

OPATIJA INDIVIDUAL GRADES 2016

Natural and cultural factors:	4.55
General and transport infrastructure:	4.29
Tourist infrastructure:	4.85
Meeting infrastructure:	4.65
Subjective grade:	4.59
Marketing Buzz:	4.58
ICCA index:	1.22
Numbeo quality of life Index:	4.00
Global Peace Index:	3.70
Destination grade:	4.05

OPATIJA

EPICENTRE OF INCENTIVE INSPIRATIONS

Opatija is with no doubt an ultimate meetings destination. Why? Because few destinations provide such rich assortment of luxury accommodations in such a small area, whilst Opatija provides 32 hotels offering 2700 rooms, 60 congress and conferences halls within a radius of just 3 km of its coastline.

This little Adriatic city also known as the “Old Dame”, the “Nice of the Adriatic” or the ‘Queen of Croatian Tourism’ certainly deserves all the flattering titles since the tradition of business and leisure tourism dates back in the late 19th century, when in 1885 the first congress, the Congress of balneologists, was organised by the Austrian Southern Railway Company. Back then Opatija was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire which played a crucial role in placing this Northern Adriatic gem on the map of most sophisticated tourist destinations in the Balkan region and in the world.

The day I visited Opatija was not really a representative one in terms of weather and temperatures (I visited Opatija in late march this year), but luckily I have been regularly visiting Opatija for the past 20 years and have experienced it in all its splendour so the dark clouds and the mild rain didn’t disturb my overall impression and judgement of the city. On the contrary despite bad weather conditions the city was bursting with life, revealing its unique belle époque architectural style and landscape charms, which were only complemented with the warm and welcoming approach of the locals who in many ways seem to have inherited the noble spirit of the former monarchy, treating each guest with respect, complaisance and catching cordiality. In the words of Goran Pavlović, the head of convention and incentive bureau at the Tourist Board of Opatija, “Opatija is a rare mixture of history, tradition, enchanting cultural and natural diversity, supplemented with proximity and closeness to all major Central European cities”.

WHEN IT ALL BEGAN - FOLLOWING THE EMPIRE’S FOOTSTEPS

Opatija was formed in the 12th century, when St. Jacob’s church was built with a corresponding monastery - a Benedictine abbey for its ministers, which gave name to Opatija. Namely Opatija in Croatian means abbey, the St. Jacob’s abbey, who is also the guardian of the city. Later on in 19th century Opatija became a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and soon became a fashionable resort of Austro-Hungarian nobility. As mentioned above the Congress of balneologists, where Opatija was officially declared as the first bathing and climatic health resort on the Adriatic Sea, represented the springboard for future development of the city which today reigns as the unbeatable queen in the field of leisure and business tourism in Croatia and beyond. By 1913 Opatija turned into an elite resort, boasting with dozen hotels, 44 bed and breakfasts, 83 villas and even 5 baths surrounded by beautiful botanical gardens and didn’t cease to flourish during all these years, positioning itself as a world renowned, distinguished tourism destination. Opatija was one of Europe’s most important health resorts of the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, alongside Nice, Karlovy

Vary, Cannes and Biarritz. Even famous psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud advised to his patients: “Go take your cure in the waters of Opatija!”. Considered as one of the most beautiful Croatian cities, Opatija today represents a social and cultural intersection of the region combining Italian, Austrian and Croatian cultural heritage.

AT THE CROSSROADS OF CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN EUROPE

Opatija’s favourable central position in the Alpe-Adria region, which includes countries of Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Austria and Hungary certainly adds to its everlasting popularity. Opatija is situated in the Kvarner Gulf, the northern part of the Croatian Adriatic Sea, and is therefore the closest sea resort to all Central and Western Europe countries which is why Kvarner bay was and still is a very popular tourist destination. It is also located at the geographical crossroads of southern Croatia, southern Slovenia and eastern Italy, lying at the foot of the mountain Učka, a natural preserve, and covering an area of 54 square kilometres. The best thing about this noble seaside resort is precisely its location. Opatija is within the radius of 5-hour-drive from some of the most important cities in South and Central Europe like Zagreb, Ljubljana, Venice, Milan, Vienna, Budapest, Salzburg, Munich, Milan, Belgrade etc. In close proximity there are five international airports - Rijeka airport (connecting Rijeka with Munich and London (Heathrow)), island of Krk, Pula, Zagreb, Ljubljana-Brnik and Trieste, not to mention Venice airport which is the best choice for transcontinental flights.

