



TACOMA SISTER CITIES COUNCIL

SISTER/FRIENDSHIP CITIES PROGRAM - APPLICATION FOR DESIGNATION

To be completed by the requesting organization:

1. *Name and Country of the proposed SISTER City and partnering organization:*

SPLIT, Croatia

2. *Today's date:*

November 17, 2025

3. *Name of person requesting relationship:*

Title: CLARE PETRICH, Chair
Affiliation: SPLIT, CROATIA COMMITTEE
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4. *Rationale:*

Please explain the rationale and focus of the requested Sister Cities Designation. Describe why a Sister City relationship would be beneficial to the Sister Cities Council, the City of Tacoma and your local community, organization and city. Please outline the areas of mutual strength and interest for each of the participants. Limit this section to four pages. Items to include:

Tacoma's initial foray into Croatia's Dalmatian Coast in search of a Sister City began in 2015. Because many Croatian-Americans in Tacoma came from Dalmatia and the island of Hvar, we started our search for a partner first in Hvar City and next, in Stari Grad on the island of Hvar. The Economic Development Committee of the City of Tacoma approved the Application between Tacoma and Hvar. But, after a few initial meetings with him, Mayor Budrovic' was non-responsive. En route to a Sister Cities meeting in Brovary, Ukraine, Mayor Woodards, Debbie Bingham and Clare Petrich met the Mayor of Stari Grad but no papers were signed. Finally, we found our excellent match with Split, a city much more like Tacoma in size and attributes than the earlier choices. A Letter of Intent was signed by the Mayors of Split and Tacoma in October, 2023.

Split and Tacoma are both Port cities. Tacoma's port focuses on Asian cargo trade, Split's port is concentrated on Adriatic and Mediterranean transportation primarily via Ferries. Tourism plays a larger role in Split's economy. Sports, Education, Cultural exchanges are desirable and do-able. The strongest link between our communities are the people of Tacoma, many with deep roots in Dalmatia and other parts of Croatia.

- *Names, title and affiliations of those who will be involved from both cities.*

FROM TACOMA:

- Mayor of Tacoma: Victoria Woodard
- Clare Petrich, Chair, Business owner, former Port Commissioner, family from Hvar, Chair Tacoma Sister Cities
- Tanja Stack, Business owner. Born in Zagreb
- Zelko Halar, local businessman with roots near Zagreb
- Bob Mack, Tacoma Attorney of Croatian descent, Su Martine, Island of Brac
- Eugen Halar, retired physician, born near Zagreb, landowner in Milna, Island of Brac
- Patti Mullan Hurlbut, retired Nurse, family immigrated from Island of Hvar
- Jason & Elizabeth Pashich, students of Croatian language; pursuing connections re Down Syndrome.

- Bill & Susan Connolly, retired businessman. Bill's family came from Hvar & mainland Croatia.
- Dominic Jovanovich, Musician and Radio Broadcaster for Croatia News

FROM SPLIT

- Mayor Tomislav Suta. Mayor since June 9, 2025
- Nikola Aleksic - Deputy Mayor for International Affairs
- Branka Bezic' - Liaison Volunteer. Has visited Tacoma twice since 2019. Hosted Mayor Woodard, City of Tacoma, Liaison Debbie Bingham and Clare Petrich in 2020.
- Nives Cicin Sain -Split Artist who was an artist in residence in Tacoma, Summer 2024
- Zvonko Martic, Cultural Anthropologist, Split and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Featured documentary film about him at the Sister City Film Festival 2021. He attended the Festival in person.
- Petroslav Sapunar, former "County Executive" of Dalmatia.

Contact information for those involved from both cities.

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- *Areas of mutual interest upon which the relationship will focus:*

Education, Sports, Culture, Tourism and Economic Development

- **Opportunities for new activities and potential outcomes.**

Maritime Education and Training

Split is a PORT City, well known for over 2,000 years as a center for mariners. From 1704-1897, Split was the shipbuilding center for Venice. Today Split is home to Croatia's largest shipyard.

- Spring of 2026, the Tacoma School District may visit **Maritime 253 education** programs in Europe; Split will be one of their sites. This is an opportunity for the newly elected Tacoma Mayor to lead that delegation.

- Opportunities for American and Croatian educational exchanges. Currently in conversation with a teacher at SAMI interested in the Spring Quarter visit.

-Robotics education and exchanges

- The **Split Archives** has collections of letters from two well known Croatian Americans -Henry Suzzallo, former President of the University of Washington. The Suzzallo Library is named for him. Martin Bogdanovich, the founder of Starkist Tuna in San Pedro with whom many Tacoma boatbuilders partnered in the Tuna industry. We are considering helping them digitize their collection.

