052 600 400/fax 052 600 490)** [www.nauticahotels.com](http://www.nauticahotels.com). Rates €157-€218. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V. Istria's first five-star hotel, opened in 2006. See left.

## Resources

### Internet

**Internet Centar Mandrač 20 (052 726 280)**. Open Summer 8am-midnight daily. Winter 9am-noon, 5-8pm Mon-Sat. Handy place by the marina that also sells arty souvenirs.

### Tourist information

**Novigrad tourist office Porporella 1 (052 757 075)** [www.istra.com/novigrad](http://www.istra.com/novigrad). Open Summer 8am-8pm daily. Winter 8am-3pm Mon-Fri; 8am-1pm Sat. Friendly little office brimming with brochures on the seafront.

## Getting there & around

Novigrad is poorly served by public transport. There are only four buses a day from Zagreb and Pula. It might be quicker to get to Poreč and change for a more regular service between the two towns 18km (11 miles) apart. The bus station is a ten-minute walk from town. For a taxi, call 052 757 224, 098 806 349 mobile.

## Motovun

**Motovun** – Montona to the Romans – is one of the most beautiful and best preserved of Istria's medieval hilltop settlements. These days it's best known for its film festival (see p94 **Motovun Film Festival**), which transforms this otherwise sleepy town into a cultural hub and party madhouse for one week every summer.

Motovun is sited on the summit of a 277-metre (910-foot) hill in the middle of the Mirna Valley, surrounded by truffle-rich forest. When the original prehistoric settlement was founded, it would have been surrounded by water. In those days the estuary stretched right up to the 'Gates of Buzet' at the head of the valley. It was along this ancient inlet that Jason and his

Argonauts are supposed to have fled after having captured the Golden Fleece.

In its day, Motovun was the communications hub for all of inland Istria. From its strategic position, it controlled the merchant routes that wound across the valley floor on the way to the coast. In 1278 Motovun came under the rule of Venice, a major outpost on its border with the Austrian empire. Although depopulated as a result of the Italian exodus after World War II, a new wave of inhabitants – many of them artists and writers – has set up home here in recent times. The result is the Motovun Film Festival, set up in 1999.

Non-residents are banned from driving around the town's narrow cobbled streets (there's a car park at the bottom of the hill). Motovun's two sets of fortified walls divide the town into three sections – the higher

you climb, the older it gets. As you wend your way upwards, past rather dilapidated, 16th- and 17th-century Venetian-style houses, you pass several small shops, offering wine, truffles and local grappa.

As the road levels it passes through the main city gate dating from the 15th century. Its walls are hung with Roman tombstones taken from the cemetery of **Karobjba**, a village 5km (3 miles) away on the road to Pazin. Within the gate is a museum of antique weaponry. The entrance is on the far side of the gate. Also here is the town's art gallery. Next door is the café bar **Gallery** whose terrace is sited on the other side of the street, against the first set of fortified walls. Sitting here you have a clear view to the Adriatic. Just in case, a telescope has been thoughtfully provided. There's a cashpoint opposite, the only one in the area.

A few steps further, facing the town loggia, is the 13th-century gateway into the original heart of Motovun. This walkway is particularly steep and slippery – use the handrail. This entrance houses a small landmark restaurant, **Pod Voltom**. From the archway you walk on to the main square. Dominated by a magnificent 13th-century belltower, the piazza is sited over a huge cisterna, or water collection pit, which used to supply the town. You can still see the 14th-century well. Next to the tower stands the baroque **Church of St Stephen** and, opposite, a Renaissance palace citadel, housing the local cinema. The piazza also contains Motovun's main hotel, the attractive **Kaštel**.

It's at this point that all the climbing pays off. Stroll along the original 13th-century walls and a stunning 360-degree panoramic



view reveals the whole of inland Istria laid out before you. Motovun's strategic importance down the ages suddenly becomes clear.

Motovun only has two main roads. If you turn left and follow the second route down, you come out close to the car park. Known as Pod Motovun (Under Motovun), the locality contains a couple of popular café-bars (including the **Fakin**) and shops but, most importantly of all, an all-too-rare petrol station.

## Where to eat

Two venues dominate Motovun's dining scene: the traditional **Pod Voltom**, offering standard Istrian fare, and the more adventurous if pricier **Barbacan**. Both pack out completely during film festival time – make sure you make your reservation way in advance.