OPATIJA IN BETWEEN GREEN AND BLUE HORIZONS

As sea side resort, Opatija’s great advantage is the sea with the nearby islands Krk, Cres and Lošinj, the mild climate and the Natural Park Učka massif which protects Opatija from the cold northern winds. The vegetation in this part of Croatia is absolutely stunning. Opatija enjoys the microclimate of the Kvarner region, characterised by mild temperatures throughout the whole year and light rain that supports the growth of lush subtropical vegetation surrounded by laurel woods, pine and palm trees, not to mention the majestic oak forests/trees covering the slopes of the mountain Učka. The forest is interlaced with many stone paved paths that speak of the glorious Austrian-Hungarian period when the emperor Franz Joseph, in order to maintain the image of an exquisite tourist resort, arranged many walking paths in the hills of the Učka massif and built the famous coastal promenade - the Lungomare, more than a 100 year old and 12 km long coastal walking path connecting Opatija and Lovran. All this abundant vegetation gives Opatija a fresh and vital look especially in combination with the town’s parks like Park Angiolina and Park St. Juraj which represent the monumental park architecture of Opatija. The Park of St. Juraj was recently also awarded the prize for the most beautiful Croatian park. There you can find more than 150 plant species, one of most prominent are: laurel, the leafless magnolia, cedar trees, pines, cherry-laurel, wood date-palms and camelias that have become symbols of Opatija.



“OLD LADY” WITH RICH EXPERIENCES, EXQUISITE LOOKS AND A VISION

It seems that the geographical position, the rich historical background and mostly the beautiful natural scenery enabled Opatija to keep reinventing itself and maintaining its leading position as a unique tourist destination. It continues to deliver and create new attractive stories in all cultural, touristic, urban and business areas. One of town's new acquisition is the Marino Cvetković sports hall. Namely, after 40 years of waiting and planning, Opatija opened its very first sports hall in 2014, which hosts not only sporting events, but also cultural and business events, exhibitions and fairs, entertainment programmes, concerts, conventions and congresses. The hall covers an area of 11,000 square metres with the large sports court providing 1,217 seats including movable stands (900 + 317 seats). In the basement there is a car parking area with 137 parking spaces and five bus parking spaces which is a fantastic news and a welcoming acquisition since Opatija has limited parking space and parking still remains a big challenge.

Opatija may appear as an “Old Lady”, but this old lady has rich experiences in the leisure and business tourism sector, incomparable charm accompanied with strong architectural, natural and cultural features that has been inviting, inspiring and fascinating visitors for more than 170 years. A rich architectural heritage of well preserved and magnificent villas – the prime examples of Belle Époque architecture, that dom-

inate the coastline, nicely decorated gardens which give the city an aristocratic feel, luxury restaurants, spa facilities etc. all this gives the city its vital dynamics and a youthful spirit. The most intriguing thing about Opatija is that its core is more vivid than most of the top touristic destinations on the Adriatic. Namely, Opatija is one of the busiest tourist destinations in Croatia, since it offers an all year round tourist buzz.

CONGRESS IS KING

Opatija is a synonym for congress tourism and has been considered as a major convention destination for several decades now. Namely, Opatija hosts more than 500 congresses, seminars, various meetings and events each year, more than 50% of them are organized by Opatija's regular customers and partners who have been coming to Opatija for the past 40 years. Opatija's main focus is to provide an all year round tourism offer and has until today succeeded in doing exactly that. For instance in January Opatija covers 10% of the entire Croatian tourism income, which can be a surprising fact if we compare it to other mega tourism hubs like Dubrovnik or Rovinj which have up to 30,000 sleeping accommodations (Opatija has all together 8,000 sleeping accommodations) but are fulfilled only during high season period.

