

JOURNEY I · HERZEGOVINA

The Karst Spring



A ten-day hosted journey through Herzegovina's springs, stones and herbs

Ten days · Eight guests

Hosted by the owners in English, French & Bosnian

SEASON · APRIL–MAY AND SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER

VRELO COLLECTION · THE HOSTED JOURNEYS

The Invitation

Why we host this road ourselves

Herzegovina is a country of springs. Water rises here whole and cold out of the karst — at Trebinje, at Blagaj, beneath the Old Bridge — and everything else, the wine, the herbs, the stone towns, arranges itself around that first act of the land giving up water. We built this journey to move at the speed of those springs: slowly, from three bases, with time to sit.

We host it ourselves because the material is ours. We know which winemaker will open the cellar after hours, which shepherd's wife still distils helichrysum in a copper still, which hour the light falls cleanest on the Radimlja stones. Ten days, eight guests, two to a room — small enough that a whole house becomes ours for a few nights, and the days can bend around the table rather than the clock. We host in English, French and Bosnian, and we travel the road with you rather than ahead of it.

— *The owners, Vrelo Collection*

The Shape of the Journey

Route, bases, and pace

The road runs inland from the sea and never doubles back. You land on the coast — Dubrovnik, an hour south, or Mostar's small airport — and climb into the limestone. From there the journey rests on three bases and lets the days radiate outward from each. And it moves the way the best travel films do — from person to person rather than sight to sight: the monk who pours, the beekeeper who narrates the year, the family whose cheese is tasted in the room where it was made. The places hold the days; the people carry them.

Landfall	Dubrovnik or Mostar (OMO)	Arrival ritual, not a night — we gather, then drive inland
Trebinje	Three nights	Wine country, the plane-tree square, monastery cellars
Stolac	By day, en route	The Radimlja stećci and the Bregava, on the drive north
Počitelj & Blagaj	Three to four nights	Vila Lavanda as our anchor; the tekke, the Buna spring
Mostar	Three nights	The Old Bridge, fireside tables, the last of the herbs
Departure	Mostar or Dubrovnik	The road back to the coast

On pace

Depth over movement. Three bases in ten days means you unpack twice, not eight times. Mornings are generally the working hours of the journey — a cellar, a necropolis, a distillation — and the afternoons loosen: a terrace, a swim, the shade of a fig tree. One full day is left deliberately open. There is no hurrying karst water, and we do not try.

The Ten Days

The heart of the journey

Day 1

The Drive Inland

Landfall · Trebinje

Morning

We meet on the coast — at Dubrovnik, or at Mostar's small airport if you have flown in over the mountains. There is no rush; the first act of the journey is simply to gather, trade names, and let the sea fall away behind us as the road climbs into limestone.

Afternoon

The drive to Trebinje is short and the border quiet. Herzegovina opens as a country of pale rock and low vines. Where the road first opens over the valley we pull off for the first road table — local cheese, cured ham, cold pomegranate juice and a glass of Žilavka, taken standing with the view. By late afternoon we are in Trebinje, checking into rooms scented already with rosemary from the terraces below.

Evening

A first supper together, unhurried, with a bottle of Žilavka opened to mark the start. The plane trees on the main square hold the day's heat well past dark; we walk it off slowly before the first proper night's sleep.

Day 2

Cellars Below the Town

Trebinje

Morning

The morning belongs to wine. We go first to Tvrdoš Monastery†, an Orthodox house four kilometres from town that has made wine since the fifteenth century, its cellars cut into the gorge above the Trebišnjica. The monks pour Vranac and Žilavka, and the tasting is quiet, almost devotional.

Afternoon

At midday we drive out to Tuli, ten kilometres into the karst, where the Kisin household† keeps a small cow's-milk dairy behind its tavern — the cheese and cured meat tasted at the family's own table, a few steps from where they were made. Back in town, we climb to Vukoje 1982 — the family winery whose cellars lie eight metres underground and whose rooftop opens over the whole valley. A guided walk through the barrique rooms ends with a seated tasting on the terrace, the vineyards laid out below.

Evening

Dinner at Restoran Vukoje†, the winery's own table, where the local wines meet raštika, Herzegovinian cheese and slow-cooked lamb. The descent back into town is short and the stars are close.

