A scuba diver in a black wetsuit and mask is swimming in clear blue water. The diver is positioned on the left side of the frame, looking towards the camera. A bright light from the diver's equipment illuminates the scene. The background is dominated by a dense and colorful coral reef, featuring large, branching red coral structures and smaller, more intricate coral formations in shades of pink, orange, and yellow. The overall atmosphere is that of a rich and healthy underwater ecosystem.

# CROATIA

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# Pearl of the Mediterranean Sea



The Adriatic Sea is not tropical warm but you can find a very colorful underwater-world over there.

The Republic of Croatia is a small Country (4,5 Million people) in Central Europe. It is lying at the Adriatic Sea, a northeastern part of the Mediterranean Sea.

Although it's small size, Croatia has an immense coastline of 1800 kilometer and 1246 Islands, a lot of them not populated. Specially in summer time, the cristall clear water attracts many tourists from all over Europe. There are still a lot of untouched, lonely bays with small beaches - perfect for swimming, beach vacations and relaxing holidays.

For accommodation you can choose between all categories from camping grounds, apartments, bed-and-breakfast up to 5 star hotels. Most people enjoy their stay in one of the countless picturesque old traditional fishing villages. Beside this, there are a lot of well known historical cities like Dubrovnik which is as well on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites as Split and Trogir.

Along the coast you also find enough tourist centers for shopping, making party and do any kind of sport. But you also can do any kind of water sport like sailing, yachting, parasailing, surfing, kite surfing and of course also scuba diving.

Out of Europe, Croatia is not well known for

scuba diving yet. But the country at the Adriatic Sea has a lot of outstanding divesites!

Along their coastline people live there for more than 2000 years and you can imagine that there have been a lot of fights, wars and naval battles within this time. Now you still can find lots of sunken shipwrecks, some of them absolutely great for diving. You can find them almost all along the coast and also in different depths. So some of them are fine for beginners of scuba diving and some of them are lying quite deep and are only possible to visit for technical divers. By the way, nowadays many divecenters over there offer Nitrox and also Trimix!

Beside shipwrecks, Croatia has to offer much more interesting divesites. Mainly mentionable, there are all the steep walls and rocky formations which are covered with colorful life. You can find different types of sea-fans, yellow-orange ones in shallow waters and purple-red ones starting from 25 or 30 meter of depth. Specially if there is always a little bit of current, the red gorgonians can grow more than 1 meter in diameter and are really a great attraction for every scuba diver. Beside this you can find walls completely covered with bright yellow sponges, colorful sea anemones and on some deep spots even red corals. On fishlife you mainly can see

small and medium size fish, some of them in big schools, for example good size scorpionfish, moray eels, giant conger eels, spiny lobsters and normal lobsters.

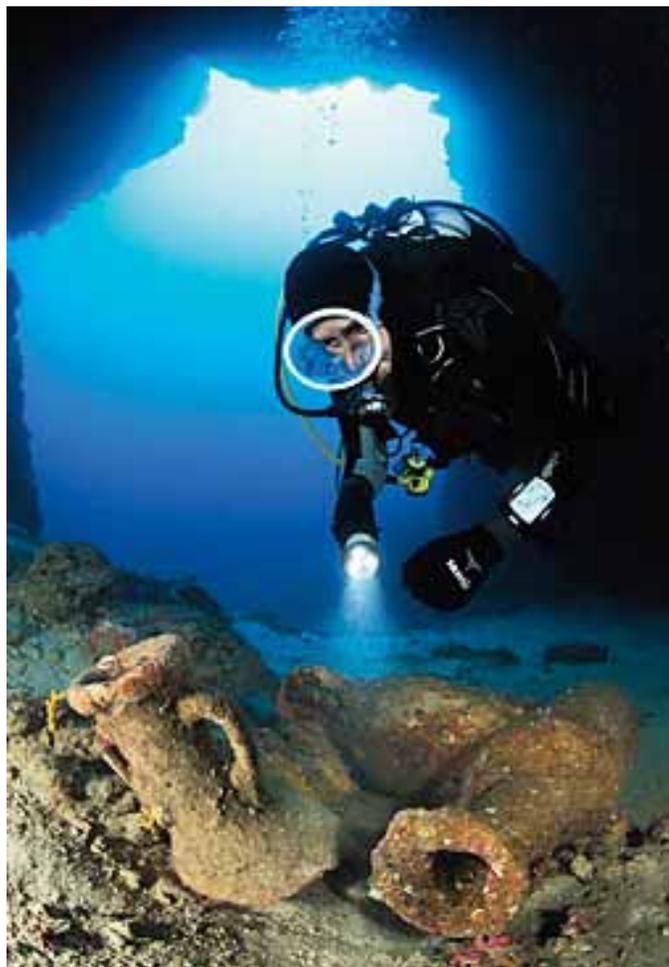
Also always of note are mystical caverns and caves. The limestone along the coast is perforated here and there like a swiss cheese and allows scuba divers of all levels to investigate all the tunnels and caves.

