

Croatia Road-Trip

A Country of Contrasts





1 HRVATSKA - A BALKAN BEAUTY

Croatia or **Hrvatska**, as it is known by locals, is a country at the crossroads of south eastern and central Europe. A place where history, war and natural beauty collide to create a memorable and moving road-trip

It's taken us 6 years to finally reach Croatia, if you exclude our brief dalliance with Zagreb in 2017. Before they joined the Schengen gang, we knew it was likely our last chance to do this country justice with a three month tour. A Schengen Shuffle in Croatia was going to be epic and we were ready for the challenge.

About your Croatian Guide

So many people have raved about Croatia. They told us about the beautiful coastline, the enormous campsites and the prohibition of wild camping. So it was with mixed feelings that we planned our autumn road-trip.

To coincide with a secret family celebration in Omiš mid September, we covertly made our move into Europe from the gorgeous Emerald Isle. Down through France, Germany, Austria and finally Slovenia with the deftness of a stalking lion.

How would it turn out, how would the weather be and how would we fair through their low season closures? All questions we will answer through the course of this comprehensive eBook.

Who are we?

Formally, we are Karen and Myles; digital nomads who are inspired to discover the world with the freedom and choice that this travelling lifestyle has gifted us. More lovingly we are known as **The Motoroamers** and in March 2016 we packed up and packed in our life in the UK for a gap year of travel whilst we sold property. The grand plan was to put down our roots in the south-west and find the 'good life', once we had sown our travel seeds.

With visions of a small-holding, donkeys, chickens and soil tarnished fingernails put aside, we hit the road in our motorhome Scoobie. We were ready for adventures and exploration that would soothe our curious spirits and satiate our inner-adventurer. However a few weeks into our trip we discovered that this was the life we wanted permanently and that 'going back' was not an option. So from that moment on, 'home' became the place where Scoobie's tyres rested. We found love in every dawn, each new vista cleansed our eager eyes and fed our desire to live with freedom, fearlessness and choice.

In our first year with our trusty steed, a Pilote 740 (7.5m), we visited 10 countries and covered 12,000 miles; from Spain to Slovenia, to France, Belgium and Netherlands. A rich array of adventures that satiated our need to feel alive after too many decades of corporate stress and burn-out.

Spring 2017 heralded a new set of adventures as we began an epic journey into uncharted territory. The idea was to travel across to [Greece](#) and then follow a natural passage through the eastern borders of [Bulgaria](#) and [Romania](#). What incredible cultures and natural wonders these countries had to offer. So young on the European stage and yet a whole new set of experiences for the eager traveller.

2018 was all about uncovering the scars of [Poland](#) and [Slovakia](#) and 2019 our adventures took us into the Nordic

highlights of Scandinavia's north-eastern trio of [Denmark](#), [Sweden](#) and [Norway](#).

Then early 2020 a magical mystery tour of [Morocco](#) awaited us as we stepped out of our comfort zone and onto the African continent with the leap of a gazelle. Little did we know how poignant this trip would be as Covid struck around us and Moroccan borders locked up within four days of us leaving the country. Since then the memory of our lockdowns are all too real and they have in one way accelerated our passion for travel having been grounded for so long.

And with the crisis hopefully now behind us, our engine can roar and our tyres can roll with confidence. With 2022's adventures starting in the green land of [Ireland](#) we threw ourselves into our love for travel; a love that gives our lives meaning, definition and purpose as we continue with our philosophy of ***inspiring you to travel***.

So step into this latest guide and let's see if, with our itineraries, our practicalities and our tempting focus we can persuade you to step your foot into this Balkan Beauty.



Karen, Myles and Scoobie



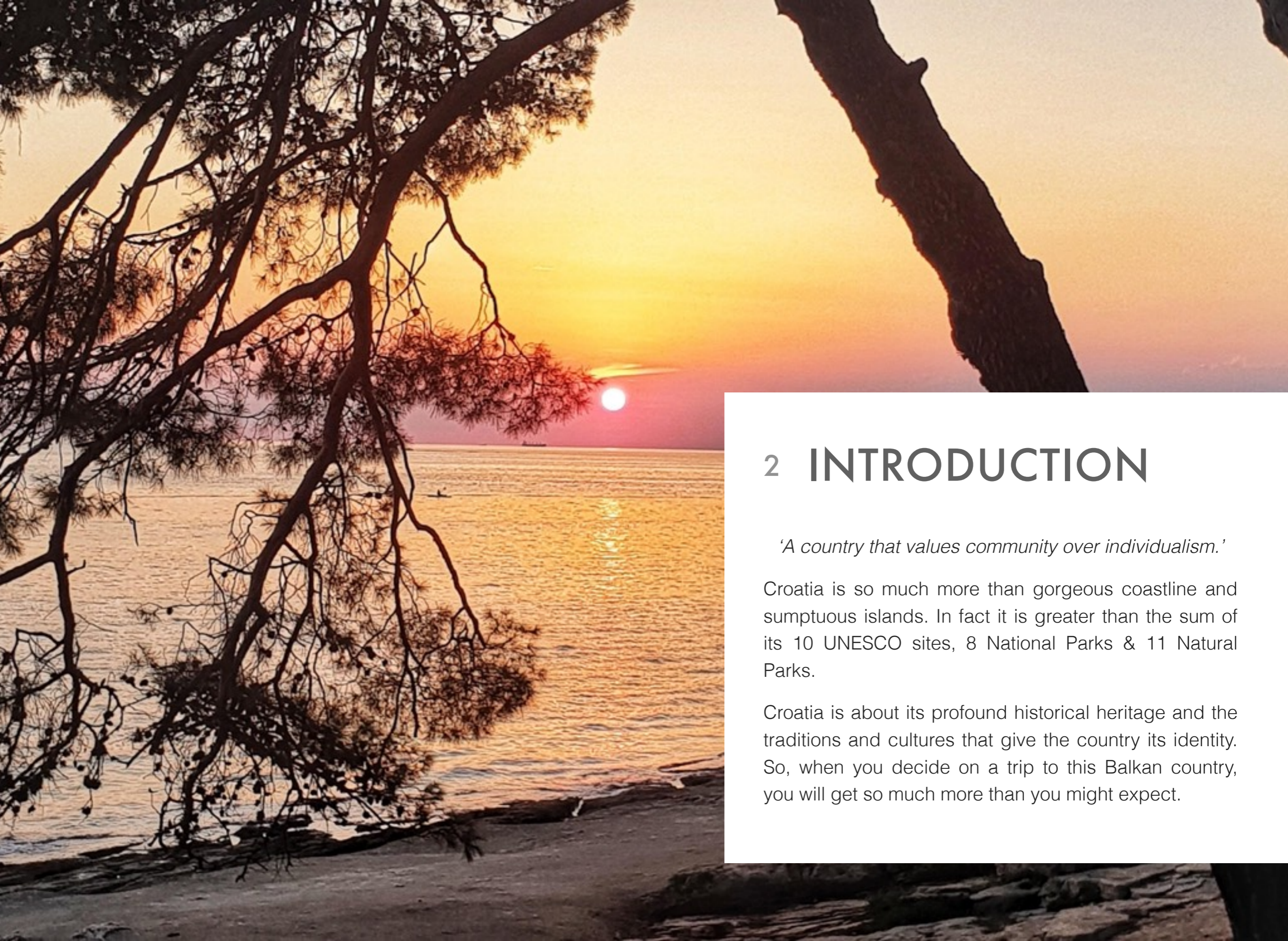
<https://www.motoroaming.com>



This is an outstanding guide for any Motorhome adventurer wishing to travel to Croatia. Karen and Myles clearly have a gift for uncovering the heart and soul of any country they visit and this guide is much more than a list of places to stop and gives many useful facts and nuggets of information all in one place.

Ian Curtis, founder of Search for Sites

With thanks to [freepik](#) for the ornamental graphi



2 INTRODUCTION

'A country that values community over individualism.'

Croatia is so much more than gorgeous coastline and sumptuous islands. In fact it is greater than the sum of its 10 UNESCO sites, 8 National Parks & 11 Natural Parks.

Croatia is about its profound historical heritage and the traditions and cultures that give the country its identity. So, when you decide on a trip to this Balkan country, you will get so much more than you might expect.



Roman ruins at Zadar

Known as the 'Country of 1000 islands', Croatia has plenty to offer the wanderluster searching for new territory to explore. Bridging the central European and Mediterranean worlds, Croatia is rich with a fusion of traditions, culture and history, yet is tainted with scars from centuries of battles. It seems strange to think that for many of us reading this eBook, a war for independence raged in our lifetime. Croatia has healed well, it seems superficially, as there are very few visible signs of their Homeland War 1991 - 1995. Yet it is in the hearts of the locals where you uncover their pain.

Croatia, despite being fiercely proud of their nationality, is home to a multicultural community thanks to its Balkan neighbours and its ancient history. Whilst I don't intend to dwell on what is a complex web of power struggles and rulers, there are a few facts that are worth knowing to understand Croatia's culture.

The Liburnians and Romans

The first thing to acknowledge in Croatia's passage of time is the influence of the Liburnians. It's hard to imagine that this land, so close to Italy was not first settled by the Roman Empire. It was in fact the **Illirian** tribe of the **Liburnians** back in **1000BC**, splitting the land into two regions; Istria and Dalmatia. Their origin is disputed although they are thought to be of either Asia Minor or Greek origin. *Then* it was the turn of the **Greeks** in 4BC before the **Romans** made their presence felt around 9AD until their fall in 5th century AD. Whilst Iron Age evidence exists, it is the Roman remains strewn across the country that pique our interest especially given that many pillars and artefacts still exist in the present day.

Zadar, **Nin** and **Muster** in particular are great places to experience Roman rule in Croatia. To think that history going that far back with



RIMSKI HRAM
ROMAN TEMPLE

Obelisk supporting beams in
Zadar - 1. st.

Remains of the biggest
Roman Temple on the
Adriatic sea - 1. cent.



visual reminders of life over 2000 years ago is something else. In whose footsteps do we tread?

The Kingdom of Croatia and her battles

Croatia became recognised as a Kingdom in 925AD thanks to the efforts of **Bishop Grugr Ninski**. From this point forward, the country as we know it evolved. Yet, struggles for supremacy raged throughout the medieval period in Croatia. The pull between two warring factions; the **Ottomans** of the south and the **Habsburgs** to the north, created turmoil for Croatia. This period is noted as the most dire for the country, where towns and villages were plundered with locals taken as slaves forcing Croats to flee to safer lands. As a result, Croatia lost 60% of its population through emigration during these times. It wasn't until 1699 that the Ottoman grip loosened and Croatia was released from its rule. You can still see the medieval influence of the Ottomans throughout Croatia.

For a while, Croatia came under French control, thanks to Napoleon, was swarmed by Germans seeking to settle here, the Venetians and then the Austrian-Hungarian Empire up until the end of the 1st World War. It is suggested, by the locals we spoke to that this was a progressive period for the country where much of its infrastructure was forged.

This century's history - Yugoslavia

It is perhaps this last century that Croatia's most significant shaping occurred. In 1918, Croatia came under the newly created state of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, whilst Italy took Istria and ventured as far south as Zadar. Yet, the newly

formed state was never harmonious with conflict between the parties and the individual nationalities for decades. Yugoslavia started to break down in the early 1990's as Croatia and Slovenia fought for independence from the Serb-influenced state. A decentralisation was favoured by Croatia and Slovenia, whilst the Serbians wanted a centralised state that protected Serb's interests.

On 19th May 1991, Croatia held a referendum with an overwhelming vote of 93.24% in favour of severing their ties to Yugoslavia, and by 8th October 1991 they had severed ties. This is now known as their Independence Day.

Homeland War for Independence 1991-1995

Triggered by Croatia's desire for independence, the battle between the Croats and the Serbians began. The serene beauty of the Plitvice Lakes National Park was where the skirmishes all began on **Easter Sunday 1991**. Driven by two key goals; independence and preservation of borders, this was a complex battle that intermittently raged until 1995. Between May and August 1995 two final battles; **Operation Storm** and **Operation Flash** brought the war to an end with a Croatian victory. It wasn't without tragedy, massive loss of life, ethnic cleansing and economic ruin. Although, in the aftermath of the Homeland War, Croatia began to rebuilt her new found independence which were not without struggles.

Even 30 years on, there are unsettled vibrations as the war generations leave the country for a better lifestyle in Europe. There is still anger with those we spoke to about the lack of support for

post-war victims. So, despite the victory, the independence and Croatia's rich tourism industry, the country has some way to go in healing people's wounds.

Croatia is so much more than stunning coastline. It is deeply scarred with battles, independence and rebuilding.

Croatia's history embedded in her culture

So what does all this diverse history, that would justify its own book, have on day to day life here?

Well, firstly you will hear Italian being spoken a great deal in Istria. Venetian architecture throughout the coastal regions, defensive castles, fortresses and outposts throughout the hinterlands and coastline. You will notice that German is also a strong second language for many of the older generation, whilst English majors for the younger generation. And, tourism is high on their agenda specifically along the Adriatic coast.

You will see a stark contrast between smart, tourist-designed resorts and shabbier, still under-development buildings. Evidence of the war, is on the whole pretty well covered up superficially except for a few neglected buildings such as **Kupari** on the Dubrovnik Riviera. Little is actually said out loud about the war unless you visit the sites of major battles. If you are in the country on **18 November - Homeland Day**, you might experience a memorial procession otherwise, much of their recent past has been covered to focus on the economic priority of tourism.

A country of contrasts

Knowing a little of Croatia's historical landscape helps to shape an understanding of the contrasts you can experience in the country.

From the hinterlands to the coast, the mountains and islands, the rural livelihoods to the fishing and tourist culture and the older generational influences over the impact from the younger more modern ages. Even the summer heat in contrast to the land-shaping winds of the Bora Bora, Croatia fuses together so many origins, ways of life, architectural, meteorological and human perspectives that a road-trip here is so much more than the sun-drenched coastline.





3 Our Routes Through Croatia

After 77 days in Croatia, we got a pretty good feel for the country. We learned about her culture, fell in love with her coastal prowess and marvelled at her inner hinterland.

With so many islands to lure you, it is easy to miss the inland dynamic of the country and we pride ourselves in our inland explorations being one of our specialities; the path less travelled.

So, follow us on our tour as we danced our way round this wondrous new land and allow us to take you on a Croatian journey of a lifetime.

We have split this section up into four main regions:

- Istria
- Dalmatian Coast
- Inland
- Islands





4 ROUTE 1 - THE ISTRIA PENINSULA

Istria was our first station stop as we crossed the border with Slovenia at **Dragonja**. We always like to find a place to land and ground ourselves for a few days when arriving in a new country.

We were due down in Omiš by mid September, so we took the opportunity, whilst the weather was still gorgeous to enjoy this beautiful northern peninsula.

Shaped by diverse European cultures, thanks the many struggles of power over Istria, this corner of Croatia has a very cosmopolitan feel to it.