Sports Management In 2024, the Sports Management Program at UWT School of Business signed a MOU with Aspira University in Split for student exchanges. In 2026, the Tacoma SC Committee is offering to **host students** who are selected as volunteers for the **World Cup games** in Seattle.

Cultural:

-Tacoma loves **glass art**. Dalmatia has a history of glass making since Roman times and a superb collection of Roman glass art at the Split Archaeological Museum. An exhibit is a possibility.

-Learning about **Croatian history** in Split and in other parts of the world is an interest of Tacomans. TSC and the SABS Hall have collaborated on a **speaking series** in 2025 and 2026.

- You may hate them or love them, but the history books tell us that **neckties were invented by Croatians**. In May of 2026, Branka Bezic will accompany the Mayor of Milna to visit Brac's new Sister City of Gig Harbor. While in the Northwest, she will present The Croatian Tie Project to Northwestern Croatian-Americans at the Slavonian American Benevolent Society Hall.

- **Tourism** plays a top role in economic development for Split and its surrounding islands. Tacoma has yet to develop a strong tourism profile. Professionals in Split are willing to share pros and cons and advice on developing successful programs.

-Three years ago the Split Summer Arts Festival invited the **Tacoma Opera** to perform in Split. They did not have the financial resources to accept at that time. It is an invitation to be revisited.

Other:

- Discussions are also going on between Split and Tacoma organizations that work with children and adults with **Down Syndrome** to seek opportunities to share approaches and services offered to families in both communities.

- ***Benefits and measurable results that the Sister Cities Council and the partnering organization expect as a result of the establishment of such a relationship.***
 - Student trips change people's lives. This can happen between students in Tacoma and in Split through our connections with Aspira University and its MOU with UWT.
 - The economic impact of Sister Cities relationships and delegation visits and projects is indisputable. But it has not been measured in Tacoma. TSC seeks the tools to provide the City with economic impact numbers.

5. Resources:

Please address monetary and in-kind resources that may be necessary to conduct the activities of this relationship, how they are to be obtained, and from whom. If none, state "no funding required".

-Currently, the Split Committee has over \$8,000 in its bank account. We have raised funds by obtaining sponsorships for the Film Festival and selling Croatian books, crafts and edible products at events in the Tacoma area. We have also obtained grants for an Artist in Residence program in 2024. No funding by the City of Tacoma is requested at this time.

6. Profile of the proposed friendship city and/or organization:

A brief profile, no more than two pages, of your city and/or organization including, but not limited to: background, location, nature, size, and relevant programs. If available, please include brochures or other written information regarding the organization, its operations, curriculum, and/or staff. (Web information is sufficient for the latter, if available and edited to address the specific nature of the proposed relationship.)

Background History (Source: Wikipedia) The city of [Split](#) was founded as the [Greek colony](#) of Aspálathos (Ἀσπάλαθος) in the 3rd or 2nd century BC. It became a prominent settlement around 650 CE when it succeeded the ancient capital of the [Roman province of Dalmatia](#), [Salona](#). After the [Sack of Salona](#) by the [Avars](#) and [Slavs](#), the fortified [Palace of Diocletian](#) was settled by Roman refugees. Split became a [Byzantine city](#), to later gradually drift into the sphere of the [Republic of Venice](#) and the [Kingdom of Croatia](#), with the Byzantines retaining nominal suzerainty. For much of the [High](#) and [Late Middle Ages](#), Split enjoyed autonomy as a free city, caught in the middle of a struggle between Venice and the [King of Hungary](#) for control over [Dalmatian city-states](#).

Venice eventually prevailed and during the [early modern period](#) Split remained a Venetian city, a heavily fortified outpost surrounded by [Ottoman](#) territory. Its hinterland was won from the Ottomans in the [Morean War](#) of 1699, and in 1797, as Venice fell to [Napoleon](#), the [Treaty of Campo Formio](#) rendered the city to the [Habsburg monarchy](#). In 1805, the [Peace of Pressburg](#) added it to the Napoleonic [Kingdom of Italy](#) and in 1806 it was included in the [French Empire](#), becoming part of the [Illyrian Provinces](#) in 1809. After being occupied in 1813, it was eventually granted to the [Austrian Empire](#) following the [Congress of Vienna](#), where the city remained a part of the Austrian [Kingdom of Dalmatia](#) until the fall of [Austria-Hungary](#) in 1918 and the formation of [Yugoslavia](#). In [World War II](#), the city was annexed by [Italy](#), then liberated by the [Partisans](#) after the [Italian capitulation](#) in 1943. It was then re-occupied by [Germany](#), which granted it to its puppet [Independent State of Croatia](#). The city was liberated again by the Partisans in 1944, and was included in the post-war [Socialist Yugoslavia](#), as part of its republic of [Croatia](#). In 1991, Croatia seceded from Yugoslavia amid the [Croatian War of Independence](#).