Today Opatija boasts with 3 major congress hotels: the 4 Opatijska Cvjeta (can host up to 500 people) with the new corresponding Design Hotel Royal (built in 2014 within the Milenij

hotel Group) that prides with a large Royal Hall – banquet hall for congresses, conferences, weddings covering 750m² of surface (500 + 200m²) and is the largest congress hall in Opatija by surface, able to host up to 800 people. The second one is the Remenisens Hotel Ambassador, built in 1960 with a congress hall welcoming 515 delegates and with 7 break-out rooms. The third one is the Grand Hotel Adriatic, situated on the exit from Opatija, and a hotel with the longest congress tourism tradition in modern time. The hotel includes two different complexes and an amphitheatrical congress hall with 550 seats. Each of the mentioned hotels can host up to 500 people, in case of a larger event, the hotel 4 Opatijska Cvjeta, the Design Hotel Royal and the hotel Ambassador can join together to host a larger event up to 1000 delegates.

NEW HOTELS AND RENOVATIONS

In the past 5 years Opatija has succumbed to some serious renovations and adjustments of hotels and other tourist facilities. Namely in 2014 Hotel Kvarner became a part of the Remisens Premium Hotel brand and today operates under the new name “Remisens Premium Hotel Kvarner”. This was the first hotel built on the Adriatic coast, built in 1884 and represents the elegance and delicacy of Opatija and is best known for its Crystall hall. The hotel underwent a complete redecoration of all rooms and is now categorized as a 4-star hotel. The already mentioned the Design Hotel Royal, opened



in summer 2014, is a 4-star hotel arranged as a 5-star hotel, with 54 luxury rooms and is considered as an extension to the “4 Opatijska cvijeta hotel” as both hotels are connected via underground corridors. Special feature of the hotel is the largest conference hall in Opatija, the Royal Hall, which is complementing the 7 meetings halls of the “4 Opatijska Cvijeta” hotel. The Remisens Hotel Bellevue Palace in 2016 is becoming one of the holders of trademarks Remisens on the Opatija Riviera. New investments include refurbishment of rooms and common areas by maintaining discreet neo baroque style arrangements, a new wellness center, and expanding and improving the quality of content and services.

Another not so recent novelty, but certainly worth mentioning is the new hotel Bevanda (opened in 2013). A top class 5-star boutique hotel established within a world famous Chain of luxury hotels, Relais & Chateaux, constructed right above the famous restaurant Bevanda. This truly exclusive hotel has 10 rooms (5 in each floor, floors can be separated from each other offering more intimate space for closed groups), each of them tastefully decorated with top notch equipment and offering impressive sea views. The hotel also operates the corresponding beach - the Bevanda beach resort, which was completely renovated and is ideal for hosting evening events.

Conceptually completely different 5-star hotel, hotel Navis opened in 2014 and represents a



welcoming refreshment in terms of the existing Riviera’s hotel offer. The modern and abstract design of the hotel with amazing interior and outdoor decoration, with heavy patina finishes on the walls, unique furniture, wooden details, rooms with separated living rooms all offering majestic views of the sea, a fantastic restaurant that in just 2 years become a recognizable and respectable gastronomy zone and above all the

overall conceptual design (Navis is designed as a cruise ship) that delivers an intriguing hotel story are just some of the features that contributed to the hotel’s prompt success. The hotel has 40 designer-decorated rooms and 4 suites and also a small meetings room, to welcome maximum 40 guests.

TOP EVENT VENUES

The Villa Ariston has a magnificent garden and represents a perfect venue place to host events like receptions, presentations, evening ceremonies for about 200-300 people. Here you can open a fashion show or have an intimate corporate party, with local food tastings, exclusive presentation of a new product, business partners party, etc. Then there is the Bevanda Beach resort, a special open air venue place with removable sliding glass doors so events can be organized also in winter time. The place is really remarkable, located directly at the sea side offering unique views of the city of Opatija and its exclusive architectural masterpieces. It is best for hosting evening events, cocktails, receptions, etc. for up to 300 participants or more. The Bevanda Beach resort is a new Opatija's hotspot taking a whole touristic experience to another level. In the proximity of park Angiolina there is Art pavilion Šporer, ideal for receptions, and Opatija's Open Air Theatre - a large amphitheatre-shaped auditorium with a capacity of 2,500 seats. It is a perfect venue for concerts and open air events. In addition to the large central stage, there is another, smaller stage, suitable for more intimate performances, cocktail parties and similar events.