Day 3

The Plane-Tree Town

Trebinje

Morning

A gentler morning. We walk the old town within its walls, cross to the Arslanagić bridge, and climb to Hercegovačka Gračanica†, the hilltop church whose terrace holds the finest view over the river bend and the roofs below.

Afternoon

The afternoon is a working farm. We drive out to Apiary Kovačević† at Skrobotno, a family apiary on the cheese-and-honey trail of eastern Herzegovina, keeping bees here since the 1930s. The beekeeper walks us through the hives and the extracting room, and the tasting runs from sage honey to heather — the same hillsides we walked that morning, rendered into a jar.

Evening

An early plant walk with us before supper — the first of the journey's botanical threads — gathering wild rosemary and sage from the slopes, learning the difference by scent alone. Supper is light and local, taken back in town.

Day 4

Stones That Stand

Trebinje · Stolac · Počitelj

Morning

We leave Trebinje after breakfast and drive north into the Bregava valley. The road unspools through Popovo polje and up toward Stolac, one of the oldest inhabited sites in the region, layered with Illyrian, Roman and Ottoman stone. Where the polje is widest, a road table is laid — cheese, figs, juice and wine against the limestone.

Afternoon

At Radimlja, three kilometres west of Stolac, we stop for the stećci — 133 medieval tombstones standing in a clearing, carved with raised hands, moons, hunts and vines. A historian† walks them with us, reading the stones that stand, as their name says, over the dead of the Miloradović clan. Lunch follows in Stolac by the Bregava, at Old Mill† beside the water.

Evening

By evening we reach Počitelj and settle into Vila Lavanda, our anchor for the middle of the journey — a whitewashed villa wrapped in lavender and old fig trees beneath the Ottoman fortress. Supper is in the garden, when we want it.

Day 5

The Source of the Buna

Počitelj & Blagaj

Morning	We drive the short road to Blagaj early, before the day's crowds. The Buna does not trickle from the karst — it arrives whole, a full cold river surging from the base of a hundred-metre cliff, the loudest quiet water in Herzegovina.
Afternoon	At its edge stands the tekke, a white dervish house built in the sixteenth century against the rock. We enter quietly — shoes off, voices low — and sit a while where dervishes have sat for four hundred years, the river filling the silence.
Evening	Back at Vila Lavanda the afternoon belongs to the shaded terrace and the pool. In the evening, the journey's signature ritual: a seven-course table at Konoba Vrelo, at the water's edge in Blagaj, lit by candle and current.

Day 6

The Fortress Village

Počitelj

Morning	A morning in Počitelj itself. We climb the stepped lanes of the walled town to the Sahat-kula tower and the Hajji Alija mosque, the Neretva turning green far below. The stone holds the cool of the night well into the morning.
Afternoon	The distillation ritual takes the middle of the day — the heart of the plant thread. In the garden we lay cut helichrysum, the immortelle that scents these hills silver-gold, into a copper still and draw off its hydrosol drop by drop, learning the plant by steam and patience.
Evening	A quiet evening at the villa. The garden gives supper; the fig trees drop their shade across the terrace, and the first stars come up over the fortress. Nothing is scheduled after dark.

Day 7

An Unhurried Day

Počitelj & Blagaj

Morning	Nothing is planned this morning, and that is the plan. Breakfast comes to the garden when you rise. Some guests swim; some read on the terrace; some ask us, over coffee, about the road ahead.
Afternoon	The afternoon stays open. Those who want it can be driven back to the Buna to canoe the still water above the spring, or to walk the fruit rows of the Badžak family plantation† at Blagaj — pomegranates, figs and cherries picked and tasted where they grow, the farmer explaining the orchard as we go. Those who want the terrace keep the terrace.
Evening	Supper is at home, in the villa garden — whatever the day's market offered, cooked simply, eaten late. An evening with no next place to be.