Location

Split is a capital of [Split Dalmatia County](#), also called Central Dalmatia. It borders with Northern Dalmatia on the west and Zadar town as a capital, and with [Southern Dalmatia](#) on the south with Dubrovnik as the capital.

Nature: Split is a Coastal and Port City with a large harbor, active seagoing transportation intra country and internationally. Primary agricultural products for export are wine and olive oil.

Size Population: 180,000

relevant programs. Tourism plays a crucial role in Split's and Croatia's economy. With over 900,000 visits each year, Split makes one of the most visited cities in Croatia and in Europe. The largest tourist region of [Dalmatia](#) is the part around its largest city. Split is the location of the most valuable cultural monuments. Near Split are the other large all the large Dalmatian islands - [Brač](#), [Šolta](#), [Čiovo](#), [Hvar](#) and [Vis](#), which are all well connected with [Port of Split](#).^[61]

In 2023, Split had a record number of tourists, 965,405 visits and 3,050,389 overnight stays. Cultural impact plays a big role in Split's tourism, including filming of international TV series [Game of Thrones](#), which used locations of [Diocletian's Palace](#), [Klis Fortress](#), Žrnovnica quarry and [watermill](#).

7. Additional Information
Please add any additional information about this proposed relationship and/or the involved city and organization you wish to share and submit this form electronically to the Mayor's Office and the chair of the Sister Cities Council of Tacoma

10 Best Reasons to Visit Split (2025)



Is Split worth visiting? Without a doubt! When I first stepped into [Split](#), I was blown away by the seamless blend of ancient history and laid-back Mediterranean vibes. Wandering through the maze-like streets of Diocletian's Palace felt like stepping back in time, while the bustling Riva waterfront was perfect for soaking up the sun and people-watching.

Split, located on [Croatia's](#) stunning Dalmatian Coast, is a city that offers something for everyone. From its rich Roman history to its crystal-clear beaches and lively nightlife, Split has a charm that's hard to resist. It's the perfect gateway to nearby islands like Hvar and Brač, but it's also a destination worth exploring in its own right. Whether you're dining on fresh seafood, hiking up Marjan Hill for panoramic views, or diving into the turquoise waters of the Adriatic, Split delivers unforgettable experiences.

Pros – Reasons You Should Visit Split

1. Stunning Coastal Scenery and Adriatic Views



Split sits on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea, offering breathtaking coastal scenery, crystal-clear waters, and some of the most beautiful sunsets in Europe. The city's waterfront promenade, known as the Riva, is the perfect place to take in the views while enjoying a coffee or a glass of local wine. With the sparkling sea on one side and palm-lined streets on the other, the setting is nothing short of spectacular. One of the highlights of a visit is taking a boat tour around the nearby islands. The contrast between the deep blue of the Adriatic and the rugged Dalmatian coastline is absolutely mesmerizing. Whether you're lounging by the sea, taking a ferry to nearby islands, or simply walking along the promenade, Split's coastal beauty is one of its biggest draws.

2. The Incredible History of Diocletian's Palace



Split is built around the remains of Diocletian's Palace, a massive Roman fortress that dates back to the 4th century. What makes it unique is that this isn't just a historical site—it's a living, breathing part of the city, with homes, restaurants, bars, and shops all nestled within the ancient stone walls. Walking through its narrow alleyways feels like stepping back in time, yet at the same time, it's full of modern energy. I was amazed at how well-preserved the palace remains are, especially the underground basements, which give a real sense of the scale of this ancient complex. You can also visit the Peristyle, the palace's central courtyard, where you'll often see street performers dressed as Roman soldiers. The mix of history and daily life in Diocletian's Palace makes it one of the most fascinating places in Europe.

3. Easy Access to Stunning Dalmatian Islands



Split is the perfect base for exploring Croatia's famous Dalmatian islands, which offer some of the most spectacular beaches, charming villages, and lively summer scenes in the Adriatic. From Split's ferry terminal, you can easily take day trips to islands like Hvar, Brač, and Vis. I took a ferry to Hvar, which is known for its beautiful harbor, lavender fields, and vibrant nightlife. Another must-visit is Brač, home to Zlatni Rat, one of the most famous beaches in Croatia. If you're looking for something more peaceful, Vis offers a more secluded, untouched feel. Whether you're after party scenes, hidden coves, or quiet fishing villages, Split provides easy access to them all.