Route 1

Istria Peninsula

Must-sees;

* Savudrija boat racks and Croatia's oldest lighthouse

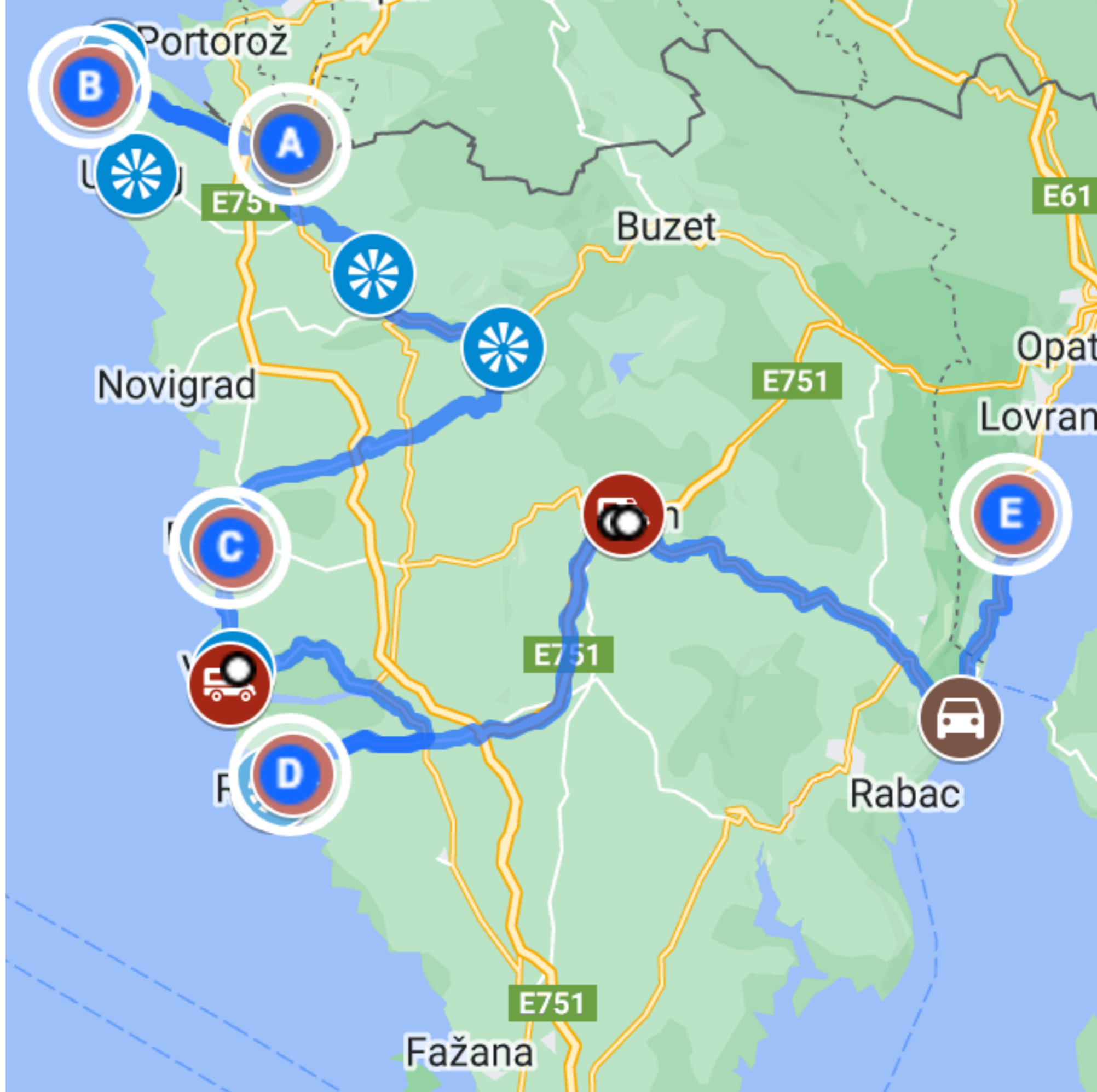
* Umag

* Poreč

* Grožnjan

* Rovinj

* Vrsar





SAVUDRIJA - BOAT RACKS AND CROATIA'S OLDEST LIGHTHOUSE

Savudrija is on the farthest corner of Croatia's north west corner. Its character has been shaped by the sea and fishing still runs deep in its soil despite it being a huge beach resort for locals and, predominantly German visitors.

Stopping at one of the many, huge campsites in this area, the coastline is your oyster with its craggy nature marginally shading its 'beach' appeal. None the less, this Adriatic beauty, that has seen its fair share of tempestuous power struggles, holds its own as part of the independent state of Croatia.

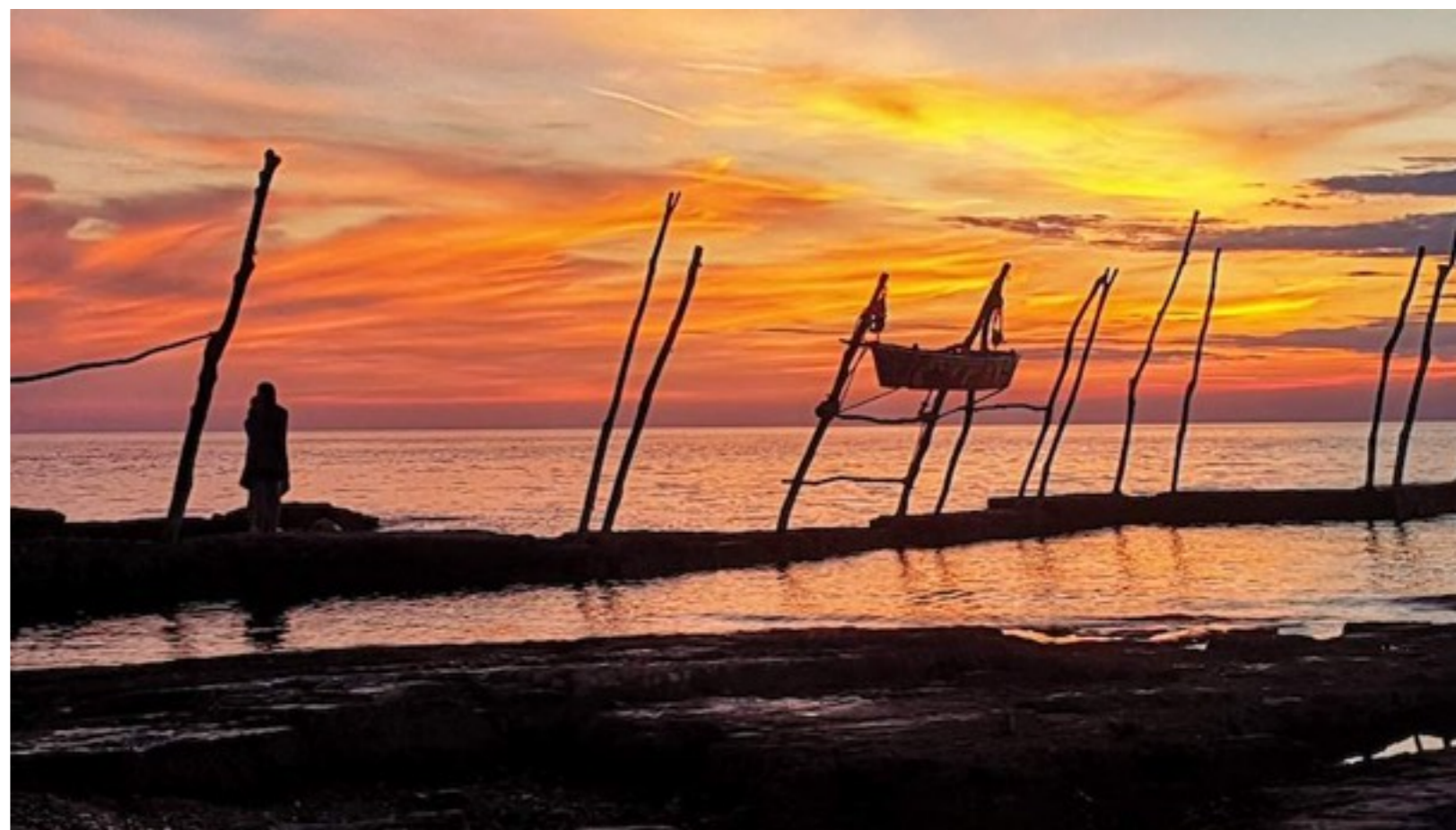
The unique wooden boat racks are an old tradition that are still a cornerstone of Savudrija's culture. Ravaged by a trio of winds that can rage in this Gulf of Venice and the rocky coast, fishing boats are hoisted up onto these racks to protect them from the elements. They are so atmospheric and at sunset is a real photographic gem.

Croatia really does do both coastline and magnificent sunsets and this is a fabulous way to begin your Croatian adventures.

The lighthouse here is Croatia's oldest working lighthouse and acts as a beacon for shipping vessels who frequent these waters heading to Koper, Trieste and Venice.

Built in 1817, this 29m tall lighthouse is still manned by a family who have upheld that tradition for five generations. It is a fabulous sight set against the azure seas and pine green forests.

And, worthy of mention is the sunken Roman village at **Spiar** just 20 mins walk along the coast. At low tide, the spit reveals an archeological site with old Roman ruins. It is not a protected site so you will see modern man's Instagram influence, although to walk on the spit gives you a sense of the local heritage.





UMAG - 10TH CENTURY TOWN WITH ROMAN ROOTS

Within cycling distance of Savudrija you will find the cute village of **Umag**. As you cycle along the promenade by-pass, close your eyes to the water parks, beaches filled with wall-to-wall umbrellas and the throng of locals enjoying the late summer sun.

Umag's half-moon harbour is a relief to the soul as you get some respite from the tourist packed coastline here. A smart harbour-side greets you with those iconic azure seas that we were soon to become accustomed to. Ahead was the small settlement of Umag with its towering church steeple revealing a charming old town secret as we reached its inner core.

As soon as you reach the main square, donned with shiny marbled, paved flooring, we were struck by the elegant, honey-coloured

plaza. Fringed with cafe's, bars and restaurants still buzzing with holiday makers, it had an instant appeal. Yet, it was the smaller streets, narrow, cool and authentically rustic that attracted us more. Washing hanging between the houses and locals sitting on stools contemplating life.

Surrounded by the sea on both sides, this little peninsula holds a 10th century tale and Roman roots. All along this coast, especially at **Sipar**, you find remnants of Roman villages. Plagues and invasions haunt little Umag, although now is a charming introduction to Istria's Italian influence.





ISTRIA'S POREČ

Magnetised by the continuing glistening seas, the resort of **Poreč** (pronounced Porech) was in our sights. Parked up on an Aire just 15 minutes walk from town, we soaked up the almost Colonial feel of this Roman port settlement.

Along with neighbouring **Rovinj** just down the coast, this has been a tourist magnet since the 1970s and it is easy to see why. With its glamorous marina to welcome you; home to so many Gin Palaces, we were guided by the town's perimeter promenade. It's a bustling area for boat trips and ocean gazers as you sit still for a moment to gather yourself and take in the water-world in front of you.

Walking around the town's outer edges, intrigue filled our minds about the tales held within its inner sanctum walls. Once inside, protection from the sea is instant and Poreč's mariner history fades into the maze of quintessential bars and tourist shaped commerciality. Although, it has to be said it was all done with subtlety and elegance. Seemingly we missed Poreč's **6th century UNESCO Basilica**, which means we will just have to return for another visit.

A charming town that will hold your souls for an hour or two and is definitely worth a wee visit.





INLAND TO GROŽNJAN - HILLTOP VILLAGE

Croatia's coastline is sublime, yet head inland and you get an authentic flavour of a country lost to time and culture without the sun-beds and kayaks.

Istria's hinterland is filled with vineyards, hilltop villages, truffles and olive groves. A land that typically escapes the tourists' gaze, bar a few intrepid explorers.

We loved the hidden village of **Grožnjan**, known as the '*City of artists*'. This 12th century settlement is nestled up in the hills with the glistening coast just a distant glint on the horizon.

Atmospheric streets with cobbled pathways that looked like marble, wind in a maze-like manner, all surrounded by charming stone

houses that look like something out of a Thomas Hardy novel. A place that felt like you could wander for hours yet never be lost.

Honey bricks warmed us in the early autumn haze, set in contrast with the vines and clematis that adorn its walls.

Every May this village comes alive as its reputation as an Artist's Haven awakens with the spring air.

Unlike its hilltop neighbour **Motovun**, you share this historical space with just a handful of people, such is its anonymity. With a car park dedicated to motorhomes, visiting has never been easier.

There was a film crew there the day we arrived, filming Series 2 of **Hotel Portofino**, a glamorous period drama set in 1920 Italy.



Views of Grožnjan





THE ROMANCE OF ROVINJ - ONE OF OUR HIGHLIGHTS

The jewel in Istria's crown has surely to be **Rovinj**....With its once island promontory commanding your admiration, this stunning 3rd century settlement has blossomed into a photogenic and historic beauty. So much so it brings tears to my eyes when I review my pictures.

Reconnected with the mainland in 1763, Rovinj carries a legacy from tempestuous battles for supremacy. Feudal lords, Napoleonic, Venetian, Austrian and Italian reigns all contribute to the shape of this walled-city's landscape.

From first glance, this place leaves an indelible mark upon your heart and definitely provoked a teary moment, such is its beauty.

Although, it is one of those places in the world that needs to be seen with the naked eye to see its true magic. Photographs somehow don't capture it completely.

Once past the tourist tat shops at the port, the cultural essence of this stunning location opens up to willing eyes. The main square has a feel of St Mark's in Venice, which given its Italian rule until recent times, is perhaps not a surprise. With its chocolate box clock tower and fancy restaurants overlooking the opulence of the marina, you feel as though you've entered Utopia.



Yet through the honey walled gates you enter a world of yester-year as the steep cobbled streets take you skywards to Istria's highest bell tower.

Whichever direction you take, glimpses of sparkling seas and archipelago will tease you, whilst the characterful artists shops fill your visions with colour and vibrance.

There's a gentle buzz in this glorious town which soon vibrates to your very core. Taking lunch on the other side of the marina, you get a sumptuous view of the town in all its glory and has to be as romantic a destination as Venice, without the hoards.

Rovinj is one of those destinations that will remain in my memory forever; a place I could return to and never tire of its magical setting.

There is a new Aire on the outskirts of town opposite Kaufland where you can park day and night for €1.99 per hour. You will need to get your bikes out although it's a better option than the parking areas closer to Rovinj that are quite expensive.







THE VERITABLE DELIGHTS OF VR SAR

We dropped into **Vrsar** to avoid an incoming storm. Yet, this unassuming town became one of those iconic memories in a traveller's diary; ostensibly a perfunctory stopover morphed into a memorable moment in time.

Our home was camping **Porto Sole**, situated next door to one of Croatia's many and oldest naturist sites. What an enlightening experience. Inadvertently, I found myself amidst this 1100 strong nudist community whilst exploring the area. The resurgence of my youthful shyness surprised me as I teetered between *not knowing where to look* versus *intrigue*. Naked cyclists, mechanics, bathers and dinners; I was in full admiration of their liberation and self-comfort, realising that my transition from owning my very first bikini at 54, had me a very long way from being that confident in my own skin. I love that travel continues to shape me profoundly.

Anyway, I digress... Vrsar, is a serene hill-top fishing village that casts its gaze across the ocean and its 18 island archipelago. Its roots go back to the Romans from which it carries a tempestuous past; their rulers changing like Palace Guards. Now settled into independence, Vrsar can focus on being an iconic travel destination for those privileged to visit.

As we wandered from the campsite, a mere mile down a Cyprus tree lined road, we saw the town rise up from its ocean position. A stroll along its marina and seaside path shows why this coastal cutie is so popular. Nature has carved this coastline so beautifully. Then the climb began as we headed for one of its 3 belvederes. The views really are spectacular and implored us to stay a while. The cobbled streets felt like marble beneath our feet and it is said that it is the very same stone from which Venice was built. Houses that line the



alleyways towered above us; some linked by vines, some with washing and others sedately standing with shuttered windows keeping out the autumn sun. For a town with two large campsites, the peace of the town's inner sanctum was palpable.

Casanova loved this place back in the 18th century and a statue in his memory sits beside the town gate. Atmospheric cafes, picturesque chapels, mesmerising views - Vrsar has it all.

And that's before you explore the **Limski Kanal**; a 21 mile estuary carved by the river seeking out the sea. A National Reserve that protects its wildlife and which can be explored by boat from Vrsar or by bicycle. We took the latter option and whilst the dense forest mostly hides the view, the shade was very welcome on such a hot day.

We adored our 3 days here, untouched, as it happened by the anticipated storm; that was just travel's ruse to make us stay a while. With a fabulous campsite it felt strangely like a much needed holiday and we relished in its embrace, and it steeled us for our next chapter.