Day 8

Across the Old Bridge

Počitelj · Mostar

- Morning** The short drive to Mostar. We arrive in the old town on foot, through the coppersmiths' lane, and settle into Muslibegović House — an Ottoman residence turned intimate hotel, its courtyard cool and green in the heart of the town.
- Afternoon** In the late afternoon, when the day-trippers thin, we cross the Old Bridge — Stari Most, the sixteenth-century arch broken in the war and raised again stone by stone, now a UNESCO site and the emblem of the whole country's mending. We watch the divers from the water's edge.
- Evening** Dinner at the Stari Most Table — eight seats facing the open fire, a stone's throw from the bridge. The fire does the cooking; we do the talking, late into the night.
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Day 9

The Turning City

Mostar

- Morning** A slow morning in Mostar's bazaar before it wakes fully — the copper workshops, the Karadžozbeg mosque with its minaret view over the river, the small museum of the bridge and its long history of breaking and rebuilding.
- Afternoon** The afternoon is the journey's last loose hours. There is time for the hammam, for a final coffee ground fine and served with lokum, or for one more crossing of the bridge in gentler light. We gather the plant thread here too — the small vials of helichrysum water, labelled, to carry home.
- Evening** A last supper together, unhurried and long, somewhere quiet in the old town. Ten days close the way they opened: a bottle, a table, and time enough to sit at it.
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Day 10

Back to the Sea

Mostar · Departure

- Morning** Breakfast without a clock, then the road back to the coast. We drive you to Mostar's airport or on to Dubrovnik, retracing in an hour the country the journey took ten days to cross.
- Afternoon** Goodbyes are made at the water's edge, where the journey began. The herbs travel with you — rosemary, lavender, immortelle — in the vials and in the memory of them.
- Evening** The spring keeps rising after you leave. It always has.
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† Proposed addition — to be confirmed by the hosts.

The Stays

Three houses, each held for several nights

Hotel Nar

Trebinje

A quiet town house near the plane-tree square, low-key and unshowy, with rosemary and pomegranate (nar) at the door. It puts the old town, the market and the river all within a short walk — a calm base for three nights of cellars and slow mornings.

BEST FOR Travellers who want the town at their feet and no fuss about it.

NOT FOR Those seeking a grand resort or a spa wing.

IN BRIEF SLEEPS OUR GROUP ACROSS ITS ROOMS · OLD-TOWN WALKING BASE · POMEGRANATE COURTYARD

Vila Lavanda

Počitelj — the garden villa beneath the fortress

A whitewashed villa wrapped in lavender and old fig trees, looking up at the Ottoman fortress of Počitelj. The garden gives breakfast when you want it; the afternoons belong to the shaded terrace and the pool. Family-run, unhurried, and scented with herbs from the first hour of light — the anchor of the whole journey, and for these nights it is ours alone.

BEST FOR Couples and pairs who want a whole house and a slow middle to the road.

NOT FOR Anyone who needs a lift, room service, or city noise.

IN BRIEF SLEEPS 8 · 4 BEDROOMS · LAVENDER TERRACE & POOL · FROM €175 / NIGHT · AIRPORT: MOSTAR (OMO) 25 MIN

Muslibegović House

Mostar

An eighteenth-century Ottoman residence in the heart of the old town, turned into an intimate hotel around a cool green courtyard. Kilims, low divans and carved wood; the Old Bridge is a few minutes' walk through the coppersmiths' lane. History you sleep inside of, not beside.

BEST FOR Guests who want to wake within the walled old town, steps from the bridge.

NOT FOR Those who prefer modern minimalism or step-free access throughout.

IN BRIEF OTTOMAN COURTYARD HOUSE · STEPS FROM STARI MOST · AWARD-WINNING HERITAGE STAY

The Tables

Every dining moment worth naming

Konoba Vrelo BLAGAJ	A seven-course table at the water's edge, lit by candle and current.	From €95 / guest
Stari Most Table MOSTAR	Eight seats facing the open fire, a stone's throw from the Old Bridge.	From €130 / guest
Restoran Vukoje† TREBINJE	The winery's own table — local wine, raštika and slow lamb, above the vineyards.	—
Tvrdoš Monastery cellar† NEAR TREBINJE	A quiet monastic tasting of Vranac and Žilavka in fifteenth-century cellars.	—
Platani† TREBINJE	The plane-tree café on the square — long coffees and Herzegovinian staples.	—
Old Mill† STOLAC	A lunch by the Bregava after the stećci, beside the running water.	—
The villa garden POČITELJ	Suppers at Vila Lavanda — the day's market, cooked simply, eaten late.	Included
The Road Table EN ROUTE	On every transfer day, a cloth laid at a viewpoint — sack cheese, cured ham, Žilavka and Blatina, pomegranate and fig juices — the road itself set as a table.	Included

† Proposed addition — to be confirmed by the hosts.