### Barbacan

*Barbacan 1 (0 52 681 791). Open Summer 10.30am-3.30pm, 6-11pm daily. Winter 10.30am-3.30pm daily. No credit cards.* Recommended Dutch-run restaurant renowned for using seasonal ingredients. See below **Truffles with everything**.

### Konoba Dolina

*Gradnje 59/1, Livade (052 664 091). Open noon-10pm Mon, Wed-Sun. No credit cards.* A short, tricky drive from Motovun (head into Livade, take a right at the only roundabout, then five minutes via the left fork, it's on your left) but Dolina is worth it. A perfect example of fantastic, simple local food in a simple, local place. It's so good, many Italians drive down for the night. It's not touristy or flash in any way – and all the better for it. It's also incredibly good value. For 100kn, you can be very happily fed and watered. The secret is the quality of the unpretentious and fresh ingredients: huge plates of fresh, meaty porcini mushrooms served with olive oil; *fuzi* with truffles, squid with chips, cabbage salad, beans. The drinks are equally great: Istrian Favorit

beer on tap, bottles of local mistletoe and honey spirits, domestic wines, great coffee. Dolina gets busy with locals sat around wooden tables, repeat guests and chattering elderly Italian ladies from the nearby spa. There's half-a-dozen tables outside too. If you lived here you'd visit once a week.

### Pod Voltom

*Setalište V Nazova (052 681 923). Open Summer noon-11pm daily. Winter noon-11pm Mon, Tue, Thur-Sun. No credit cards.*

Under the Arch by the old city gate serves a selection of honest, regional fare, including truffles, and can always be relied upon to have a fire blazing in winter. Reasonable prices too. Pod Voltom is also known for its flavoured spirits, *rakija*, of such quality they are sold to other restaurants around Croatia, including the *Maškin i lata* in Zagreb. It's also a non-smoking establishment, all too rare in these parts.

## Where to drink

For its size, Motovun has no shortage of places to drink. Top of the list is the excellent **Caffè Bar Montona Gallery**, whose panoramic views match anything in Dalmatia. Down in Pod Motovun are a number of establishments, including the down-to-earth **Fakin**. Everything changes at festival time, when any place purveying alcohol fills out for the whole week. The rest of the time, expect quiet drinks in a pretty, hilltop setting.

### Caffè Bar Montona Gallery

*Trg Josefa Resselja 2 (052 681 524). Open 8am-midnight daily.* Best venue for a drink in town, hands down. Run by the friendly local couple Claudio and Lela, this relaxed café is set between Motovun's two town gates, right on top of the hill, and with completely stunning panoramic views of the Mirna valley below. Try and get here for a drink at sunsets. Sought-after tables are lined up on the terrace outside, and there's a scattering of furniture inside for the winter. Morning coffee here is a must – you wish it did breakfast – and you want to try and get here early before the tourist coaches start pulling up.

# Motovun Film Festival

Motovun's annual film festival is central Istria's cultural highlight of the year. For five days in late July this tiny medieval town is transformed into a party-mad hub, occasionally patronised by some of the most famous names in the business, a mix between Sundance and Glastonbury. Expect enchanting open-air screenings in the historic main square on balmy summer evenings. Dates for 2007 are 24-28 July.

Established in 1999 with the stated aim of promoting independent films and films originating in countries with modest movie industries, this small festival has burgeoned beyond all expectations. It's almost become too big. With a resident population of only a couple of hundred, Motovun's annual inundation of 50,000-plus souls has the little hilltop village bursting at the seams. But then again, that's all part of the fun.

The festival presents around 80 documentaries, features and shorts. The top prize is the Propeller of Motovun. In 2004 it went to Ken Loach for *Ae Fond Kiss* and there are usually a handful of offerings from UK independents. Other awards include From A to A, for the best regional film from Albania to Austria. You can also access some 30 shorts from the festival's website.

Screenings are scheduled around Motovun over the five days from 10am to midnight, followed by live music until 3am or 4am. The festival becomes a 24-hour party and you don't have to be a film buff to enjoy it. People arrive from all over Europe; accommodation is at a premium. A campsite is set up in Pod Motovun at the bottom of the hill but many just sleep in their cars. For further information, refer to [www.motovunfilmfestival.com](http://www.motovunfilmfestival.com).