6 ROUTE 2 - THE DALMATIAN COAST

After a beautiful introduction of Istria's Italian influenced peninsula, we hugged the coast south towards Omiš. We had a birthday rendezvous with family, so whilst we knew we may miss some of the highlights along the way, we were able to retrace our steps during the intervening months of our Schengen Shuffle road-trip.

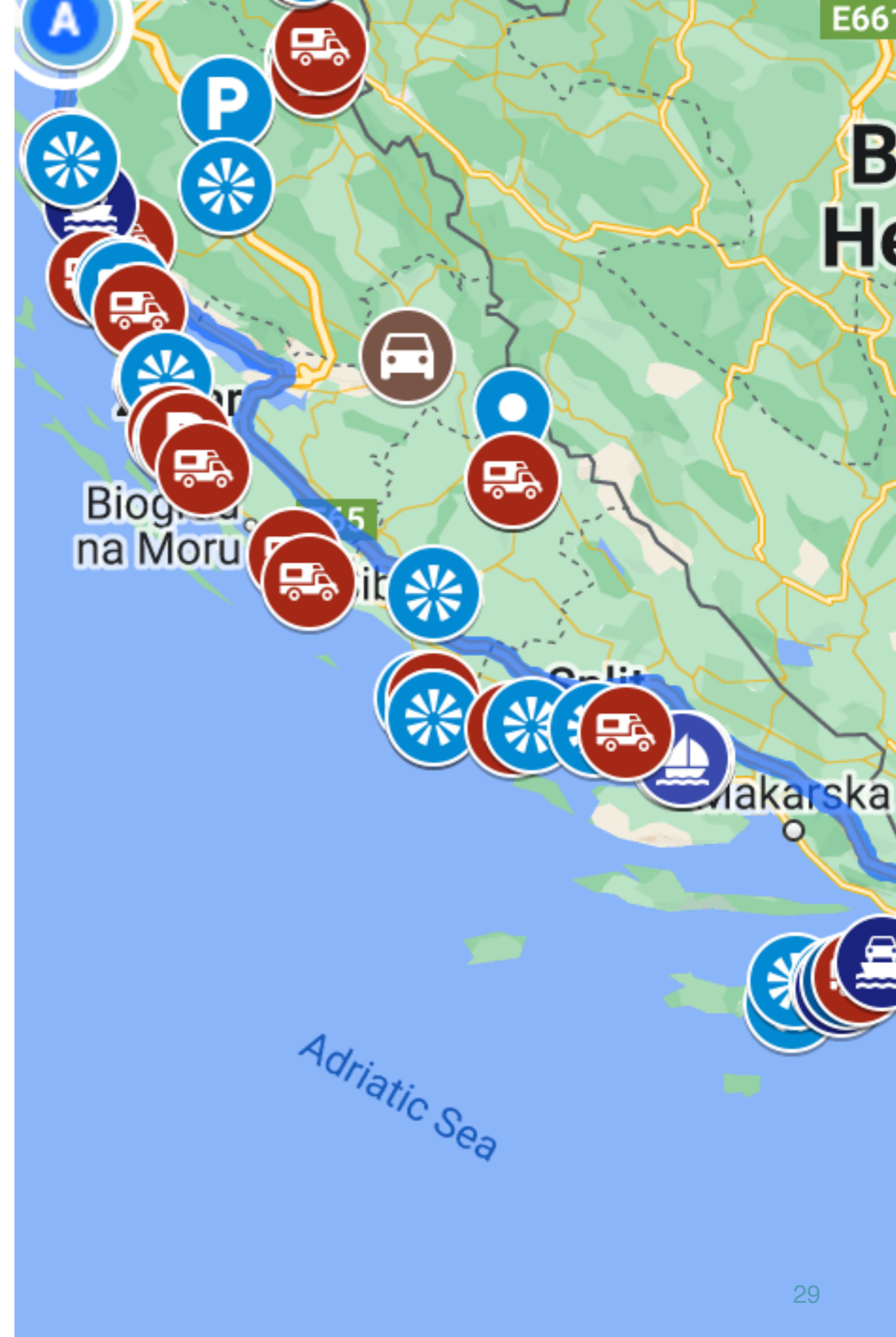
The Dalmatian coastline is seen as one of Croatia's most prized regions due to its tourist rich destinations. Stretching from the island of **Rab** to the **Bay of Kotor** it was a treasure trove of gems.

Route 2

The Dalmatian Coast

Must-sees;

- * Senj (whilst technically not in Dalmatia, it is still worth sharing)
- * Jablanac and Zavratica Bay
- * Nin and Zadar
- * Šibenik
- * Primošten and Rogoznica
- * Trogir v Split
- * Omiš
- * Dubrovnik - UNESCO
- * Dubrovnik Riviera
- * Prevlaka Peninsula





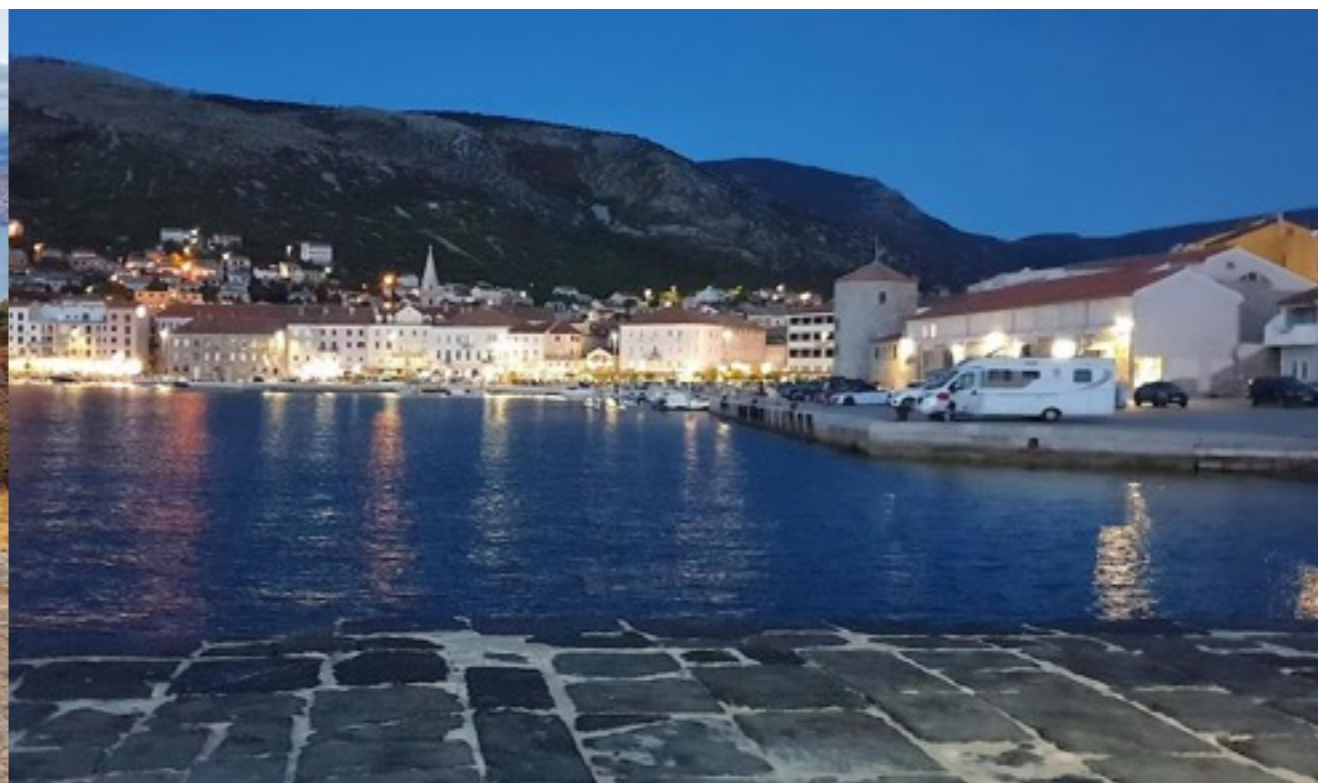
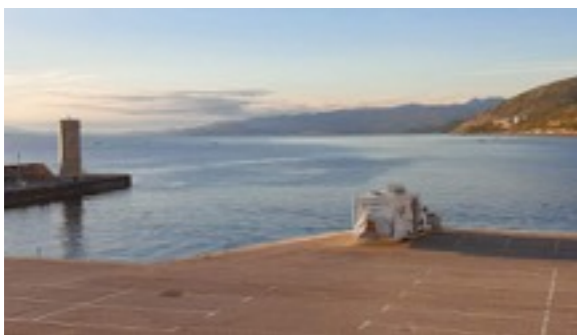
ROMAN SENJ

Heading south, we had our sights set on **Senj**, and undertook our longest drive in the whole of our Croatia road-trip; 90 mins and 60 miles. It was seriously worth it as we hugged the craggy coastline past umpteen AutoKamps that crowd the shoreline like beach resort sun-beds, with every available inch of land.

Our destination was idyllic and it left me speechless inducing yet another teary moment. This had 'us' written all over it. No crowds, a castle, an ancient town and the chance for a bit of yoga and paddleboarding. So, with the focus of a wasp drawn to beer, Senj became our home. Now, here I must add a technical point; Senj is not in the Dalmatia region, although I thought I would add it here for neatness as we headed our way south.

As one of the oldest towns along this historic coast, dating back 3,000 years, Senj (pronounced Senia) has a few tales. Romans, Knights Templar and WW2 bombings by German and Allied forces. Senj with its 16th century **Nehaj Fortress** and the protection from the mountains behind, has a vibrancy about it. Whilst the old town still has ruins evidencing the attacks, the port is divine.

It is from Senj south that the infamous Bora Bora (or Bura in Croatian) winds blow. The influence of the **Velebit** mountains has a serious impact on the weather in these parts. More on this later. Our visit was all-too short yet so sweet, thanks alone to our overnight spot and we will return here. €8 for the night, awarded us a front-row seat with sumptuous seas for swimming and spectacular sunsets.





JABLANAC AND ZAVRATNICA BAY

Whilst not neatly in chronological order for our trip, from a geographical perspective, Jablanac and Zavratica sensibly sit here in our eBook, as we headed south.

Jablanac (pronounced Yablanatz) is a small fishing hamlet tucked away beneath the UNESCO **Velebit National Park**, just around the corner is THE most amazing sight to witness, which had been recommended to us. Jablanac used to be the ferry point for the island of Rab, so the winding road down to the water's edge is neatly one way and completely doable for motorhomes. There isn't much parking space here and not somewhere you could stay in the summer, although in the low season, the little parking spot beneath the hotel is fine and glorious. Jablanac in itself is certainly picturesque although there's not very much here other than dolphins

and perfect swimming conditions. What puts this little hidden gem on the map is its neighbour just around the headland.

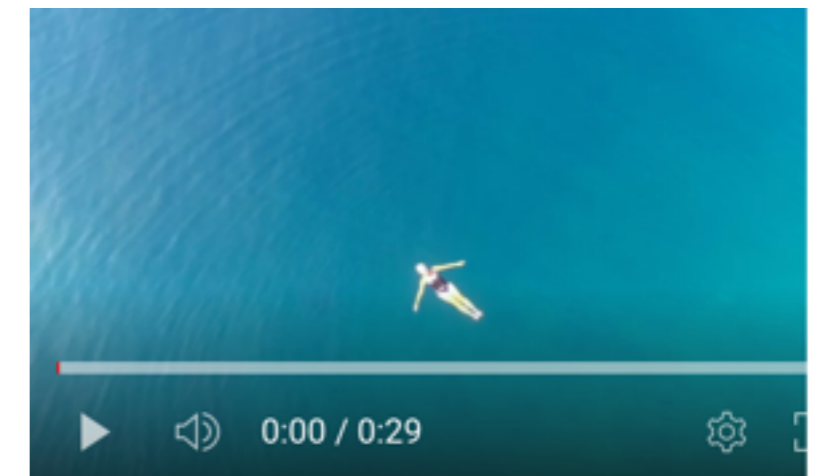
Zavratica Bay is a protected site that legend has it was created by an earthquake, although geologists will give you a far older explanation for its unique shape. This bay and gorge are one of the most peaceful and beautiful sights I've seen. And after a mile walk around a clifftop promenade made by the locals, your eyes will pop and your heart will skip a beat.

Resembling a fjord, Zavratica's perfectly clear, azure waters reach deep into the mountains creating a deeply penetrating gorge. So clear are the waters that you can clearly see the wreck of one of three German warships destroyed by allied troops in August 1944.

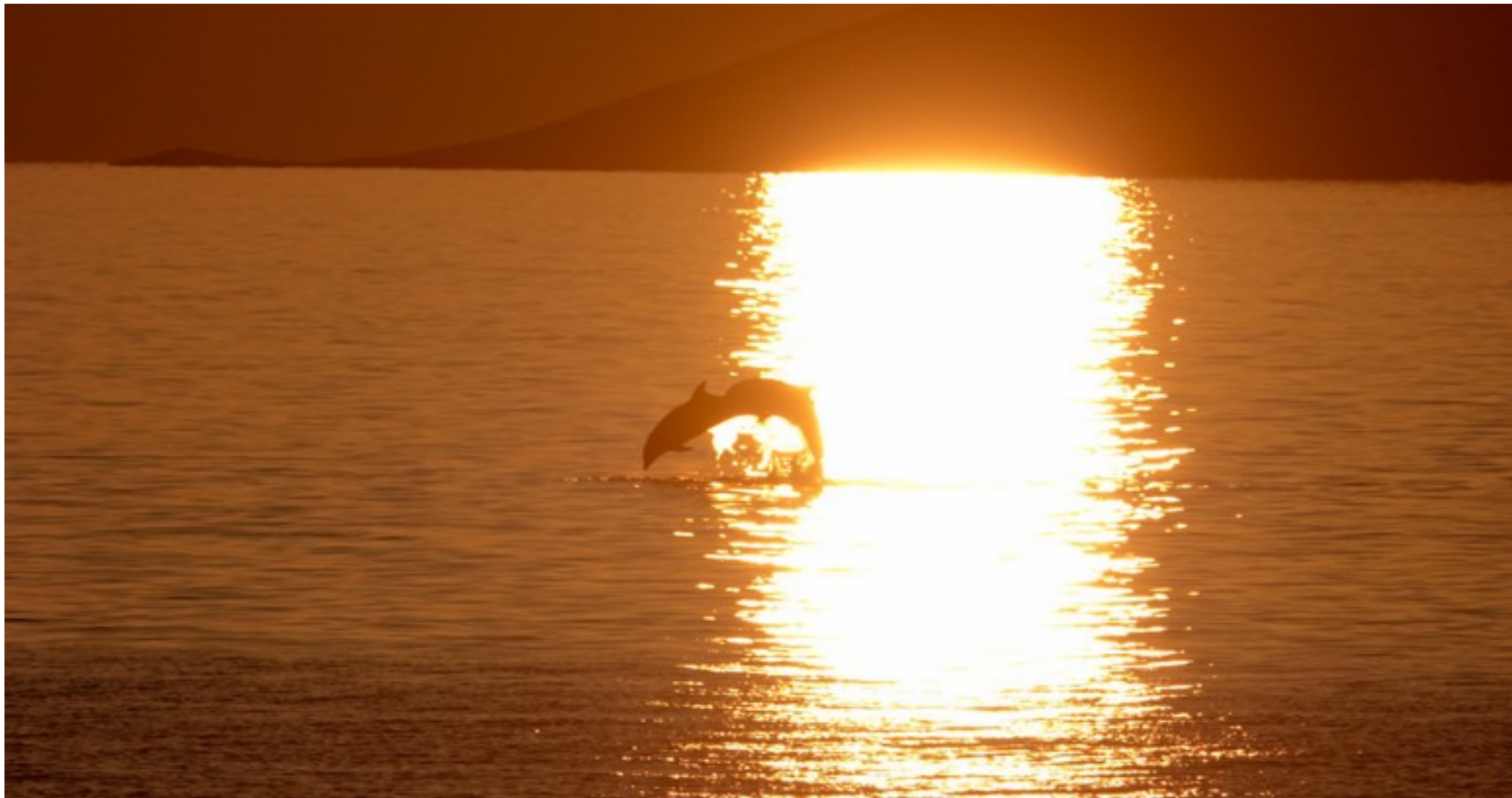


With sides that scale over 100m and act like a amphitheatre, the acoustics of bird song harmonises with peace making for an incredible soul-thumping experience. A further mile hike up the gorge to the top of the mountain, offers a spectacle that the eyes alone can appreciate. Somehow the camera doesn't do the vista justice. The alternative way to see this side of the Bay is to access the view point via a gravel track from the main road.

