



Self-Guided Walk

Welcome to Motovun

The following commentary will bring some meaning to your Motovun hilltop stroll. The walk begins at the traffic barrier halfway up the hill (the highest you can drive unless you're sleeping at Hotel Kaštel).

The main drag leading up into town is lined with wine-and-truffle shops. My favorite is the Lanča family's **Etnobutiga ČA** (just above the parking lot on the right, at Gradiziol 33). This restored 17th-century house has a beautiful view terrace and a wide selection of local wines, brandies, and truffle products (most of them from the Zigante company, just across the valley); they also have a restaurant with grand views (Pod Napun). Like many people around here, Livio Lanča makes his own mistletoe brandy laced with honey (Easter-Oct daily 10:00-22:00, off-season closed Mon, closed Feb-mid-March, tel. 052/681-767).

Hike several more steep minutes up the hill, passing more local-products shops, truffles, and jewelry boutiques. Soon you'll reach yet another traffic barrier at the base of the town's wall (and

the recommended Mondo Konoba restaurant). Continuing up past the barrier, you'll earn grand views on the right—the little town across the valley floor is Livade, the heart of all that truffle commerce—then go through the first of two **defensive gateways**. Inside this passage (under the fortified gate), notice the various insignias from Motovun's history lining the walls—look for the Venetian lion, the Latin family tombstone, and the seal of Motovun (with a pyramid of five towers being watched over by an angel). The area above the gate was a storehouse for weapons in the 15th century, when Motovun first flourished.

Emerging from the gateway, you're greeted by more sweeping views of the valley below on your right-hand side. (A coffee or light meal with this view is unforgettable; the town's lone ATM is to your left.) Just up and to the left, you'll find another defensive gateway, which is the main entrance into the heart of the **Old Town**. (Inside this gateway, notice the recommended Konoba pod Voltom restaurant.)

To your left as you come through the main gate is the yellow town church, **St. Stephen's**. The crenellated tower is a reminder of a time when this hilltop town needed to be defended. While unassuming from the outside, this austere house of worship has an impressive pedigree: It's based on designs by the famous Venetian architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), who greatly influenced the Neoclassical architecture of Washington, DC. The interior is a little gloomy but refreshingly lived-in—used more by locals than by tourists. On the left, notice a painting of the heart of Jesus, its eyes following you around the church (free, generally open daily 10:00-18:00 and during frequent services).



As you stand on the square in front of the church, imagine Motovun during its annual **film festival**, when it's filled with 20,000 movie lovers from throughout the region and around the world—often including a minor celebrity or two. This square fills to capacity, and films are projected on a giant screen at the far end (generally late July or early Aug, www.motovunfilmfestival.com).

Facing the church is the **Italian Cultural Center**, which plays an important role in this very Italian corner of Croatia. While the building is not open to the public, if your timing is right you'll enjoy beautiful music spilling out from its windows and filling the square. The local *klapa* music troupe—with men's voices harmonizing a cappella—practices here twice weekly (usually Mon and Fri evenings, at 21:00 in summer and 20:00 in winter, www.klapamotovun.com). If you hear them, find a bench and enjoy the show.

At the other end of the square is a leafy little piazza dominated by the big, pink **Hotel Kaštel**—the main industry in town. This is also where bigwigs in town for the local film festival call home—ask the staff about recent sightings of B-, C-, and D-list celebrities. (For example, if you're staying here, you may be showering in the same bathroom once graced by Jason Biggs, star of *American Pie*. Lucky you.)



Between the church and Hotel Kaštel, follow the lane to the **ramparts**. Take the five-minute stroll

around the Old Town on these fortifications. While most of Croatia is overrun by stray cats, Motovun seems populated by dog lovers. If you see or hear dogs in people's backyards, it's a safe bet that they are trained to hunt for truffles in the surrounding forest.

As you breathe in the stunning panorama, notice that well-defended Motovun has been fortified three times—two layers of wall up top, and a third down below.