In the evenings it gets packed with locals and visitors staying at the nearby Hotel Kaštel (see below). Open all year round.

### Fakin

*Zadrugarska 8 (052 681 978). Open 8am-11pm Mon-Sat. Closed 2wks Jan.* Wild at festival time, the Fakin attracts the friendly local biker fraternity thanks to owner Damir, whose pictures adorn the walls. In winter you might only hear the click of chess pieces, the clack of pool balls and the cluck of local chatter about the price of truffles.

Attractive half-board rates are also available at the renowned in-house restaurant (8am-10pm daily), offering game, truffles and other Istrian specialities in a nice chestnut-shaded garden or the recently renovated dining room.

## Resources

### Istria Magica

*Trg Andrea Antico 8 (052 681 750).*

### Motovun Tourist Office

*Trg Andrea Antico 1 (052 681 758).*

## Where to stay

### Kaštel

*Trg Andrea Antico 7 (052 681 607/ fax 052 681 652/ [www.hotel-kaštel-motovun.hr](http://www.hotel-kaštel-motovun.hr)). Rates €39-€48.50 single; €66-€111 double. Credit AmEx, DC, MC, V.* Behind the bright red façade of Motovun's only hotel are 28 spacious three-star rooms set around patios. Some have balconies.

## Getting there & around

The bus from the transport hub of Pazin takes 45 minutes. There are five a day in summer, two in winter. The twice-daily **Pula-Buzet** line also drops off at Motovun.



## Truffles with everything

This Motovun restaurant (see above) is always good, and it can be outstanding – it all depends. If it's Ronald on, the Dutch chef and owner, you're in luck – before **Barbacan**, he once ran an award-winning restaurant in Cork.

In Motovun Ronald combines seasonal, local ingredients – asparagus, wild mushrooms, capers – with the centrepiece ingredient, truffles. Ronald, who lives nearby with his Zagreb-born wife and a dozen dogs discarded by truffle hunters, has created a cosy, friendly place: half-a-dozen tables in the basement, half-a-dozen on the terrace, all served by friendly, multilingual locals. Expect to be presented with

salmon mousse with black truffles and home-made bread upon arrival. Dishes include a divine broth with fresh black-and-white truffle slices and wild mushrooms; tagliatelle with truffles (a snip at 75kn), cheese with truffles – washed down with good domestic wine. Add a salad of spicy rocket, huge juicy capers, black olives soaked in balsamic vinegar and parmesan shavings for 30kn. There's also great meat, fish and desserts.

Music ranges from jazz to the Tinnersticks, Belgian Chimay comes by the bottle and truffle omelettes make a great brunch. You could say the portions aren't huge but that's clutching at straws to find a fault.

## Grožnjan

With 23 galleries and plenty of studios, the tiny town of Grožnjan is now known as the 'Town of Artists'. Nearly wiped off the map not once but twice, Grožnjan is a place with an instinct for survival.

Grožnjan is one of Istria's prettiest medieval hilltop towns, 228 metres (750 feet) above sea level. Its position provides spectacular views, the Adriatic coast to the west and the dramatic landscape of the glorious Mirna Valley to the east. The northern region of Istria is rich with these ancient, Italianate settlements. What sets Grožnjan apart is that this town feels loved, alive and cared for. Amazing when you consider that, just 40 years ago, it lay derelict and deserted – and not for the first time.

In 1630 bubonic plague almost wiped it out. The Venetian republic then set about revitalising the municipality. Tradesmen and artisans settled in the town itself. For the surrounding villages, the Venetians brought in peasants to work the land: Dalmatians, Montenegrins and Albanians, the Illyrian provinces were never short of strong backs. Grožnjan grew and

prospered. In 1902 Austrians built the Paranzana Railway, opening up new markets in Koper and Trieste. The depression of the 1920s saw the economic migration there. After World War II, this part of Istria was assigned to Tito's Yugoslavia. Some two-thirds of north-west Istria emigrated to Italy. In Grožnjan only 20 souls remained. Neighbouring towns such as Završje never recovered (although there are current plans to revive it). In Grožnjan, local artists began using the empty buildings as studio space and by 1965 it was formally declared a 'Town of Artists'. Premises were allocated for the **International Cultural Centre for Young Musicians (MKC HGM Grožnjan, Umberta Gorjana 2, 052 776 106)**.