Check out our drone footage from this divine place. Click the image below.









NIN - SMALL YET MIGHTY IN CROATIA'S HISTORY

Nin, small in size yet huge in historical and natural stature. On first sighting, Nin grabs your attention visually. You glimpse the island connected by honey-coloured bridges separating it from its blue-tinted lagoon and slate-grey salt-pans. Then the golden sandy beaches bring about a child-like thrill after 2 months of pebbles. Dancing barefoot in autumn winds beneath the rust coloured skeletal sunshades that line the shore, we seek out the medicinal mud that heals; sadly only accessible during pre-booked sessions in July and August.

Nin is an area claimed to have the best beaches in Croatia (and tentatively the world), they say. Traditional rowing boats designed for lagoon fishing, bob on the water's mirror-like surface, framing the village's reflection perfectly.

Then, like peeling away an onion's layers, Nin's charm reveals a more poignant truth; symbolised by bronze statues honouring their heroes and impeccable Roman remains. Interest piqued, it isn't long before you realise that Nin's historical heritage puts this tiny village plumb in the middle of Croatia's cultural identity. **9th Century BC** Nin was conceived thanks to its salt pan riches and it evolved up to the 1st century AD where Roman walls still stand to reveal its historical legacy. And it was from here, thanks to ruler **Duke Branimir**, that the Croatian state was born.

Nin is home to the crowning of 7 Kings at St Nicholas Church, set on the outskirts of the village. This humble building anchors Nin's importance and acclaim as *the oldest Royal town in Croatia*. Nestled in the heart of Nin is the country's first and smallest



cathedral. And to top it all, imposing Roman ruins and a towering pillar that has defied time and winds to steal your admiration for this mighty community.

So if the fusion of natural beauty and historical prowess doesn't impress you then nothing will. Nin has been an absolute highlight from our nearly 3 months here. Miss it at your peril.





UNESCO ZADAR

One of Croatia's most important cities on the Adriatic sea is Zadar. Previously known as Zara, this is Croatia's oldest, continuously inhabited city and its fifth largest. It almost beggars belief to imagine that Zadar was first founded in the 9th century **BC** by the Liburnians - well before the Roman conquests. Although they did come along in 48BC and colonise the then town. There is plenty of evidence to show their presence within the old-town walls.

And, from that point forward, poor old Zadar came under regular battles for supremacy from the Venetians, Austrians, Ottomans and, more recently World War 2. Between 1943-44 the city came under regular attacks by the Allies because the city had become part of the Kingdom of Italy from 1920. 80% of the city was destroyed during the siege, which is often referred to as the **Dresden of the Adriatic**.

Episcopal Complex Zadar

Thanks to rebuilding efforts, much of Zadar is now back to its former glory and you would be unsuspecting of its war-time fate. There are so many faces of the city to explore; its Roman remains, the 9th century **St Donatus Cathedral** and the **Landward Gate** with the Lion of St Mark, a symbol of the Republic of Venice. It is considered the finest work of Renaissance art in the whole of the Dalmatia region. Thanks to its Venetian Works of Defence city walls, Roman prowess *and* its maritime significance, Zadar has been on UNESCO's list since 2017.

And on top of all this, the modern face of Zadar, along its west ocean-facing side is the atmospheric **Sea Organ**. The lapping of the waves creates a eery and hypnotic sound that interacts with tubes built into the newly formed and repaired sea wall following the WW2 damage.

Check out our Reel from our visit to Zadar by clicking on this image below.







UNESCO'S ŠIBENIK

There are some places you visit that pass you by with the whisper of the wind. Others have a profound affect on you such that you know they will stay with you forever. **Šibenik** is one such place.

We didn't really have any expectations, given all we had seen up to this point. Yet, we were to receive a proverbial smack for our apathy. Parked in a scruffy parking area just 10 minutes from Šibenik, we strode with purpose. "A quick nip in", we said. Well the first view of this 1200 year old city immediately struck us, as it perched on the hill facing out towards its guarding archipelago.

This is the only city on the Dalmatian coast that was founded by Croats and not Illyrian, Greek or Roman settlers. And from its 11th century burst onto the Croatian scene, it has endured battles

between Byzantine, Venetian and Hungarian forces. The Venetian influence is so clear to see; you could almost be in Venice with the Italian styled architecture.

Grand stairs that look something out of the movie *Gone with the Wind* draw you towards the first of Šibenik's two UNESCO sites. **St James's Cathedral** has the most important Renaissance architecture in the country. Building started in 1402 and the cathedral is constructed entirely of limestone and marble, making it unique amongst its peers. The cathedral was created by three different designers over 40 years, each leaving their own mark on this impressive building. Yet as you walk away from this cultural centre, a further 23 churches will greet you, their hourly chimes echoing around the town's alleyways.

So often our eyes are held to the floor, yet in Šibenik your gaze is always up. The markings, doors, windows all scream for your adoration. Brightly coloured facades give even the quietest day in November a vibrancy.

The streets are filled with classy boutiques and cafés offering shelter beneath their elegant umbrellas. Endless cobbled passages spur off the main street and archways intrigue you, curious as to where they will take you next. It felt like Alice in Wonderland; we were in awe of this ancient town's vivacious yet gentle charm that won us both over.

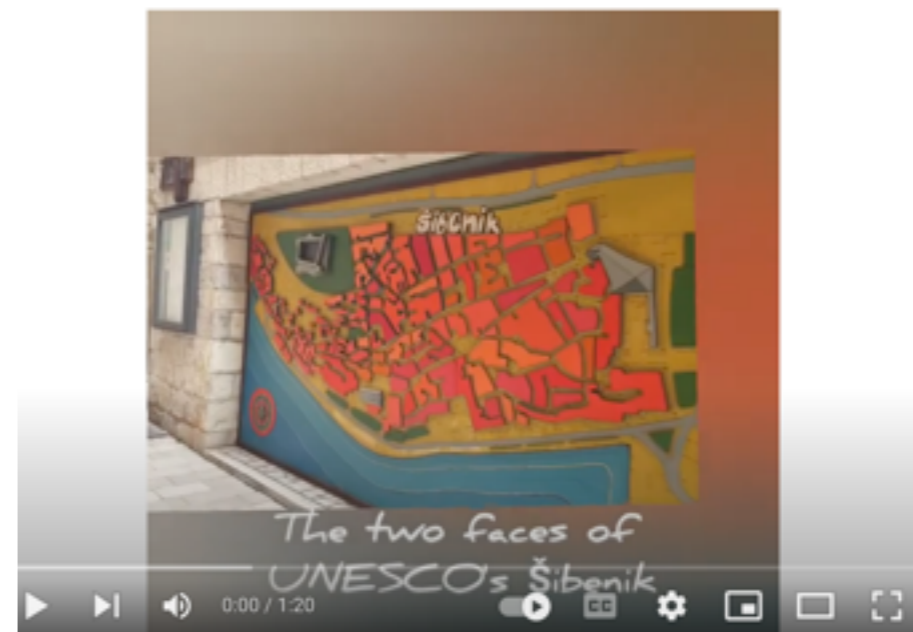


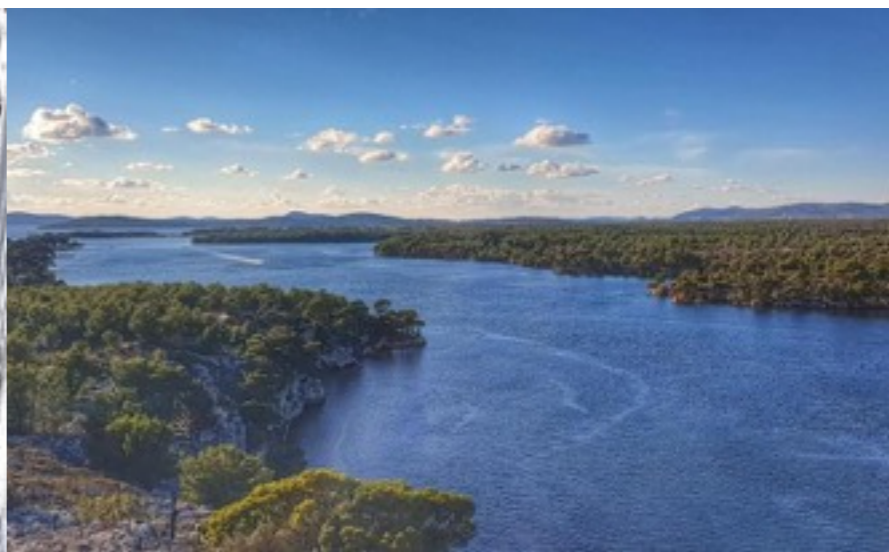
And then, if that wasn't enough, a few days later we moved to the mouth of **St Anthony's Kanal** that leads to Šibenik's harbour offering us a completely difference perspective.

With a full frontal view of St Nicholas' Fortress, we sheltered here for a couple of days as a Bora took hold over the area. Although we managed to squeeze a little exploration before it hit. **St Nichola's Fortress** is Šibenik's second UNESCO site, famed for its 16th century Venice Defence fortifications. For tours you must start from Šibenik itself despite the shallow walk way that leads you across to the island.

From our 'home' the walks around the peninsula are wonderful, with remnants of German WW2 activity, which are highlighted best by the secret tunnel that is referred to as Hitler's Eye. It was here that the Germans hid their torpedo ships. It had a very eery feel. They even commandeered the ancient cave chapel just above the tunnel. The views from the top of the hill, overlooking Šibenik were worth the short climb.

Let us show you around Šibenik. Click the image below for a short video.









PRIMOŠTEN AND ROGOZNICA

Heading down the coast we had a meet up with friends and thanks to them, a delightful free Aire overlooking **Gaj Hill** and **Primošten**.

Primošten looks incredible from an arial view with its characterful island promontory. Back in the 16th century during Turkish rule the Ottomans built city walls and a drawbridge that connected it to the mainland. When the Turks retreated, the drawbridge was removed and a causeway was put in its place. From that moment the settlement was named Primošten after the Croatian verb *primostiti*, to bridge.

The short walk around the island is delightful as is the neighbouring finger which has the most incredible beaches. At one time a fancy

hotel accommodated summer guests, although now it is a sad reflection of its former glory.

Across the water is **Gaj Hill** which is pretty famous for its monument to **Lady Loretta and the Black Madonna**. It is one of the tallest structures in the world and unique thanks to its mosaic architecture. Whilst the hike up the hill is a stretch it is so worth the effort for the views. There's a café at the top so you can replenish your energy.

The whole area is also well known for its special vineyards and are on UNESCO's 'Tentative List'. Rising up from the sea, rectangular parcels of land separated by dry stone walls are home to low growing vines. Historically stoney ground, these vineyards have been tirelessly worked by hand to make them vine viable.



Not more than 15 minutes south is **Rogoznica**. It's one of those towns that is tucked away on the coast, where too many visitors by-pass because of the attraction of the southern Dalmatian coast.

Sadly there are no campsites very close by so a bit of 'off gridding' is required. The community allows overnight parking in their plentiful parking spots close to the marina. You pay an hourly rate from 0600 - 2400 via Parking Assistant app **Bmove** and you can stay overnight for free. It's well worth a day or two's stay to explore the peninsulas.

Rogoznica has one of the most sheltered positions along this Bora battered coast. The size of **Marina Frapa** with its 450 births, gives you a clue to its protective assets.

Once an island called *Kopara*, in the 19th century it was connected to the mainland via a bridge. A walk around its outer rim gives you a peek into its vibrancy, even in the winter. If you take the path up to the highest point, you can enter, for free, into the **Lavender Maze**

garden which offers a delicious aroma and spectacular views out to sea.

On the other side of the inlet on which the marina and hotel sit, you have one of the best views of Rogoznica, especially at sunset. Your short hike will take you past the **Dragon's Eye** named as such because of its elliptical shape.

The Dragon's Eye is actually a salt water lake and despite local legends declaring the presence of a dragon living beneath the surface, it is more of a geological phenomenon than a mythical tale.

Being 15m deep, this lake actually gets warmer the deeper you go thanks to its hydrogen sulphide. Often you can see this lake 'bubble' as the salts and hot water rise to the surface. Although superficially the lake looks encased by its limestone walls, in fact there are fissures deep in the walls that connects it to the sea, hence its saline composition. It's beautiful to see and worthy of a walk from the parking area.







SPLIT V TROGIR

With the arrival of our bestie and his daughter, we had the perfect excuse for some chilling, play time and exploring. Our home for the week was **Amadria Park in Seget** which put us in pole position for a visit to two of the region's historic UNESCO sites; a stone's throw from Trogir and an taxi to Split.

Our first foray was to intimate **Trogir**, with its 3rd century **BC** roots, clearly steeped in history. A 4 mile walk along the coast brought us to this old town nestled on its very own island. As we entered these ancient walls we were struck by its Romanesque, Venetian & Renaissance architecture. The honey coloured walls drew us into the labyrinth of alleyways with cobbled streets giving us a sense of its Roman footprints. The characterful shutters above us gave this place personality and the building's towering presence made us feel insignificant yet protected and safe. The medieval **Kamerlengo Fortress** that guards the island, with its imposing waterfront location,

presents a surprising modern twist. With its classy promenade proving sanctuary to Gin-palace vessels moored at the marina, this elegant town holds a fusion of ancient & historic with charm and contemporary quite effortlessly. A water taxi return to the campsite for €4.60pp completed our visit beautifully.

In contrast, our trip to Split started with a €32 and 45 minute Uber ride to the old town walls. Once engulfed in its inner sanctum we were struck by the distracting presence of commercialism with every conceivable shop; from jewellery, Christmas and sweet shops galore to Game of Thrones, boutiques and tourist tat stalls, all vying for our and the many cruise liners' attention.

As we jostled amongst the late autumn crowds, the centrepiece was the **305BC Diocletian Palace**, which really does take your breath away. As the world's best preserved Roman ruins it's a pretty special

tick off the UNESCO list. A 0.60c fee allows you access up the **Vestibul** steps for a bird's eye view of the town and the Palace walls. Although with us standing shoulder to shoulder with hoards of other picture-perfect seekers, we felt consumed by claustrophobia & so after 3 hours felt compelled to take our €40 taxi return home.

One thing to mention before we take our leave of Split is the street art that you will see all over the Split region and through much of the southern Dalmatia coast. You will see this symbol everywhere and it puzzled me enough to, of course Google it and see what the meaning behind it was.



Hajduk is the name of **Split's football team**, which was formed in 1911 by a group of Croatian students studying in Prague. When asking their professor what name they should call the team, he replied; 'Hajduk'. This is the term for an ancient Balkan freedom fighter or outlaw from the 16th century who fought against the Ottomans, protecting the Christians. These romanticised figures are akin to England's Robin Hood. Hajduk, it is said symbolises *"That which is best in our people: bravery, humanity, friendship, love of freedom, defiance to powers, and protection of the weak."*

Hajduk Split is one of the most successful Croatian football teams and has an iconic, cult fan-based.



So our verdict of these two icons?

Trogir was an absolute must. It has a peaceful transportation into ancient history without the crowds and we were glad to have seen it.

Split with its outer edges filled with urban sprawl we would gladly have by-passed, except for the Palace which felt like its only accolade.

Our Top Tip; if you want easy access to the charm of **Trogir** stay at [**Amadria Park Camping**](#).