Specially for beginners and underwater-photographers there are lots of shallow bays covered with rocks and seagrass where you can find two species of well camouflaged seahorses. Much easier to find are common sepia and octopus, who also live there.

A special suggestion is to do some nightdives during your stay in Croatia. Even in the shallow waters you will find lots of interesting and colourful stuff down there!

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Hidden treasures are still waiting to get investigated.

Clear water, great biodiversity, excellent scuba diving facilities and friendly people - Croatia is a „must“ to visit!

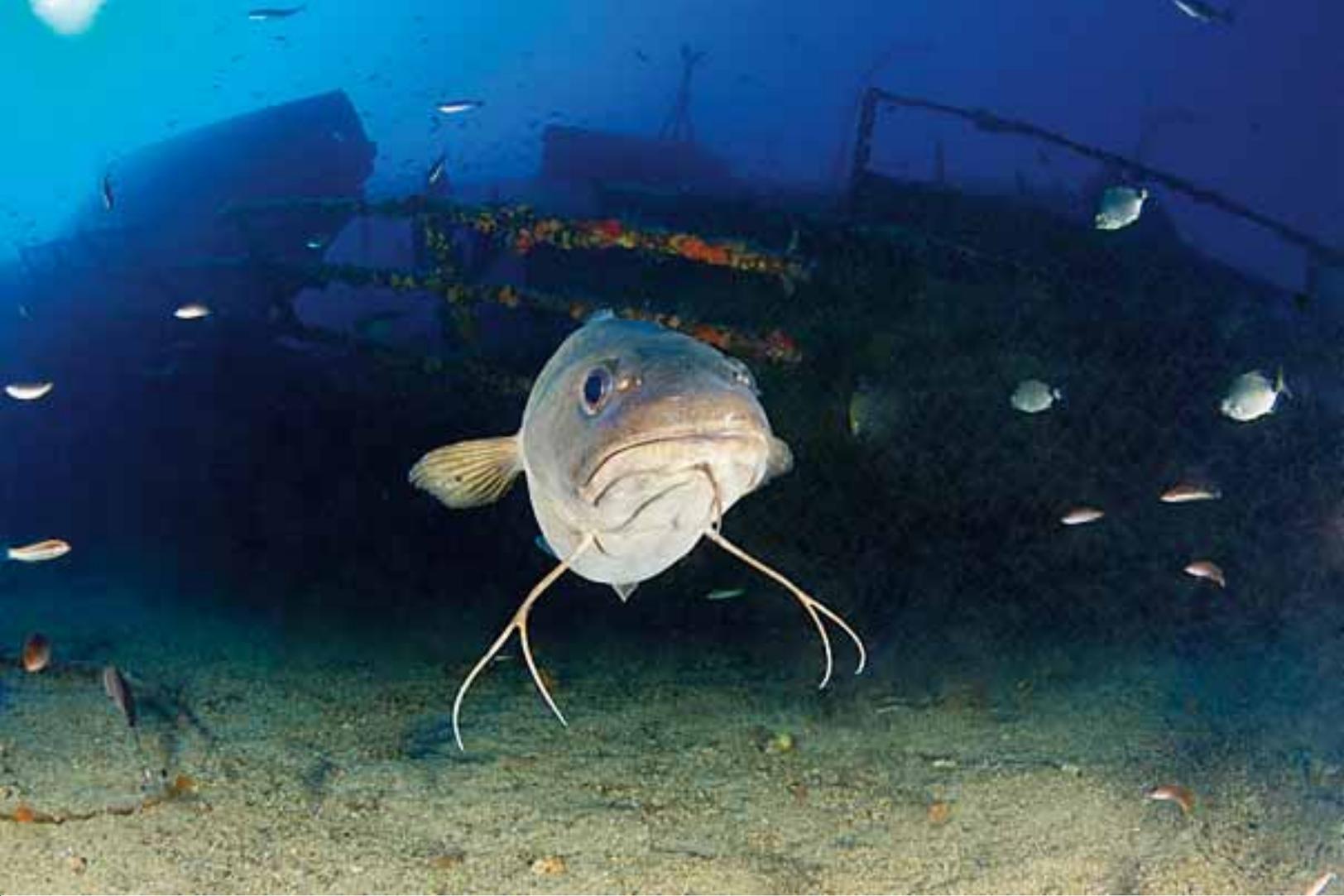




Shipwreck „Brioni“ sunken in the 2nd World War in front of the island of Vis/Dalmatia. Specially for technical divers (45-60m).

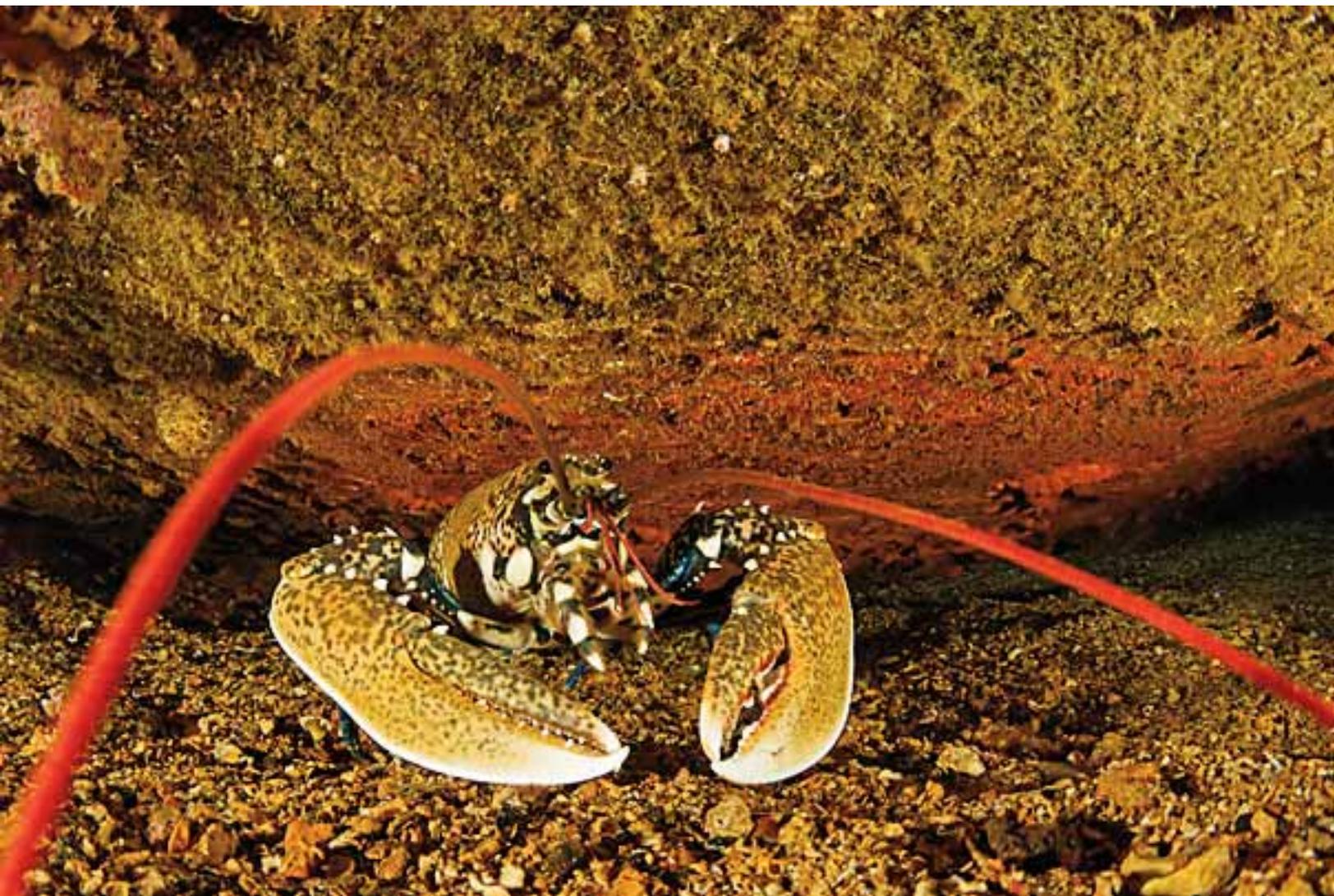
Great scenery in the shallow cave „Blue Hole“ on the island of Korcula/Dalmatia. Best time to visit at noon.





