

48 HOURS IN PULA

Isabel Putinja explores this seaside city with a Roman past that's on the tip of Croatia's Istrian Peninsula.



Don't miss ...

LANDMARK The city's best-known landmark is its first-century **Roman amphitheatre**, the sixth largest in the world and the best preserved. Once the stage for battles between Roman gladiators, this is a popular summer concert venue and the setting for the Pula Film Festival each July. (Scalierova 30, +385 52 219 028; ami-pula.hr)

HISTORIC The handsome square known as the **Forum** was once the centre of the city's cultural and political life. Today the only historic building remaining is the second-century Temple of Augustus with Corinthian columns supporting its portico. This is Croatia's oldest preserved building and houses a small sculpture museum.

LOCAL COLOUR The city's busy **farmers market** takes place each morning under the shade of chestnut trees next to the historic market building dating back to 1903. The fish market is located downstairs while the cafés on the upper level are where locals catch up over coffee. (Narodni trg 9, +385 52 218 122; trznica-pula.hr)



Drink at ...

LITERARY **Caffe Uliks** (Ulysses) pays homage to James Joyce, who taught English here at the turn of the century and is immortalised with a statue on the café's patio and his own cocktail. This cosy Art Nouveau-style pub also has an impressive selection of international whiskeys. (Trg Portarata 1, +385 52 219 158)

RETRO **Cvajner** is the most popular of the *al fresco* cafés overlooking the Temple of Augustus and town hall on the Forum, Pula's most beautiful square. The artsy interior features cosy, antique sofas and doubles as a gallery space showcasing work by local artists. (Forum 2, +385 52 52 216 502)



VINO Wine enthusiasts can sample some of the best Croatian wine at **Tappo Wine & Food**. Try the Istrian *malvazija* along with local speciality produce, such as *pršut* (cured ham), goats cheese, and extra virgin olive oil. (Istarska 38, +385 52 606 606)

Clockwise from top, sun sets over the Roman amphitheatre; wine and meat – a simple, yet enticing, proposal at Tappo; whiskey o'clock at Caffe Uliks, and the pleasingly crumbly Temple of Augustus.

SMART FLIERS

✓ **AER LINGUS** flies from Dublin to **PULA** three times per week.



Sleep at ...

CHIC Just steps away from the Roman amphitheatre, **Hotel Amfiteatar** is the best place to stay in the centre of town. This three-star is done up in a sleek, contemporary style, with some of the spacious guest rooms commanding sea views. Double rooms from €111. (Amfiteatarska 6, +385 52 375 600; hotelamfiteatar.com)

BOUTIQUE A short drive away from the city, the beachside **Hotel Valsabbion**, left, offers luxurious, modern guest rooms with tasteful wood and stone accents, a beach and lounge area, and swimming pool. Some rooms include private terraces or balconies with stunning sea views, while the penthouse has its own pool. Double rooms from €119. (Pješćana Uvala IX/26, +385 52 218 033; valsabbion.hr)

SEASIDE Located on the Punta Verudela peninsula, the sea-facing **Park Plaza Histria**, above right, is a large, resort-like four-star hotel with three restaurants, four bars, indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a wellness centre with a spa, gym and saunas, and easy access to the beach. Double rooms from €127. (Verudella 17, +385 52 590 000; arenaturist.com)



Eat at ...

POPULAR **Konoba Boccaporta** serves generous portions of fresh pasta, local fish and meat dishes, along with homemade bread and excellent, locally-produced wine and olive oil. The homestyle cuisine, rustic setting and excellent value for money make this a solid favourite with locals. (Dolinka 18, +385 52 506 266; konoba-boccaporta.com)

GOURMET Describing his cuisine as "Mediterranean with a twist", celebrity chef Deniz Zembo offers a fine dining experience at **Amfiteatar**. The innovative, gastronomic tasting menus of Instagrammable dishes feature seasonal ingredients used in creative ways, and vegetarian and vegan options - rare in meat-loving Croatia. (Amfiteatarska 6, +385 52 375 600; hotelamfiteatar.com)

HOMESTYLE Family-run **Trattoria Vodnjanka** is a simple eatery with a menu of traditional Istrian dishes such as *maneštra* vegetable stew, fresh *fuži* pasta with truffles, and *brodetto* fish stew. The menu is meat and fish heavy, but staff are happy to suggest off-menu, vegetarian-friendly options. (Ul. Dinka Vitezica 4, +385 52 210 655)



Clockwise from above, the illustrious bass graces most Istrian menus, the exterior of Hotel Amfiteatar - and the real thing in the background, and, a colourful medley of delicious fresh seafood.