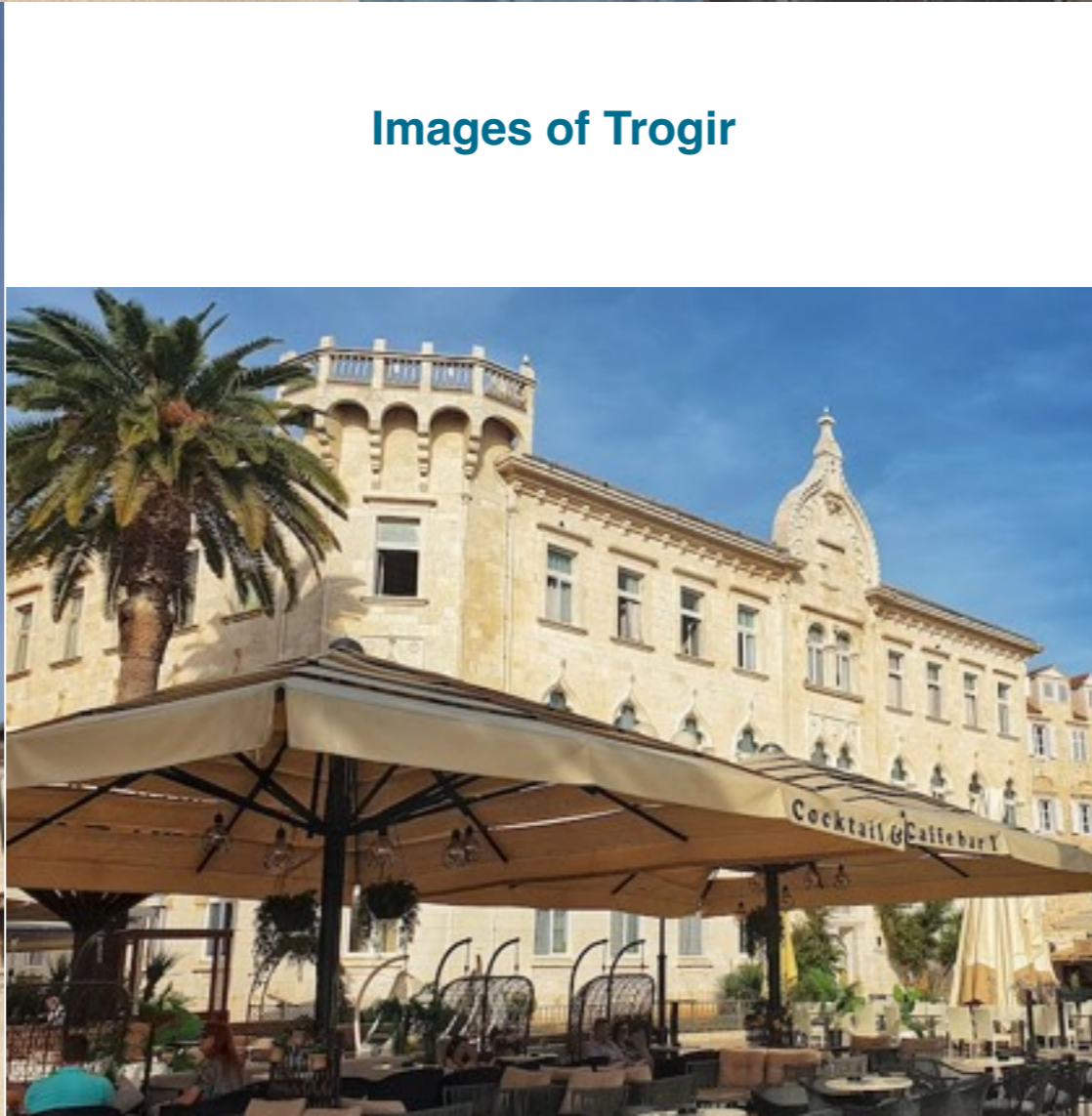
For **Split** head over to [**Camping Split in Stobreč**](#) which offers much easier access to the city by bus or bicycle and is open all year.

Images of Split





Images of Trogir





OMIŠ - CROATIA'S ADVENTURE CAPITAL

What can I say about **Omiš** (pronounced Omish)? The coastal landscape after Trogir and Split changes dramatically. After quaint villages, nook and cranny marinas and archipelago of the North Adriatic coast, the built up areas of the Split region were a bit of a shock with their sprawling urbanisation.

So, the dominating mountains that reframed our perspective was welcomed and they embraced us with open arms soothing our city-scape disappointment. **Camp Galeb** was our home for a week, whilst we had our secret rendezvous for our special birthday boy, Bob. This was our destination, held secret since our landing at Cherbourg some four weeks earlier. Our beach-fronted campsite was just perfectly positioned for water activity and the town, just across the **River Cetina** estuary.

Omiš is quite unique, nestled in the heart of Croatia's coastal delight - Dalmatia. It has a multitude of personalities that depending on your desire for retreat or high octane adventure, will satiate you admirably.

First, there is the ocean, which can be plagued by the Bora winds especially from Autumn onwards. The huge stretches of *almost* sandy beaches are so appealing. The Cetina river ends her journey after a massive 63 miles meandering through the Dinara mountains, carving spectacular gorges until the **Mosor** mountain greets it like a cheerleader. She offers boat rides, whitewater rafting and the all-important hydro-power energy thanks to her incessant flow.

Then there's the **13th century old town** that is quaint and atmospheric with its unrivalled pirate history and its picturesque **Mirabella fortress**. A heart-beating walk up steep steps culminates

in a steel ladder to reach the eye-popping view and is well worth the €2.60 entrance free - unless you suffer with vertigo like Myles.

Now if you like a challenge, aside of the **Zipline adventures**, you also have some magnificent hiking. Sat atop of the mountain is the king of all defensive fortresses; **Starigrad Fortica**. A gothic structure that with a beady eye can be seen from the coast below. Having seen friends do the walk, I set myself the challenge of the mountain-goat resemblance and scaled the 262m lung-busting climb, winding up the limestone giant. It nearly beat me a few times with the less than encouraging hails from descending walkers. Yet after 90 minutes of gritted determination, I reached the top and all with the gift of a €3.30 fee! Boy the views are beyond breathtaking. No wonder the Ottomans rarely attacked this part of the coast, with its panoramic outlook. All in all Omiš is a must for at least a couple of days to soak up its understated character, pirate shaped history and unadulterated charm.









DUBROVNIK - A UNESCO WONDERLAND FORMERLY KNOWN AS RAGUSA

As countryside lovers, we adore it when travel smacks us in the chops and shows us how incredible a city can be. We've added a few to our Wall of Fame over the years; Venice, obvs! Bratislava, Ljubljana & Seville. Notice the theme emerging? Small, intimate and compact. So how would Dubrovnik fair? [Check out our blog here.](#)

From my research, I concluded there were four ways to experience the city. The **water scene**, a **bird's-eye view** via the Cable-car, the **ground level alleyways** & the **rooftop aspect along the city walls**. In one day & respecting budgets, doing it all was a stretch too far. So as always, compromise was our companion.

We chose to take the **water taxi from Mlini** down the steps from [Camping Kate](#) and get the number 10 bus home. €8pp for the boat

and €2.40pp for the bus, one way. As a water-baby, for me to witness the imposing fortress walls by boat was an impressive start.

Our second choice was to feel the city from the ground. Losing ourselves amidst the myriad of alleyways, felt at times almost Dickensian. Shaded streets lined with cobbles, strung up washing lines & cats roaming aimlessly. We had the space to glimpse authentic Dubrovnik; until we reached the famous **Stradun Street**. Then we got sucked into a throng of coach tours that consumed us. So a good excuse for lunch to let the crowds dissipate.

When it was safe to emerge, we floated down the street that was ravaged by the seven month **Seige of Dubrivnik in Oct 1991**. The Palace, the only building unaffected by the war, is now dedicated to



those who lost their lives. It's hard to imagine what this city has endured in its 1600 year history. Earthquakes, war, fire - yet it continues to rebuild. No wonder it is a UNESCO site.

Our final peek of Dubrovnik we chose the rooftop. A staggering €33 EACH allowed us to scale the *knee-challenging* steps onto the city walls. I don't mind investing in our travels when we get great value and boy was this up there with the best.

We were treated to magnificent views along the coast, across the roof tops and down to the streets below. Despite Smiley's vertigo we sauntered the mile-long walls admiring the new, red tiles glistening atop of their cream brickwork, alongside the occasional original russet roofs and grey facades.

The final city viewing option you could opt for is to take the Cable Car for another €33 per person and get a real arial panorama. Of course taking this route is subject to the weather, which in autumn can be a bit hit and miss. If you get a clear weather window though, I imagine it is an amazing sight.

Whilst this city community is still healing, Dubrovnik, exceeded our expectations. It has firmly entered our Wall of Fame. The diversity really added to our immersion in this symbolic city. ***Check out our video. Click the image to the left.***

MOTOROAMING TV

DAY-TRIP TO
DUBROVNIK,
CROATIA

DESTINATIONS





Views of Dubrovnik







Cavtat, Dubrovnik Riviera

DUBROVNIK RIVIERA; CAVTAT, MLINI & KUPARI

After a toe dipping road-trip in **Bosnia** for 11 days, we headed back into Croatia, to the southern Dalmatian coast. **Camping Kate at Mlini** was our home for 4 nights, offering us access to a section of the coastline enveloped by mountains, craggy coves, islands and delicious blue seas.

Mlini is an elegant village tucked deep into the rock with a history in olive milling, if indeed milling is the appropriate word for olives. With discreet hotels popular with the British contingent, beach bar cafés and vibrant green pines that are so emblematic of Croatia, this is a serenely beautiful part of the country. In fact the Riviera became our favourite stretch of Dalmatia. From **Mlini** there is easy access to romantic **Cavtat** (pronounced Shavtat) by boat for €13 return per

person or the number 10 bus which will cost €5.30 return per person. Plus you are 30 minutes away from the delectable **Dubrovnik**, reaching it either by bus for €2.40pp or water taxi also at €13 pp.

Cavtat, with its luscious pine forested peninsula has been likened to St Tropez without the disingenuous glitz and accompanying prices, we're pleased to report. It feels like a place for lovers and artists as you walk around its sumptuous shoreline, with boats bombing to and from the harbour. The atmosphere is gentle, warm and completely contagious as you grab a sunset beer at the **Little Star Beach bar** with Bob Marley tunes floating into the air. The old town is charming, tucked away from sight revealing ancient churches, a quintessential



harbour with boats bobbing on the azure blue Mediterranean waters which finishes off the vista nicely. It is postcard perfect and a must-see place. We didn't get enough time here to explore its nooks and crannies although we will be back.

As we explored Dubrovnik's Riviera a little further, we found two contrasting worlds that show the fragility of life as we know it. On the one side **Mlini** with its 280 year old Plane Tree standing the test of time amidst a turbulent past. Then the curvaceous **Srebreno** with sparkling emerald seas and its fragrant pine tree promenade.

Walking around the headland with gentle waves lapping as umpteen sea urchins cling to their personally claimed rock, there is an incredible sight just around the corner. I took the panorama path, climbing like a curious cat to see the 'view'. Expecting more of the same, I was shocked to see the skeleton of an old hotel. Intrigued and feeling that exploration was ensuing, like a member of the Famous Five team I found an unmarked path that took me to **Kupari**.





From the main road, Kupari hides its truth behind the forest that has reclaimed this resort. Yet as I walked down the unkempt road, the ghostly buildings in front of me blew me away. Firstly an elegant gate house with intricate architecture shaded with soot. Next a Victorian style manor house with windows hanging off. Inside graffiti littered rooms still bearing strands of intricately designed wallpaper, revealed a shade of what was before. Ballrooms that once held laughter and dance now still and empty.

Outside of this eery shell, four other buildings consumed the bay with their extensive hotel sprawl, revealing that once upon a time this was a thriving resort. What had happened here? It had to be the war. Why had someone not snapped up this prime real estate in the heart of the Riviera? Investigative Davies was drawn to the bait like a famished fish and so I talked to my mate Google.

The centrepiece, the Grand Hotel was built in 1919 and the other five hotels followed along in the 1960s and 80s when its holiday potential was realised. It

became a resort primarily for military families housing up to 1600 in its prime. When war broke out, the Yugoslavian Army attacked from the land and sea to flush out Croatian soldiers. Whilst the resort shell was used by the army up until 2000s when they abandoned it, the locals stripped it bear... it was ravished twice.

There were plans to rejuvenate the ghostly resort although this was BC, before Covid and the plans were dropped.

Now it seems it will be a location for a film starring Kate Winslet and Jude Law set in WW2. May be one day it will breathe again although for now it is the only evidence we saw during our tour of Croatia that has shown us any significant, visual signs of war.







Our overnight looking out at Montenegro

PREVLAKA PENINSULA - SOUTHERN MOST POINT OF CROATIA

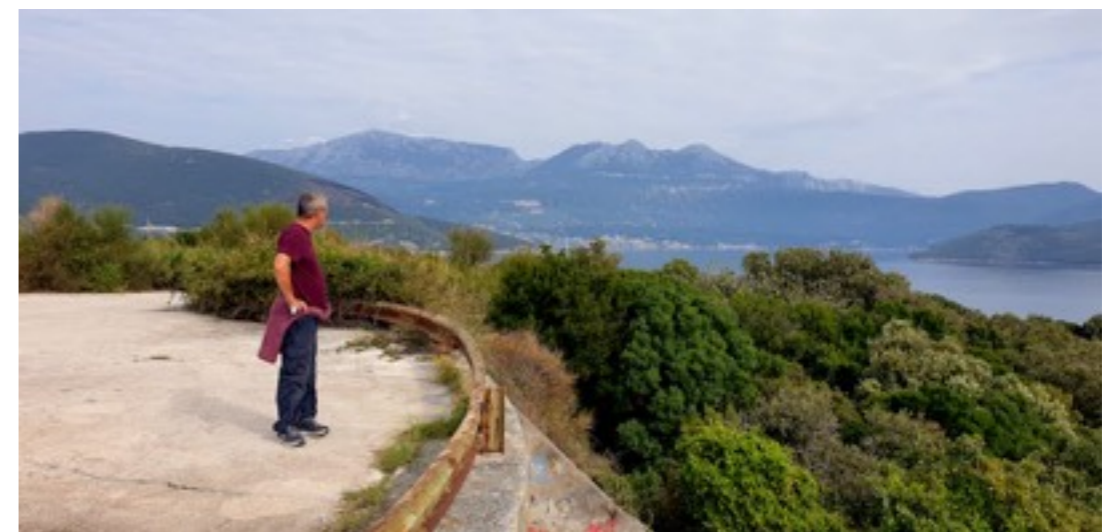
After the delights of Dubrovnik's Riviera, we had a hankering to nip down and dip our toes in one of the most hotly contested Croatian strips of land.