The Experiences

Guided visits, and who leads them

Vukoje 1982, underground

with the winemaking family

A walk through cellars cut eight metres into the rock, ending in a seated tasting on the rooftop terrace above the vineyards — poured by the family who make the wine.

Tvrdoš Monastery cellars†

with a monk of the house

A tasting of Vranac and Žilavka in an Orthodox monastery that has made wine since the fifteenth century, in cellars above the Trebišnjica gorge.

Radimlja stećci

with a regional historian†

The 133 medieval tombstones read aloud — the raised hands, the hunts, the epitaphs of the Miloradović clan — by someone who knows the stones by name.

Apiary Kovačević, Skrobotno†

with the beekeeping family

A working apiary between Trebinje and Bileća, kept by the same family since the 1930s. The hives, the extracting room, and a guided tasting of the karst's honeys — sage, heather, wildflower — with the beekeeper narrating the year.

Domaćinstvo Kisin, Tuli†

with the Kisin family

A rural household in the karst above Trebinje with its own small cheese dairy and tavern — cow's cheese and cured meat tasted where they are made, at the family's table.

The Badžak family plantation, Blagaj†

with the farming family

A family fruit plantation beneath the Blagaj karst — pomegranates, figs, cherries, peaches — walked row by row with the people who planted it, tasting straight from the tree and hearing how the harvest is dried, pressed and preserved.

Blagaj tekke & the Buna

hosted by the owners

An early, quiet entry to the dervish house at the source of the Buna, before the crowds, with time simply to sit by the surging spring.

Počitelj on foot

hosted by the owners

The stepped lanes of the walled Ottoman town, up to the Sahat-kula tower and the mosque, the Neretva turning green below.

The Old Bridge, at dusk

hosted by the owners

Stari Most crossed when the day-trippers thin — the broken-and-rebuilt arch, the divers, and the story of a city mending itself.

† Proposed addition — to be confirmed by the hosts.

The Rituals

The plant thread, and the water

The plant anchors

Four plants carry this journey, and you meet them by scent before you meet them by name: Rosmarinus and Salvia on the Trebinje slopes, Lavandula angustifolia across the villa terraces at Počitelj, and Helichrysum italicum — the immortelle — silvering the hills around Blagaj.

The tactile layer

The thread runs through the days as touch, not decoration. A plant walk above Trebinje, gathering wild rosemary and sage and learning them blind. And, at the heart of the middle days, the distillation ritual in the Počitelj garden: cut helichrysum laid into a copper still, the hydrosol drawn off drop by drop over a slow fire. You leave with your own small vials, labelled and carried home — the journey rendered into scent. This is the Living Algorithm sensibility made literal: the material is the medium.

The water

And beneath the plants, the springs. Herzegovina's rituals are water rituals. We enter the Blagaj tekke quietly at the source of the Buna, where dervishes have sat for four centuries against the cliff. We cross the Old Bridge at dusk, over the Neretva. Water rises here whole and cold, and the journey keeps returning to it — the karst spring that gives the journey, and the Collection, its name.

The Practical Page

What to know before you request a place

Getting there

ARRIVAL

Dubrovnik (DBV), one hour from Trebinje — or Mostar (OMO), 25 minutes from the villa

DEPARTURE

Mostar (OMO) or Dubrovnik (DBV); Sarajevo (SJJ) two hours if preferred

ON THE ROAD

Two ways to travel: rent a car and drive yourself, in easy convoy with the hosts — the roads are good and the route unhurried — or have us provide a car and driver for the ten days, arranged at booking. Either way, every drive breaks at a road table of local cheese, wine and juice at a viewpoint

The group

SIZE

Eight guests, two to a room — designed around couples and pairs

HOSTING

Hosted by the two owners, in English, French and Bosnian — with private time built into every day

FITNESS

Easy to moderate: town walking, cobbled lanes, a fortress climb; the necropolis is flat

WEATHER

Spring and early autumn: warm dry days, cool evenings, wildflowers among the stećci