TOP RESTAURANTS

Tourist Board of the Kvarner region created a project in 2014 with intention to brand top quality restaurants called the Kvarner Gourmet and Kvarner Food project, where among 67 most excellent restaurants in the Kvarner bay 50% of them are located in Opatija's Riviera and obtained the highest quality mark, the "Kvarner gourmet mark". Among them are the restaurant Kukuriku (Kastav), Draga di Lovrana, Lovranska Draga, Johnsson - excellent fish restaurant in Moscenicka Draga, Najade, Lovran, restaurant Bevanda providing an ambiance of exclusivity and a memorable menu, restaurant Laurus (Hotel Vila Kapetanović), restaurant Ariston.

**DESTINATION GRADE:
QUALITY MEETINGS DESTINATION**

- GRADES:**
- 5 excellent meetings destination
 - 4 quality meetings destination
 - 3 recommendable meetings destination
 - 2 average meetings destination
 - 1 so so



INDIVIDUAL GRADES:

A. NATURAL AND CULTURAL FACTORS: 4,55

The whole part of the Kvarner below the Učka mountain is famous for its mild climate, due to the sunny position below Učka, which allows all year-round tourism. This combined with lush vegetation and a clean Kvarner sea is main reason for the development of 30 kilometres of the Opatija or Liburnia Riviera. The primary tourist motive is therefore natural wellness that nicely upgrades the needs of congress organisers.

B. GENERAL AND TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE: 4,29

Connections with Rijeka are good and also at Opatija's disposal is the relative proximity to the major population conglomerates of Central Europe. In terms of infrastructure Opatija appears tidy and offers a truly diverse tourism story with the legendary tourist Adriatic Riviera connected with an attractive Lungomare promenade.



C. TOURIST INFRASTRUCTURE: 4,85

Almost every stone and building in Opatija is a witness to the rich history of the city's tourism, which was once called the 'Nice of the Adriatic'. With the renovation of hotels, which is in full swing, it will again shine in its former beauty and with an upscale hotel offer. A rich gastronomy offer thrills, with some restaurants at the peak of Croatian cuisine.

D. MEETINGS INFRASTRUCTURE: 4,65

The ratio between hotel rooms and congress facilities enables the organisation of medium sized conferences with up to 600 participants. In Opatija there is virtually no hotel without meeting facilities, and also very attractive is the accompanying offer with its well-developed incentive programmes and the offer connected by the Opatija Convention Bureau.

E. SUBJECTIVE GRADE: 4,59

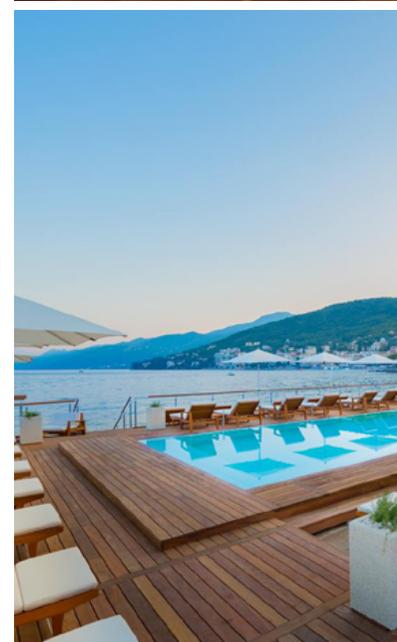
An elegant tourist lady who is showing her old age but has managed to overcome the old-fashioned habits and with major investments made in the past 3 years is ready to once again position herself as a leading congress destination with emphasis on tradition, style and exclusivity.