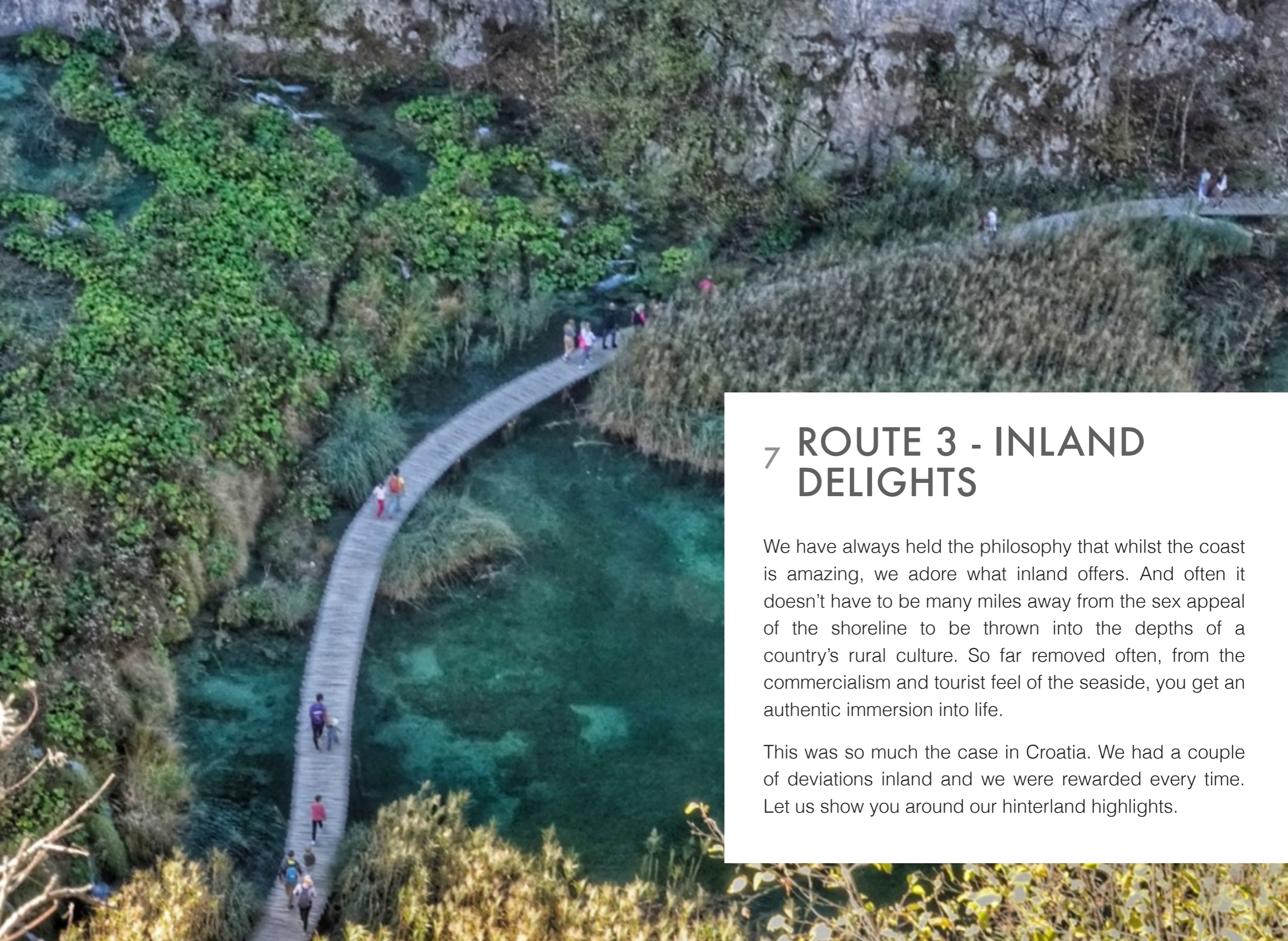
The **Prevlaka Peninsula** is the southern tip of the country with beautiful views to Montenegro. The drive to it was like being in the middle of Tuscany with a forest of Cyprus trees. With the border crossing teasingly close, and I mean no more that 200m, we hung a right to find a tiny fishing harbour for the night.

This 1 mile long peninsula has been owned by all and sundry since it was fortified in 1441, purchased from the Kingdom of Bosnia by Ragusa (now Dubrivnik). With its strategic spot at the entrance to Kotor Bay it's easy to see why so many nations wanted it. After a

series of battles the UN took control making it neutral territory until 2002 then handed it back to Croatia. Since their independence in 2006, Montenegro have been fighting for the land through international arbitration.

Now demilitarised, Prevlaka is like a ghostly military base. With its once masterful **Punta Oštro fortress**, its communications tower, bunkers and helicopter pad, you get the sense of its power. Given its commanding position, no wonder it's been hotly contested over the centuries. Now it lays dormant with nature being the overriding force. What a fascinating spot watching a flotilla of cruise liners leaving Kotor in contrast to a lone fisherman tending to his nets.





7 ROUTE 3 - INLAND DELIGHTS

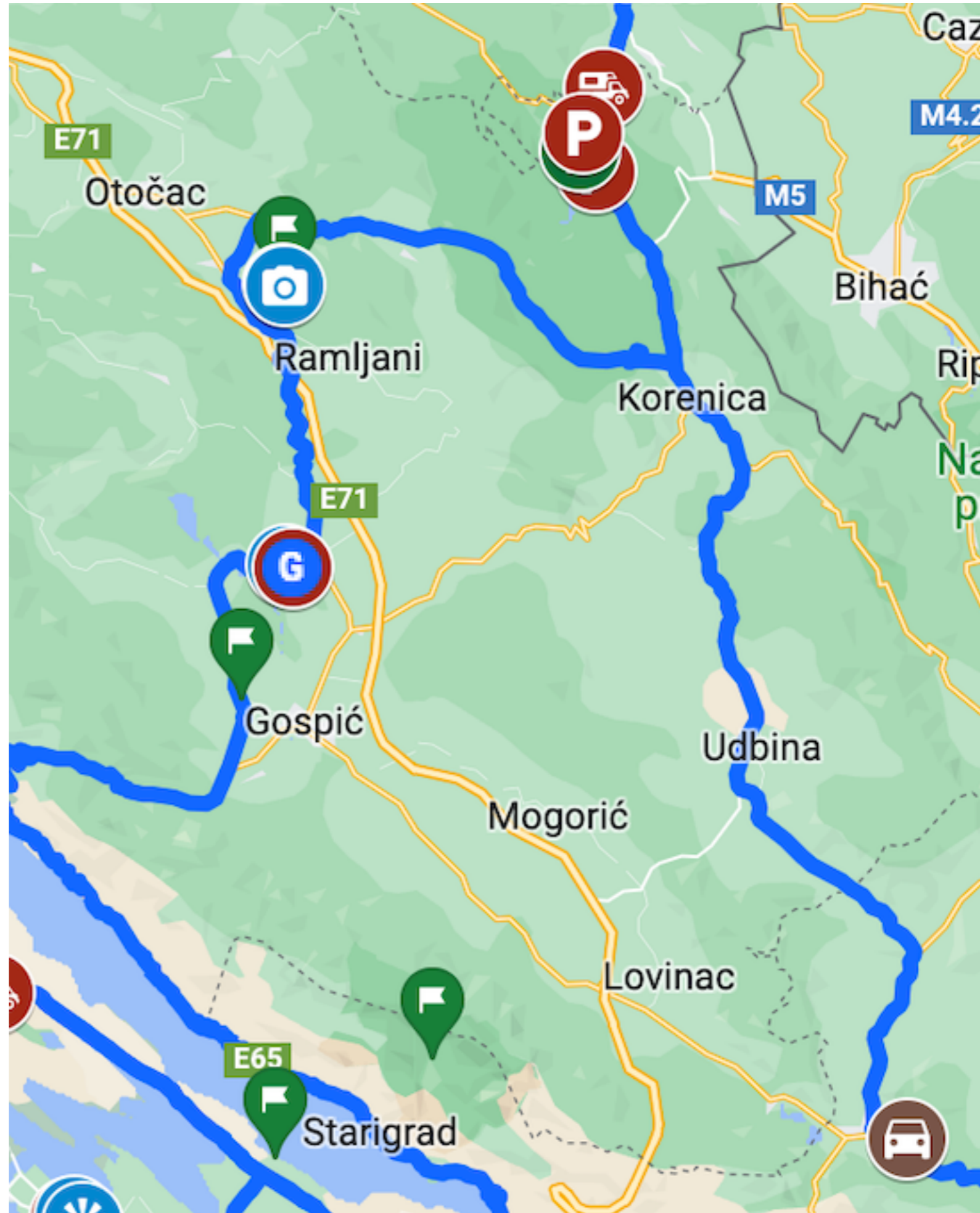
We have always held the philosophy that whilst the coast is amazing, we adore what inland offers. And often it doesn't have to be many miles away from the sex appeal of the shoreline to be thrown into the depths of a country's rural culture. So far removed often, from the commercialism and tourist feel of the seaside, you get an authentic immersion into life.

This was so much the case in Croatia. We had a couple of deviations inland and we were rewarded every time. Let us show you around our hinterland highlights.

Route 3

Croatia's Hinterlands offer a backbone of mountains and rich pastures where the heart of rural life beats. Here are our must-sees.

- * Knin Fortress
- * Plitvice National Park
- * Slunj and Rastoke
- * Stolac Mills
- * Grobovaca Caves
- * Krka National Park





Knin Fortress

KNIN - THE SEAT OF HISTORY

As a large majority of our road-trip up until this point had been hugging that proverbial coast, we needed a break from its intoxicating sparkling seas. A journey into the bosom of the **Dinaric mountains** changed our perspective instantly. The deeper inland we drove the greater their embrace. It felt like the arms of a mother comforting her child. Autumn glows of golden russet, lime and orange blazed in front of our eyes as the road glided us inward.

Knin was our half-way destination en route to Plitvice and quite by chance we rested our rolling tyres here. What a beautiful surprise it was too. Not only was our off-grid home beside the Krka River close to its source, Knin itself has a basket full of history going as far back as 9th century and beyond, no doubt. As a strategic town in between Split and Zagreb, Knin has been fought over for centuries and was once capital of the **Kingdom of Croatia**. Knin is more

lovingly known as the **City of Kings** after it became a Royal residence.

Knin fortress proudly sits atop Spa Hill commanding a powerful position with far reaching views. It is an incredible place to visit for an hour and can be reached on foot from the overnight spot. The entrance fee is €4pp and is one of the best fortresses I've visited, second only to **Xativa** in Spain. The river walk along the Krka is beautiful and goes on for miles through the gorge. The town itself is a game of two halves. The modern end is vibrant and full of new properties and commercial stores. Whilst closest to the castle it feels a little battle weary. Old ladies, heads wrapped in scarves, sell their knitted mittens and honey, seemingly reflecting the soul of this lower end of town. So many buildings are unloved and in their shadows hide the atrocities that took place during the '90's Homeland war.





PLITVICE NATIONAL PARK

Plitvice NP has been on our list since we crossed the border and with the weather still holding at end of October, we decided now was the time. Autumn would colour our world like a vibrant dot to dot and of course the crowds, we hoped would be less by now. And if we are honest, there was a little bit of us that wanted to wait for the price drop on 1st November.

The journey from Knin to Plitvice was captivating and filled our hearts and eyes to the brim. Wide open mountain ranges that endlessly reached for the horizon and foothills dappled with autumnal shrubs that looked like something out of a Blue Peter - Tracy Island project. Around every corner the vista changed; the mountain topography morphing from white



capped, snow-like plateaus to striking craggy peaks that dominated the skyline. Empty roads coursed their way amongst these limestone giants through forest and carpeted copper beach floors, carrying us passed remote mountain hamlets that resembled a scene out of Heidi. Something told us that if the Lakes didn't match our expectations this journey alone would be the sole reason for our route north.

Plitvice (pronounced Plit veetsa) is an experience that tantalises every sense, leaving us moved by Mother Nature's impeccable artistry. An 8.00am arrival at *Entrance 1* meant that we had the boardwalks to ourselves. Of the 7 routes, we chose *Route C* which took in the whole park, an electric boat and a train for a winter discounted rate of €10.60 pp (plus €10.60 for the car park for the day). These low season prices rise to €40 pp in summer!

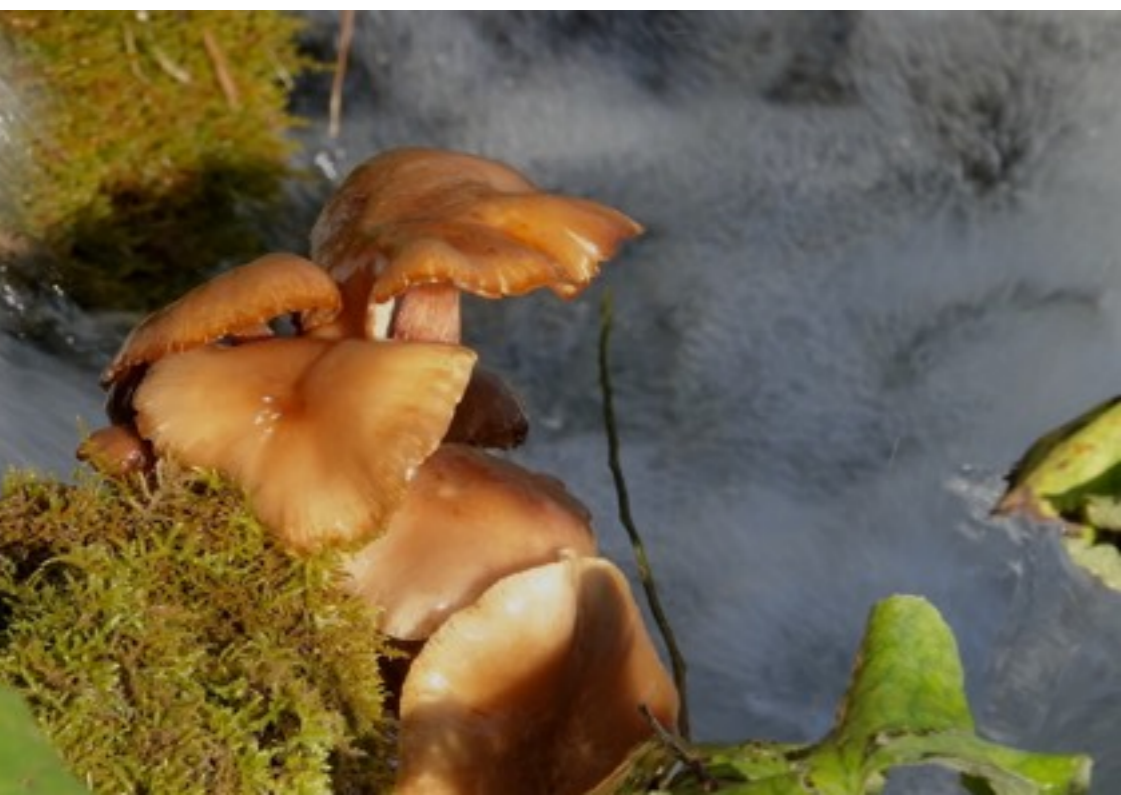
With the early morning shadow surrendering to the emerging light of the sun, the magnificence of the lakes was slow to be revealed. Yet with each passing minute the lakes' true colours started to shine through. Emerald, topaz, turquoise and mint-tea green all blended together to make something so much more vibrant than simply blue!

Beneath our feet, the fallen beech leaves crunched whilst the perpetual sound of gushing water tumbled its way to the Black Sea; and then silence. Pockets of quiet where we could stand still with time for just a moment and be at peace with our chaotic world. Like falling snow the last few leaves relinquished their hold and floated around us, leaving bare trees exposing mesmerising peeks of brilliant blue. The sometimes rickety boardwalks took us intimately

close to the 16 lakes where we could almost touch the jewelled water. Beneath the surface, debris is immortalised on the lake beds, fish swim against the flow and autumn leaves hang out like teenagers. Tufa barriers, an intricate part of this 1979 UNESCO marvel, created cascades that even after a dry summer still babbled.

The electric boat took us across Plitvice's largest and deepest **Kozjak Lake** where the stillness blends with the distant sounds of the waterfalls. Then we weaved around beautifully sculptured paths to the upper lakes, which around every corner had me in awe. How can something without a voice move us so profoundly? Yet Plitvice has a voice; a watery tune that echoes around the valley with a backing harmony from the wind that whistles through the trees. We walked for 8 miles over 6 hours which is unheard of for us, yet the energy of this hypnotic place charged us like Duracell batteries.





The Motoroamers' Top Plitvice Tips;

- Book tickets online, saves queuing.
- Download the App and choose the route that fits you best. We recommend Entrance 1 Route C which takes you from lower to upper with all the waterfalls facing you.
- Arrive early to avoid crowds and visit May or October/Nov weather depending for a quieter visit.
- Wear layers, bring lunch and allow around 5-7 hours with a leisurely pace.
- Do make use of the Panorama train if you are tired, it's an inclusive service.
- And finally it is best visited from either **Zagreb** in the north, **Rijeke** or **Senj** to the west. We visited from Split and it was a 2 day trip. From Senj you can make it in one day.