4. The Perfect Blend of History and Modern Life



One of the best things about Split is how seamlessly it blends ancient history with modern life. The old town is filled with medieval streets, ancient ruins, and traditional stone buildings, but at the same time, it has a lively atmosphere with trendy bars, boutique shops, and waterfront cafés. You can walk past Roman columns one minute and then find yourself in a stylish wine bar the next. I loved wandering through the maze-like streets of the old town, where I stumbled upon hidden courtyards, small art galleries, and charming cafés. The combination of historical depth and contemporary culture makes Split feel dynamic and exciting while still maintaining its deep connection to the past.

5. Beautiful Beaches Right in the City



While Split is known for its history, it also has several beautiful beaches that are easily accessible from the city center. Unlike some coastal cities where you have to drive long distances to reach the best beaches, Split has several within walking distance or a short bus ride away. One of my favorite spots was Bačvice Beach, which is known for its shallow, clear waters and lively atmosphere. It's also famous for being the birthplace of picigin, a traditional Croatian beach game played in the shallows. If you prefer something quieter, Žnjan Beach offers a more relaxed vibe, while Kašjuni Beach, located at the foot of Marjan Hill, provides a stunning natural setting with crystal-clear water.

6. Fresh and Delicious Mediterranean Cuisine

Split's location on the Adriatic means that seafood is a big part of the local cuisine, and you'll find plenty of restaurants serving freshly caught fish, octopus, and mussels. The city's food scene also embraces traditional Dalmatian flavors, with dishes like pašticada, a slow-cooked beef stew, and black risotto made with squid ink. One of my best meals was at a small konoba (traditional tavern) in the old town, where I had grilled sea bass, drizzled with olive oil and paired with local white wine. The simplicity and freshness of the food make every meal in Split a delight. If you love Mediterranean flavors, this city is a paradise for food lovers.

7. Marjan Hill Offers Incredible Views and Nature



For those looking to escape the crowds and get a bit of exercise, Marjan Hill is a fantastic place to explore. Located just outside the old town, this lush, forested hill offers hiking trails, scenic viewpoints, and peaceful picnic spots. From the top, you get breathtaking panoramic views of Split, the Adriatic, and the surrounding islands. I hiked up Marjan early in the morning, and it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my trip. The trails are well-marked, and along the way, you'll pass historic churches, hidden stone staircases, and quiet spots perfect for relaxing. If you want to see a different side of Split, Marjan Hill is a must-visit.

8. A Lively Nightlife Scene

Split has a surprisingly vibrant nightlife scene, especially during the summer months when the city is buzzing with visitors. The Riva promenade comes alive at night, with bars and cafés filled with people enjoying drinks by the sea. The old town has a mix of trendy cocktail bars, underground clubs, and lively beach bars that stay open late. One of the best nightlife spots I found was Academia Ghetto Club, a hidden gem with an artsy vibe and live music. If you're looking for a more energetic scene, Bacvice Beach has clubs that keep the party going until sunrise. Whether you prefer a laid-back evening or a wild night out, Split offers a little of everything.

9. Affordable Compared to Other Mediterranean Destinations

Compared to places like Dubrovnik, Hvar, or other Mediterranean hotspots, Split is relatively affordable. You can find reasonably priced accommodations, great meals at local taverns for a fraction of the price you'd pay in other coastal cities, and plenty of free or low-cost attractions. I stayed in a charming guesthouse in the old town without spending a fortune, and even the more upscale restaurants had menus that were much more budget-friendly than those in other European coastal cities. If you want to experience the beauty of the Adriatic without breaking the bank, Split is a fantastic option.

10. A Laid-Back Atmosphere with Friendly Locals



One of the things I loved most about Split was its relaxed, welcoming atmosphere. Despite being Croatia's second-largest city, it still has a small-town feel where people take their time enjoying coffee, strolling the Riva, and soaking in the coastal lifestyle. The locals are friendly and happy to share recommendations, whether it's for the best place to swim or where to find the best seafood. I never felt rushed while exploring Split, and the slower pace of life made it easy to truly enjoy the city. Whether you're wandering through Diocletian's Palace, enjoying a long seaside lunch, or taking a sunset stroll along the Riva, Split's charm lies in its ability to make you slow down and appreciate the moment.