



HOT KOTOR

Wild, dramatic and timeless, Montenegro has allured many. Jane Foster zooms in on Kotor, its newest travel gem.

Named after the rugged mountains of the interior, Montenegro or “black mountain” opens onto a blissful seaboard of fine pebble beaches and azure waters, dotted with elegant Venetian-era harbour towns, the most enchanting being Kotor and Budva.

Backed by limestone peaks and built right up to the waterfront, Kotor’s magnificent Old Town is now a UNESCO world heritage site. A cultural centre since the Byzantine era, when it was renowned for its skilled stonemasons, goldsmiths and icon painters, over the last decade its aris-



Kotor. ©iStockphoto.com / Club21 Pte Ltd

tocratic Renaissance and Baroque *palazzi* have witnessed a rebirth of sorts. Wander its car-free cobbled alleys, and check out its Romanesque churches, the most impressive being the 12th century Cathedral.

Opened last June, the seven-room **Hotel Hippocampus** occupies a 17th century building in the old town. Owner-architect, Rajko Miketić combined existing stonework and wooden beamed ceilings with slick contemporary details - sensuous glass-walled bathrooms (with the marble wash-basin and mosaic-tile shower visible from the bed), doors painted in gold-leaf (inspired by the Eastern Orthodox tradition of golden icons and church domes). The restaurant serves creative Mediterranean cuisine, including irresistible fillet steaks. Tip: reserve one of only five tables on the roof-terrace, affording panoramic views.

Next-door, the **Wine House** is a



Puro Beach

well-stocked wine store where you can sample and buy some of Montenegro’s finest wines. Besides *Plantaže*, the country’s largest producer, it represents 10 of Montenegro’s most esteemed small family-run vineyards, where quality supersedes quantity. Ask to try the potent *Vranac*, which means “black horse” - in rural villages, a black horse was considered the symbol of strength and beauty.

For a truly authentic dining experience, drive 25 km around the Bay of Kotor to Morinj, to the family-run **Ćatovići Mlini**. Set in gardens with a stream and towering palm trees, this romantic old stone flour mill dates from the 18th century. Feast on traditional seafood dishes with a contemporary twist - favourites include the *predjelo od morskih plodova* (seafood appetiser, combining octopus, fish pate, tuna carpaccio and fish mousse) and an exquisite *rižot sa šafranom i škampima* (risotto with shrimps and saffron).

In Tivat, 14 km from Kotor, the slick new **Porto Montenegro** has been redesigned by London-based ReardonSmith Architects to accommodate the world’s largest super-yachts and their owners. Formerly a Yugoslav military naval base, the complex now includes luxury residential apartments, designer shops and restaurants (including Montenegro’s first sushi bar), all overlooking the sailing boats in the 630-berth marina. Check out the **СУПЕРМАРКЕТ** concept store, stock-



СУПЕРМАРКЕТ Concept Store

ing pieces by young Serbian and Montenegrin designers - look out for Jasmina Sanader’s jewellery made from zips, nuts and bolts, Jelena Blečić’s bags, slippers and book covers made from painted leather, and Jelena Stafanović’s elegant dresses made of raw silk.

No golden sands here, but **Puro Beach**, within the Porto Montenegro complex, is a glamorous beach club where image-conscious visitors come to swim, tan and socialise. Raised slightly above the sea for spectacular views over the Bay of Kotor, it centres on a 64-metre infinity pool designed by British architect Richard Hywel Evans. Expect designer beachwear, expert masseurs and funky DJ music.



Seafood appetiser for two at Ćatovići Mlini

What better way to conclude your visit, than a one-day private sailing trip around the Bay of Kotor? If you’re staying in the Old Town, **MCC (Montenegro Charter Company)** can have a yacht moored up and waiting for you on the quay, just outside the main town gate, and drop you home before sunset. Sublime experience.

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Hotel Hippocampus
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