We loved this place and I would adore seeing it in the depths of winter and early spring. I would definitely not visit in the summer though as my willingness to share it with so many others is non-existent.

For more detailed information we have produced both a *video* and a *comprehensive Plitvice Guide* following our experiences to tantalise you further. Click on the images to the right for more information.





RASTOKE AND SLUNJ - HIDDEN GEM OF CROATIA

After the sensory high of Plitvice we needed some gentle reflection. As ever a bit of research turned up some intriguing options that perhaps may be seen as a little lower key than the Plitvice masterpiece, yet still delightful and integral to Croatia's culture.

Our first stop was **Rastoke**, just 30 minutes north of the waterfall delight, which oozes Croatian tradition out of every pore. Reputedly known as '*The small lakes of Plitvice*', this tiny, protected settlement on the outskirts of Slunj (pronounced Slunya) was built up around a river that, like so many in Croatia, disappear underground in this Karst system for 12 miles, collecting with it limestone, minerals and sediment to create *tufa*. This natural phenomenon means that this

area is constantly changing with new cascades altering the shape of the water's course.

Rastoke is best known for its symbiotic relationship between man and nature which is revealed beautifully as you walk along the shores of the **Slunjčica River**. Passing by the medieval ruins of Slunj's 15th century **Frankopan Castle** you get a sense of the river's importance as it sedately heads north. Soon that movement transforms into a frenzied activity as tufa rock formations create ponds, waterfalls and tributaries upon which man has created a community, perched almost as if on a clifftop, before the waters tumble into the river Korana.



600 years ago this natural phenomenon was seen as an opportunity and 22 mills were built around this small watery world. The river's power fed the mills allowing man to grind wheat, oats and rye together with the weaving of flax and hemp to create fabrics. Rastoke may today seem like a peaceful haven although in its time it has seen more war than peace and to feel its history embedded in the limestone rock feels quite a privilege.

You can experience this little treasure of traditional Croatian life either by paying €5.00 to walk amongst the mills or you can take the panorama route around the outskirts of the town and see it from the viewpoints for free.

What a hidden gem this place was, aided by an official and free aire just 10 minutes walk away in Slunj that we shared with friends.





Mills of Majerovo

MAJEROVO VRILO - SINAC

One of the many privileges of travel is to witness time-honoured traditions that form the very foundation of a country's culture. Whilst modern technology seeks to stamp its mark on today, yesterday still clings onto its heritage, preserving the legacy of its back story. It is only then can we continue to take a peek into and understand what life was like before the Internet and iPads. I'm not a huge fan of history although unveiling how a culture has come to be, intrigues me.

We took a path less travelled south from the unique setting of **Rastoke**, to a tiny hamlet called **Sinac** in the Lika district. Here my research uncovered an authentic cultural and natural gem. **Majerovo Vrilo** has two fascinations. First is that it is one of the springs that source the **Gacko river**. Thought to be one of the

cleanest rivers in Europe and boasts the second highest quality of potable water. You come here if you love fly-fishing; thanks to the river's special Karst mineral composition and temperature the brown trout here grow 5 times faster than elsewhere.

The second draw is to check out the old mills at **Majerovo**. Of the 60 mills that used to line the river, these few remaining wooden buildings show case authentic rural Croatian life. Here milling, thanks to the power of the water, was an integral part of mountain life. These mills have been restored in the last decade and give us a glimpse into how life was and still is for a handful of millers. There's parking at the Pizzaria car park, just 5 minutes walk to this peaceful and very special corner of hidden Croatia.





**Mejrovo Vrilo and the source
of the Gacko River**





SAMOGRAD CAVES - GRABOVACA PARK

Just 20 minutes down the road, another spectacular secret revealed itself to us. **Grabovaca Cave Park**. Thanks to a friend's recommendation, we stopped off here to primarily stay overnight in their car park and secondly to see the magnificent cave that, with your fabulous guide Marko, you can tour. For a mere €7.30 pp you get an hour's tour and home for a night or 3.

They truly embrace motorhomes staying over and provide EHU, water and toilets for free. Whilst the caves are only open Fri-Sun in winter, you can still stay; a Park Ranger will just charge you €7.30 as a one off fee. The scenery is spectacular and the cave with its 474 steps is a challenge yet well worth exploring.

The fragile earth may well be vulnerable thanks to our intervention yet 30m below the surface nature masters the environment. With 22 different chemical processes, the cave's interior design is exquisite.

Curtains of calcium glisten like diamonds, even in the dark light. Horseshoe bats cling to the damp, cold ceiling and 40 year old crustaceans live in the pools created by seeping rain water. When we prevent our interference, how remarkable is life?

We highly recommend this Samograd Cave, hidden in the Velebit mountains. k





KRKA NATIONAL PARK - SO GOOD WE WENT TWICE

Like Plitvice, **Krka Falls** is one of those *must visit* places, which is, in actual fact, far easier to reach than Plitvice from the coast.

Our first visit was the third week in September, when we went as part of Bob's 80th Birthday present from mum. And the second was after a massive rain storm in mid November. The contrast in our two visits was immense and we loved them both for different reasons.

With its Karst landscape, the river Krka flows majestically from near **Knin** in the Dinaric Alps to the Adriatic Sea. On its path it tumbles and cascades over waterfalls made of limestone deposits called travertine. Vibrant emerald green with azure blue

flashes light up the river that partners so elegantly with the crystal white waterfalls.

There are 3 main sections to the Park, an upper, middle and lower. The main tour that you will share with gazillions of others is the lower section that includes the atmospheric boardwalks and the famous **Skadrinski Buk** cascades. In September we paid €28pp where you get access to this most popular region of the Park. Plus, included in the price is the bus to and from the main car parking area at **Lozovac**. From November to March the price is €6.60pp which includes **Roški Slap**.

The Park is just 20 mins from Šibenik, 60 mins from Split, or 90 mins from Omiš via the A1 Toll Motorway (€6.70 toll each way.)

You can enter the Park at five locations, of which **Lozovac** is the most popular. You can then pay for the bus down to the main boardwalks. Or you can visit from **Skadrin**, which is a delightful town and a must-visit destination whilst you're there. If you choose Skadrin, then you can either walk to the park which is about 3 miles or get the boat transfer.

One of the reasons I wanted to revisit Krka was to see the upper stretch of the river. The whole region really needs a couple of days to do it justice. Whilst the main boardwalk area that weaves around the cascades and the iconic **Skradinski Buk** is the main attraction, there is another side of this magnificent magical wonder.

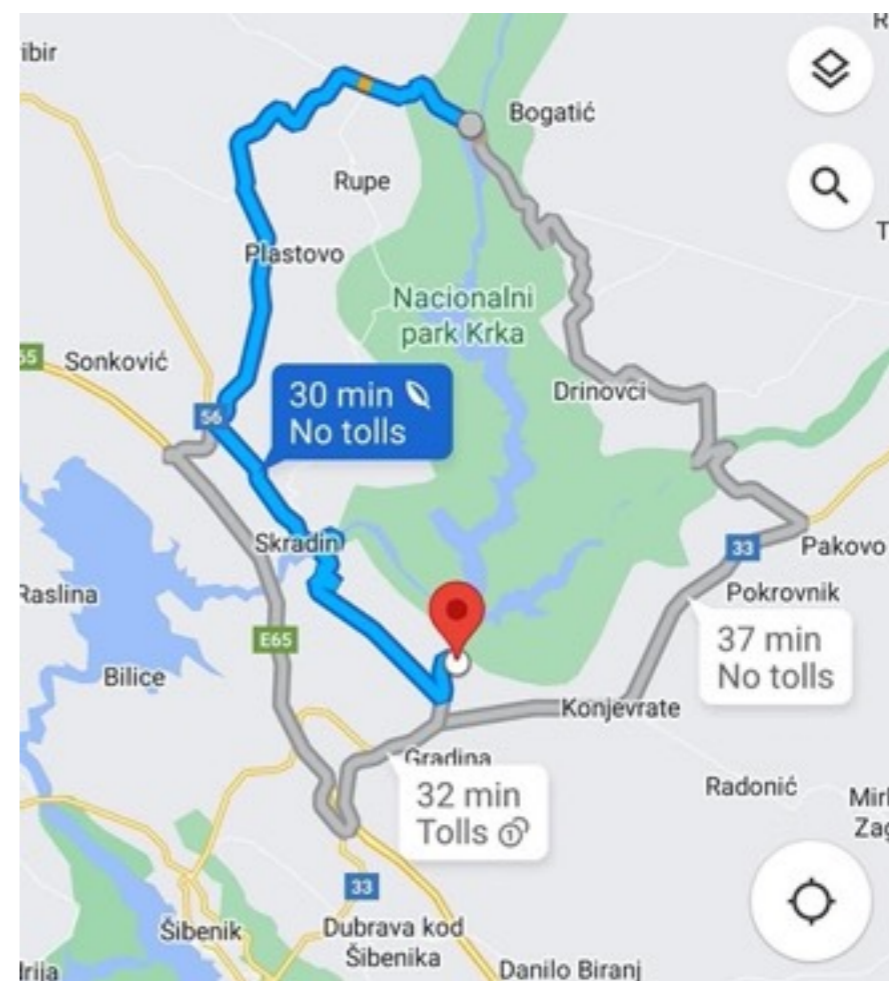
So we took Scoobie on what was a fantastic mountain drive from **Lozovac** to **Skadrin**, then rollercoasted around the neighbouring mountains to reach the northern side of **Roški Slap**.

Two words of caution, if you drive this route in season; firstly it takes you through the mountain village of **Rupe**, which whilst doable, is a single track road. In season this would be a nightmare. So do take the diversion, which isn't officially signposted! Secondly, the road across the river at Roški has a 2.2m width restriction so can't be attempted in a motorhome. We found a place to park at the side of the road and there's a small car park further up, although you can't reach the 'main' car park this way. You need to travel via **Drniš**.

That aside, Roški has a very different personality. Despite the storm, the river glides and tumbles like a basket of new born puppies finding their feet. Necklaces of small cascades seem to slither towards the waterfall. The fusion of the towering gorge walls above and the ice blue waters below was so serene. It has a raw, untouched feel about it. Given the three people we saw, it seemed

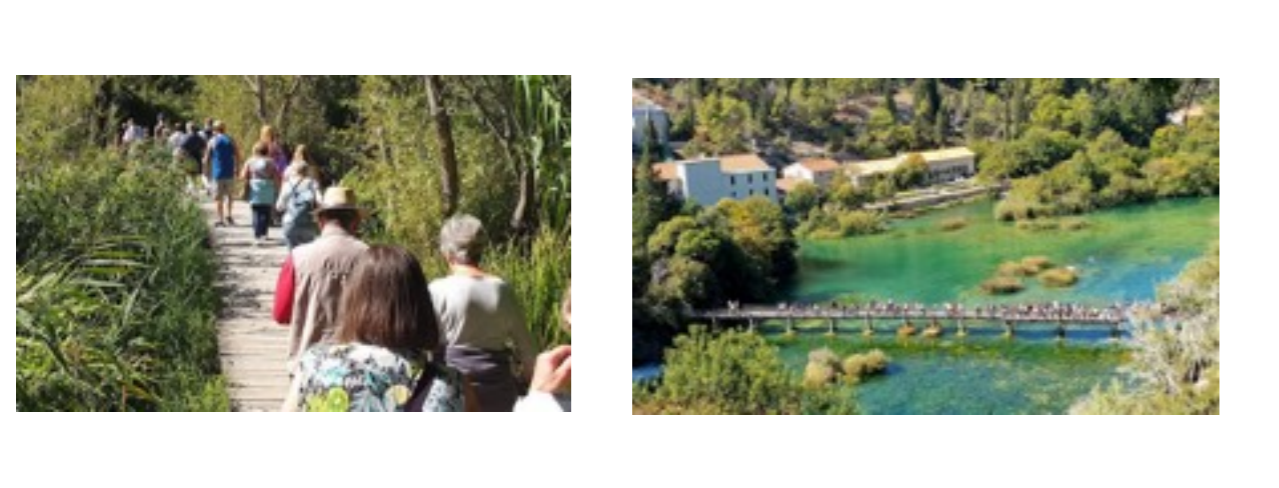
like nature was putting on her own private dance for us. Whilst Roški itself is less dramatic, the whole area combines to create a sensual and gently alluring visit. If you want high drama then you can hike up the mountainside to the **Ozidana Cave** taking the wooden 616 steps and visit inside the cave when it's open in season or just climb it for the views.

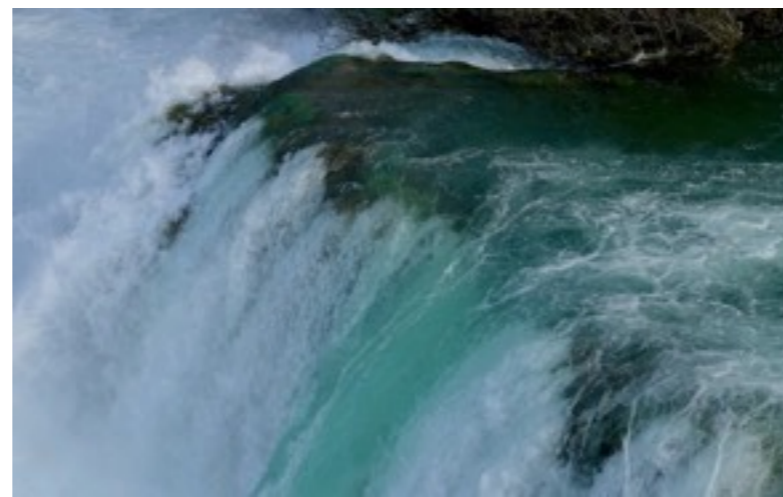
Whilst the journey was 45 minutes each way, I was glad we made the effort. In part because of the drive and also just to experience the alternative face of this incredible National Park. There are campsites open in season at this upper section if you don't fancy driving.