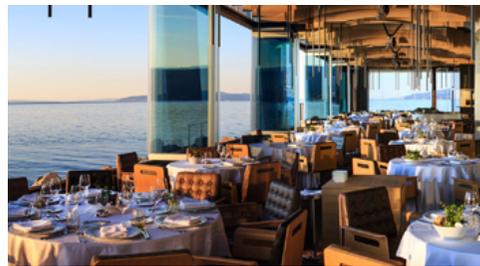
COMPARISON WITH THE REGION:

170 years of tourism tradition is based on the positive energy of the riviera and the exceptional natural conditions. This is a great sign for the revival of Opatija congress tourism, which has recently relaxed slightly in comparison with the hyperactive Croatian Adriatic competitors. The city already boasts the entire infrastructure, but it is beaten mostly by an unfavourable image and somewhat slow adjustment to the new congress market conditions. A change of the structure of hotels is also necessary, as 'cosmopolitan' Opatija today only boasts three hotels in the 5-star category, whilst in Dubrovnik there are now 14

COOL MEETINGS:

Kvarner scampi: are considered to be the best in the world. Identified by the pale red colour and thinner armour, their specialty is – experts say – in that they live here in a very shallow sea with a lot of drinkable water springs and are therefore very soft and sweet.





 **WHAT'S NEW 2016**

1. New Cultural and Touristic Center - Another novelty which will significantly contribute to the implementation of Opatija's cultural and urban scene is the establishment of a new Cultural and touristic centre which is now in construction and is due to be opened in December 2016. This new city complex is envisaged to strengthen the cultural and tourism infrastructure of the city, offering a full-year program that will raise the cultural diversity and increase the city's offer hosting different artistic, educational, entertainment and similar events. Conceptually, it is designed so it can accommodate theatre performances, concerts, exhibitions and at the same time host various conference and other business events. The first floor will be designed as an amphitheatrical hall with a gallery, offering 450 seats, with cabins for simultaneous translation, a stage of 220m² of surface with digital projection equipment and a large screen. The ground floor is reserved for a congress hall of 330m² with the possibility of splitting it into three smaller halls (3 x 110m² or 2 x 160m²) and will thus serve as a multi-purpose hall. In the second basement there will be a banquet room for catering, equipped with its own kitchen, covering 650m² of surface and ideal for hosting exhibitions, cocktail receptions, etc. The centre is one of the key investments of the city of Opatija, after getting a sports hall Marino Cvetković.

 **BEST INCENTIVE IDEA**

Imperial dinner - In cooperation with the City of Vienna, each year a "Viennese Ball" is organized in hotel Kvarner or Hotel Royal in Opatija where everyone is dressed in the clothes worn in the period of Austro-Hungarian Empire and dance to the 19th century music. An incentive can be organized as an imperial dinner where costumed staff and guests can relive the historic period of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. This sort of event can be organized any time of the year.

The Hotel Continental's brilliant Gastro world - If you are looking for a really intense and rich culinary journey all in one place, to get a wow effect from your guests than the Gastro World of the Hotel Continental is the place you are looking for. At first glance when entering the lobby of the hotel Continental where the Gastro world begins it seems as if you are entering an ordinary café bar, but soon the 6 different gastronomic zones reveal themselves one by one, and you can hardly decide which one to visit. The best thing to do is to take your time and visit all of them. On the surface of 1000 m² you can either choose to start your visit at the Juicy Champagne Bar and get the vitamins flowing in your bloodstream. Then continue to the Délicatesse "Bokunić" to get a taste of the best quality 'pršut' (prosciutto), cheeses, olives and other delicacies from the best producers. To quench your thirst stop at the "Antiqua Osteria da Ugo" and choose among more than 40 domestic and foreign types of beer or treat yourself with delicious coffee or tea and then descend to the basement where you will discover a mini chocolate factory, the Milenij Choco World" where you can see the process of making chocolate, cakes and other chocolate products, and be the first to taste them.

Bevanda Wine Cellar - Hotel Bevanda owns a small but authentic wine cellar, in the basement of the hotel where you can chose from a rich selection of over 700 labels of the greatest wines from the world carefully selected by Croatian's top sommelier Claudio Jurčić. The wine cellar can host 8-10 people to hold a wine tasting event. The hotel organizes a several wine tasting workshops and works closely with the Istrian winery Kozlović, offering wine varieties like Ribolla, Malvasia, Kabola, sparkling wine Bevanda and Kozlović.

 **WHO TO CONTACT**

Tourist board Opatija, Congress department
Goran Pavlović, Tel. +385 51 603 273, +385 99 226 3229
www.visitopatija.com, goran@visitopatija.com