Greater Forkbeard in front of shipwreck Teti on the island of Vis/Dalmatia. The 50 cm long predator is often found close to wrecks.

The European Lobster also likes to hide under shipwrecks. Beside his beauty, he is also a delicacy to eat.





Diving on a colorful wall covered with sea fans, corals, sponges - perfect to protect the spiny lobster. Taken on island of Korcula/Dalmatia.

Morey Eels can be found in the southern part of Croatia, specially in Dalmatia.





Tiny but colorful nudibranchs can be found all over Croatia. This species (*Flabellina affinis*) is feeding on Hydrozoans only.

Diving is fun and easy - even children can learn it in the warm water during summer time.





The Common Octopus (*Octopus vulgaris*) is very intelligent and friendly. Divers often get in contact with him.

Large mussel (*Pinna nobilis*) in the middle of a seagrass bed. Seagrass is the lung of the ocean - it produces oxygen like the rainforests on land.





Overhang covered with large colonies of orange Bryozoans (*Smittina cervicornis*) in front of the island Korcula/Dalmatia.

Quite common fish in the shallow water - Ornate wrasse (*Thalassoma pavo*).





Croatia is full of well known historical cities. In 1979, the city of Dubrovnik joined the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites.

Commercial fishing industry is still an important part of the country at the Mediterranean Sea.





Small fishing boats in the picturesque harbor of Rovinj/Istria.

In some parts of Croatia diving is also possible from the shore - here in Labin on the peninsula of Istria.





Lonely shingle beaches can be found along the whole coast. In summertime the watertemperature rise up to 25°C - nice for swimming.

Croatia during winter time - walk along the promenade of Opatija/Bay of Kvarner. Snow on the mountains in the background.





Traditional dressed old woman in a small village at the countryside of the Island of Cres/Kvarner.

The annual minimum of the water temperature is about 13°C during February.







Seahorses (*Hippocampus guttulatus*) can be found in the warm shallow waters (left). Sea slug *Tylodina perversa* feeding on sponge (above).

The tiny shrimp (*Periclimenes sagittifer*) lives together in a symbiotic relationship with seanezones.





Scorpionfish like to stay on rocky seafloor but you also can find them in wrecks.

Diving at an untouched shipwreck with old artefacts like large bottles of glass in front of the island of Krk/Kvarner Bay (below and right).