Grožnjan's street signs are hand-painted ceramics, rather than state-manufactured enamel; the colours of the shutters are subtle but just right; there are ancient-looking stone seats perfectly sited for enjoying the view; and everywhere you look, there's a gallery. There's a perfect little town square and outside the town loggia on balmy, summer evenings are recitals by operatic tenors or noodling jazzers, all performing as part of the **Grožnjan Musical Summer** ([www.hgm.hr](http://www.hgm.hr)).

## Where to eat & drink

### Art'A

*Trg corner 3 (no phone). Open 8am-midnight Tue-Sun. No credit cards.* Suitably arty café with a panoramic terrace, one of the few places in town open all year round. Not much by way of food, though.

### Bastia

*1 Svibnja 1 (052 776 370). Open Mid June-Aug 8am-2am daily. Mar-mid June, Sept-mid Jan 9am-10pm. Closed Mid Jan-Feb. No credit cards.*

Under the church tower, this large traditional restaurant is the main one in town. Fabulous local dishes include home-made sausage, rumpsteak with truffles and twisted pasta ties (*fuzi*) with wild game. There's a little bar with a piano in the back.

## Where to stay

Apart from the **Pintur**, a couple of families are happy to take in paying guests – just ask at the **Bastia** (see above). During the music festival, most are happy to sleep where they fall, in the main square. If you happen to be performing and need some proper shut-eye, the nearby **Radanić Hotel** (052 776 353, 091 783 3772 mobile), run by an old local of the same name, is a friendly, cheap, traditional guesthouse.

### Pintur

*M Gorjana 9 (052 731 055). Closed Jan-Mar. Rates Apr-Dec 300kn double. No credit cards.*

Modest little guesthouse and eatery (closed on Mondays) just opposite the Bastia, with four equally modest but three-star rooms.

## Galleries

### Fonticus Gallery

*Trg Lože 3 (052 776 357/ eugen.u.b.@inet.hr). Open varies.* The main public gallery in town.

### Pharos

*U Gorjana 8 (091 767 9818 mobile). Open Easter-Sept 10am-8pm daily.* A new gallery specialising in antiques: furniture, souvenirs and regional Istrian landscape paintings.

## Resources

### Grožnjan Tourist Office

*U Gorjana 3 (052 776 131/www.grozgnjan-grisignana.hr). Open May-Sept 9am-12.30pm Mon; 9am-12.30pm, 4-7pm Tue-Sun.* The staff can assist with finding private accommodation in the area.

## Getting there & around

There is no public transport to Grožnjan. Your only option is to take the **Buzet-Buje bus** and ask the driver to drop you off at **Bijeje Zemlje**, and you'll have to walk the three kilometres (two miles) uphill from there.

## Morgan

**Morgan** is one of Istria's most exciting restaurants. Self-effacing to the point of suicidal – it's not even signposted – it's busy with custom throughout the year, often with Italians who travel to eat here on a regular basis.

Marko Morgan, the young restaurateur, has a simple mission. He aims to excite his guests by producing excellent but simple dishes based on authentic Istrian recipes.

The top-quality ingredients here are all sourced locally and attention to detail predominates. The veal must be female – higher fat means tastier meat. The process involves the whole family, Morgan senior hunting the wide selection of game, mother and sister working in the kitchen.

Specialities include home-made polenta with game (rabbit, pheasant, wild boar, venison or quail); pasta stuffed with chestnut purée; and *krestine*, red pasta filled with white, cockerel meat. Morgan also places great emphasis on blending wine with food. The restaurant has an excellent selection of the region's finest vintages including some almost-forgotten varieties such as Plavina and Hrvatica.

Morgan is pleasingly fresh and unpretentious. The instruments lying around testify to Marko's training as a musician. After hours, he might play piano for his guests, perhaps on the large, covered terrace. The view is relaxing although the surroundings are somewhat ramshackle. Note the dilapidated farm building with its Communist red star still precariously perched on the roof.

And the name? Bizarrely, it's a common name in this part of Istria. Legend has it that the infamous pirate Captain Henry Morgan hid from his pursuers in the Linski kanal and was happy to fraternise with the womenfolk.

For Morgan, take the main road from Buje to Brtonigla, then the track on the left-hand side about 1km (half a mile) before Brtonigla.

*Bracanja 1, Buje (052 774 520). Open Mid Oct-mid Sept 11am-10pm daily. Credit AmEx, DC, V.*