INCLUDED

NOT INCLUDED

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · All stays — three houses, held for several nights each · Every meal on the journey — breakfasts, lunches, dinners, the named tables, the villa suppers and the road tables; some hosted, some yours alone · The hosts on the road with you on every transfer day — self-drive convoy or a provided driver, chosen at booking · Both hosts across the journey — at the introductions and the key tables, with private time built in · All guided experiences — local guides where a visit calls for one, and the cellar visits · Working-farm visits — the apiary and the fruit plantation, tastings included · The plant walk and the distillation ritual | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · International flights to and from the coast · Rental car and fuel, for those who choose to drive themselves · Travel insurance · Personal purchases — wine to ship, souvenirs · Anything of a purely personal nature |
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Departures & Places

Five departures in 2027

The Karst Spring runs from late March to mid-May, and again from late September into October — when the herbs are working, the light is long, and the stećci stand among wildflowers. Five departures run in 2027, each hosted by the two owners, each capped at eight guests. Requests open inside the Grove on October 1, 2026, and publicly on October 15.

The Early Door	March 26 – April 4	The karst at full voice — wild asparagus, the first herbs, water everywhere
The April Crossing	April 16 – 25	Wildflowers among the stećci; lavender coming into its own
The May Crossing	May 7 – 16	Warm days, the vines in full leaf, long evenings
The Harvest Crossing	September 24 – October 3	Harvest in the cellars, immortelle silver on the hills
The Late Door	October 15 – 24	The last warm light, the cellars full, the roads quiet

FROM

€6,800 per guest

sharing a room — two guests to a room · travelling alone, a room of your own adds €850 · all stays, every meal & all experiences included on the ground

A full departure, privately — all eight places for one party, on dates of your choosing — from €8,150 per guest.

Requesting a place

- 1 Request — Tell us which window calls to you. No instant checkout — this is a conversation.
- 2 A personal reply — One of us replies personally within 48 hours, with the itinerary and any questions.
- 3 A place held — A 25% deposit holds your place on the crossing.
- 4 The balance — The balance is due 60 days before departure. Then we meet on the coast.

Sources & Notes

For researched venues, marked † in the document

The core of this journey — Vila Lavanda, Muslibegović House, Vukoje 1982, Konoba Vrelo and the Stari Most Table — is drawn from the Vrelo Collection's own inventory. Venues marked † are proposed additions to be confirmed by the hosts; their sources are listed below.

1. Restoran Vukoje & Vukoje 1982 winery, Trebinje. https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g303196-d4895975-Reviews-Restoran_Vukoje-Trebinje_Republika_Srpska.html
2. Vukoje Winery — Herzegovina Wine Route. <https://hwr.ba/wine-experiences/vukoje-winery/>
3. Tvrdoš Monastery winery & Trebinje guide. <https://www.bosnia-spirit.com/guides/trebinje-hercegovacka-gracanica/>
4. Trebinje travel guide (Platani, Hercegovacka Gračanica). <https://www.bosnia-spirit.com/destinations/trebinje/>
5. Radimlja stećci necropolis, Stolac (UNESCO). <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1504/>
6. Stolac & Radimlja visit guide. <https://exploremostar.com/stolac-radimlja/>
7. Old Mill restaurant, Stolac. https://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g303195-d12302124-Reviews-Old_Mill-Stolac_Herzegovina_Neretva_Canton_Federation_of_Bosnia_and_Herzegovina.html
8. Blagaj Tekke & the Buna spring. <https://www.bosnia-spirit.com/guides/blagaj-tekke-dervish-monastery/>
9. Počitelj Ottoman village guide. <https://www.bosnia-spirit.com/guides/pocitelj-ottoman-village/>
10. Old Bridge Area of the Old City of Mostar (UNESCO). <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/946/>
11. Rural Apiary Kovačević, Skrobotno — Cheese & Honey Trail of East Herzegovina. <https://ruralapiarykovacevic.com/>
12. Badžak family fruit plantation (Jaffa-Komerc), Blagaj. <https://furaj.ba/fruit-plantation-in-blagaj-new-heaven-for-tourists/>
13. Domaćinstvo Kisin, Tuli — rural tourism household. <https://www.tourismbih.com/location/rural-tourism-domacinstvo-kisin-tuli/>



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