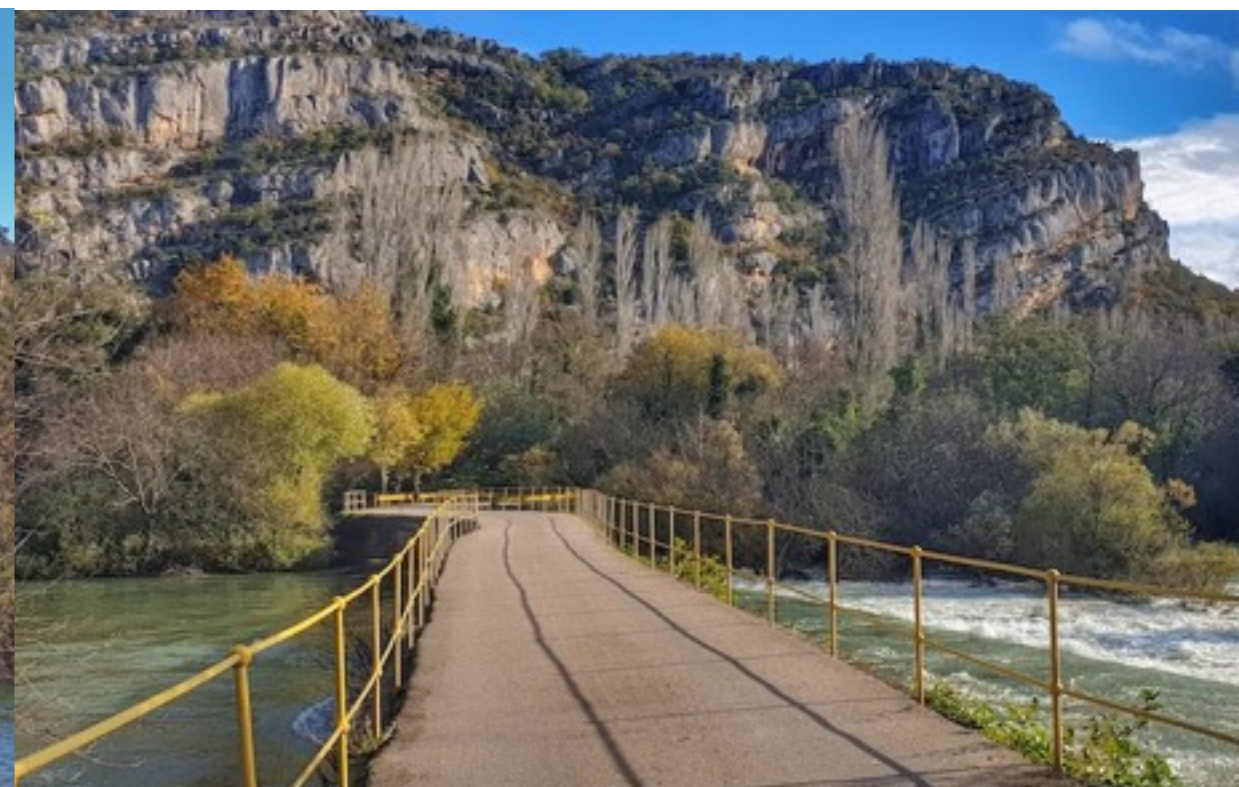
Krka Falls, mid September

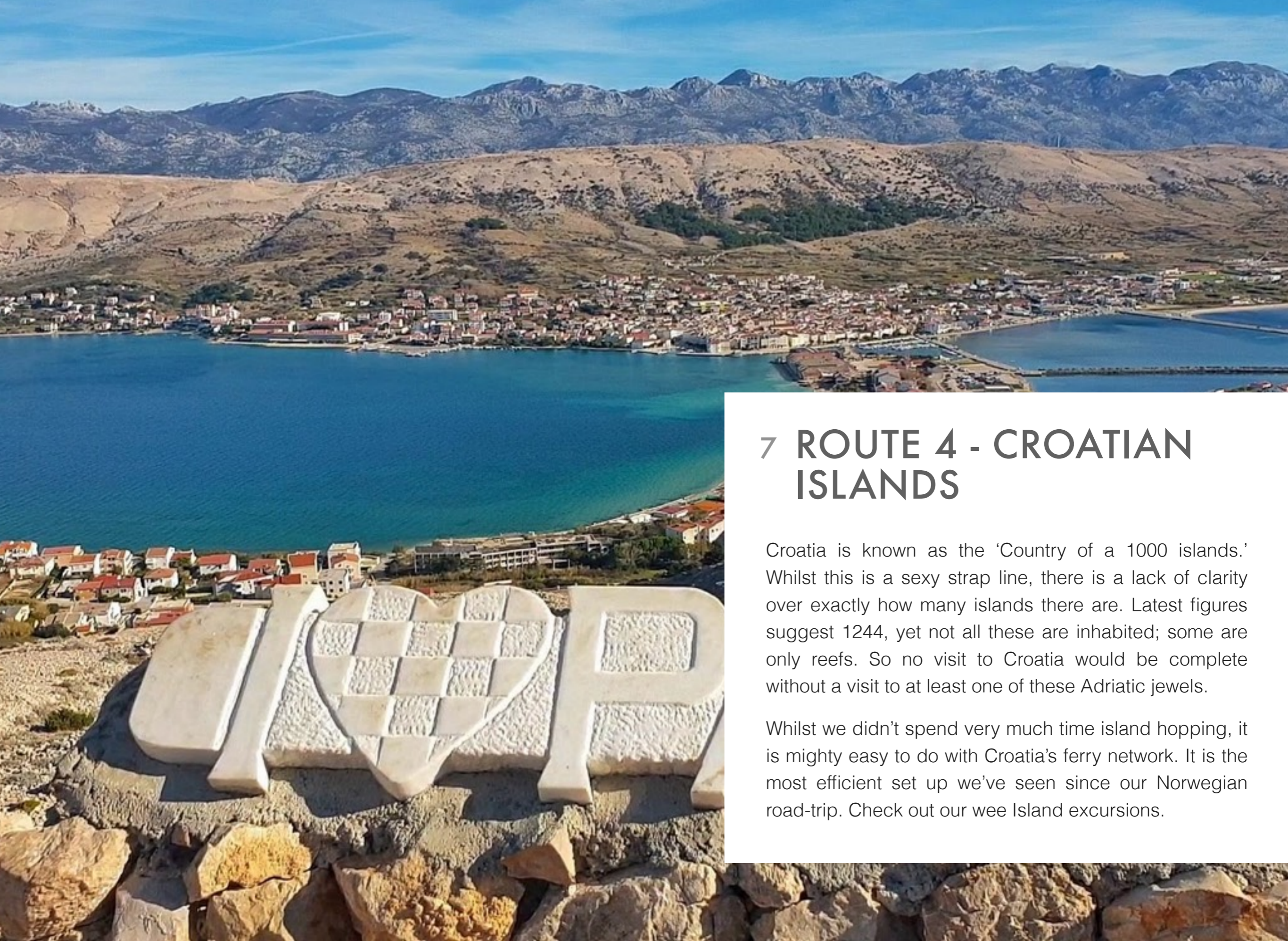






Roški Slap and Upper Krka





7 ROUTE 4 - CROATIAN ISLANDS

Croatia is known as the 'Country of a 1000 islands.' Whilst this is a sexy strap line, there is a lack of clarity over exactly how many islands there are. Latest figures suggest 1244, yet not all these are inhabited; some are only reefs. So no visit to Croatia would be complete without a visit to at least one of these Adriatic jewels.

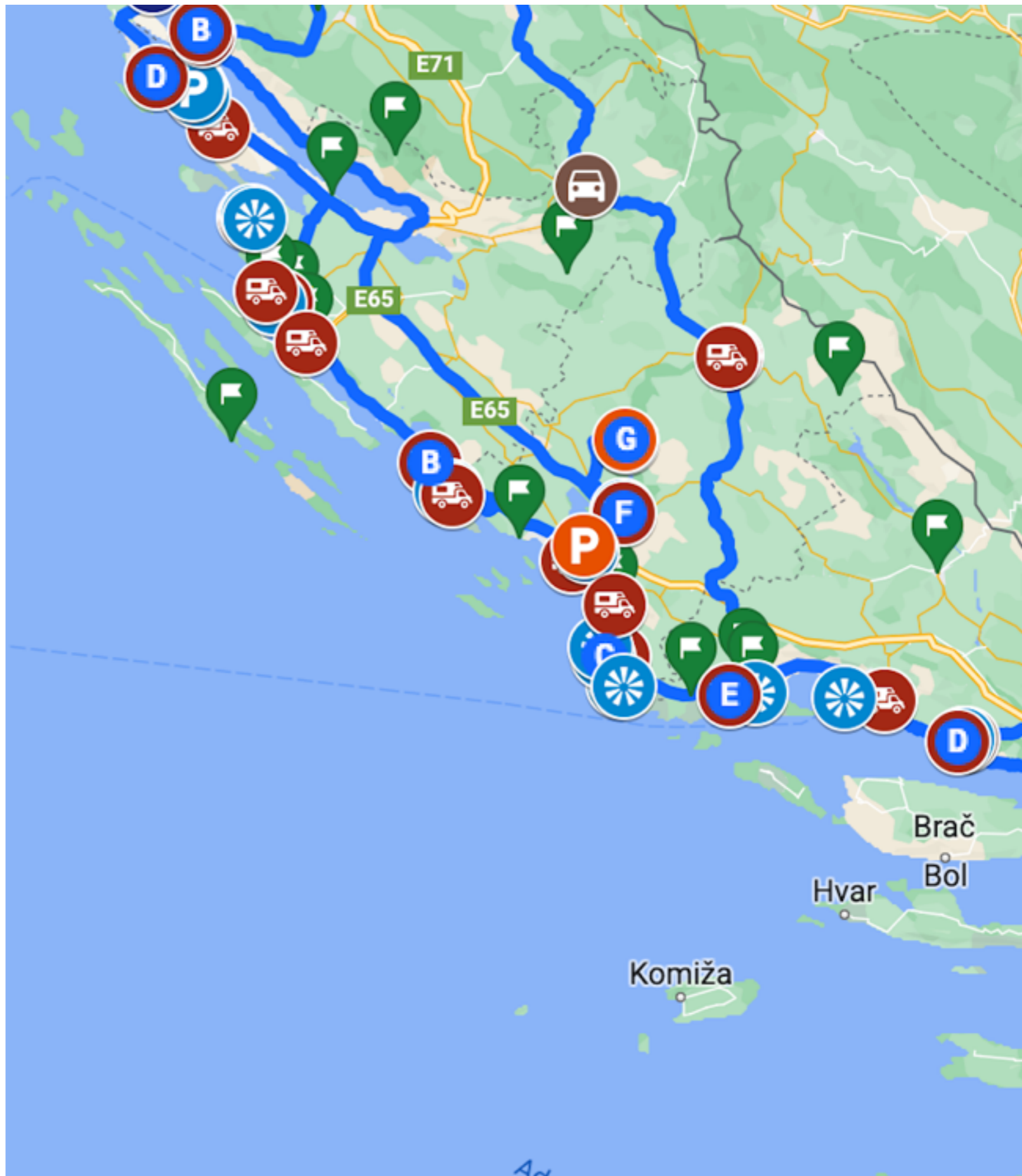
Whilst we didn't spend very much time island hopping, it is mighty easy to do with Croatia's ferry network. It is the most efficient set up we've seen since our Norwegian road-trip. Check out our wee Island excursions.

Route 4

Whilst we only scratched the surface with Croatia's islands, we had a little mooch around four of them. Certainly we will be covering more island ground next time. In the meantime, here are our highlights;

Must-sees

- * Pag and the town of Pag
- * Murter island and Betina
- * Korčula island and the town
- * Pelješac Peninsula (almost an island)





ISLAND OF PAG - PARTY CENTRAL

It seems odd to think that a lunar-landscape island should be Croatia's answer to Ibiza. Yet it is true. During the summer months, **Novalja** vibrates to the sound of young people partying the night away. Thankfully not so for us; our November visit vibrated only with the sound of the wind as it continued shaping the already barren landscape.

The island of Pag is the **second longest island** in Croatia and is certainly very distinctive. We took the ferry from Priznan that cost us €27. We do love Croatia's ferry system, especially for Scoobie's rear-end. As we sailed across the short strait to **Žigljen**, it was immediately clear that the scenery was quite unique.

The landscape, scathed by incessant Bora winds (or Bura in Croatian) lays its soul bare to the elements. Too harsh an

environment for vegetation to grow, a moon-like vista will instead colour your view.

With its seemingly one-dimensional hue, the **D106** leaving Žigljen is famous for its car commercial real estate. It felt as if James Bond should be driving his iconic Aston Martin at speed along this slow ascending route. Alas just little old Scoobie. It really did feel quite surreal after the luscious pine vegetation of Croatia's mainland coast.

With our home on the western flank of the island, we were grateful for the use of their camping facilities after being off-grid. **Šimuni** is a characterful marina village that undoubtedly buzzes in summer months. Yet in the grips of autumn, shutters were closed, a handful of fishermen mended their nets and the cats lurked in the vain hope of scraps.



The island, aside of its clubbing vibe, is famous for **cheese**, **sheep**, **lace** and **salt**. The barren ground offering barely little for the hardy flocks that litter the stone-walled fields like cotton wool buds. Yet they provide the liquid gold for Pag's greatest commodity, its *sir* - or cheese. Pag the town is nestled between two escarpments shaped only by time and winds, it seems. Rich in salt, Pag is synonymous with history. The old town just one km from the new town, bares this truth. The ruins of a grand, walled city housing 6000 people, stands as a legacy of the past. Yet with the Ottomans threatening their existence, new town Pag was constructed in 1443.

It's a charming town with its clean, cream stone walls and smart promenade. Straight as a die streets take you to its medieval centre where 15th century Tower, palaces and churches adorn the cityscape. It has an air of opulence about it as villas line the marina edges. Lace and salt museums are open in season in the town hub. **The 12th century Starigrad** is also worthy of a visit to complete your Pag education. Although only remains, the church has been salvaged from Mother Nature's grip and the old town is an important pilgrimage centrepiece on 15th August, when locals pay tribute to those who died in the 1852 cholera outbreak and to those saved by the prayers to the Virgin Mary.

Then as a final hurrah, our overnight spot 15 mins away, awarded us with the most staggering sunset. No filters needed.

[Pag sunsets are something else.](#)

Ariel view of Pag island and the town





Views of Pag town and Šimuni







Murter and its Roman ruins

MURTER ISLAND AND BETINA

Murter is a small island in North Dalmatia just 20 miles north of **Šibenik** and is connected to the mainland by a road draw-bridge at **Tisno**. It has been inhabited for eons as it was seen as an important and strategic port, sheltered by the **Kornati archipelago and National Park**. It makes for an ideal base for exploring the islands.

Although the island is small, it packs a mighty punch. In high season the island offers some fabulous coves, beaches and bays and in the town of Tisno you can experience some of Croatia's best festivals - it is said. It felt like one of those places that has been relatively untouched by commercialism, as visitors head down the main D8 Adriatic Highway towards Dubrovnik.

The off-the-beaten-track **Betina** on the eastern flank of the island was a real gem and our home for the night. With sumptuous seas for a swim, electric blue kingfishers darting around the shoreline and a skyline image to melt a snowman's heart, I was off like a shot to explore.

Betina is best known for its wooden boat building, with boatyards dating back to 1800s. Three are still in operation. The charming harbour is filled with a colourful array of fishing vessels built by the village.

Crossing the rickety bridges that carry you over the boat launches gives you a sense of the life here, present day and past. The village



goes back centuries and houses here show evidence of a marina's rural lifestyle. The alleyways tinted with vibrant blue shutters radiate from the church to the sea, both integral to life here. The streets shaped by arches have pathways of pebbles that draw you to follow their lead through their maze-like design.

Then for an immersion into Croatia's **Illyrian heritage**, take a 20 minute walk across to Murter town, revealing the most unique beach setting I've ever witnessed.

The Roman settlement of **Colentum** bares witness to a lifestyle shaped by the sea. Old walls formed along the beach with floors extending into the water. This outdoor museum is enthralling as you walk amongst Roman ghosts, imagining their daily lives here. What a treasure this place is.







KORČULA ISLAND

One of our island hop choices was **Korčula** that was in striking distance of our **Pelješac peninsula** home. With only a mile's expanse of water separating us, it was one of those teasing moments where it was almost touchable, yet far enough away to maintain its own character.

After researching our options, we decided to cycle over with the ferry and hire a scooter. This would give us a great alternative to explore a little of what this **sixth largest island** could offer us. A quick nip into **Orebić**, the purchase of 2 return tickets which, with the eBikes cost a mere €15, and we were there in a flash. The ferry system in Croatia is second to none with the precision and efficiency of a Swiss train.

A quick cycle into Korčula town, a bit of instruction from our renter and we were off. Despite warnings of steep mountains, fast drivers

A view to Croatia's mainland from Korčula

and precipitous roads, we headed off on our two-wheeled adventure. Thankfully none of our fear-inducing instruction materialised and my very own Stirling Moss took us to parts of the island that Scoobie dare not go.

Korčula is 29 miles long and 5 miles wide, yet it's size belies its historical importance. Secret bays filled with turquoise waters sparkling in the sun, hairpin roads weaving down from mountain tops and acres of vine covered fields not taken up by dense pine forest. It is truly enchanting.

Our favourite spot was the isolated village of **Račišće** on the northern coast. With beaches that invited us to swim and a peaceful vibe of village life shaped around the small marina - this was a slice of nurturing heaven, which implored us to stay a while. The route back towards Korčula hugged the shore where ocean blue filled our



visions, the balmy autumn air brushed our skin and the faint sweetness of wild rosemary floated up our nostrils. Being back on two wheels, albeit just a scooter, was sublime and brought back so many happy memories of our motorbike tours.

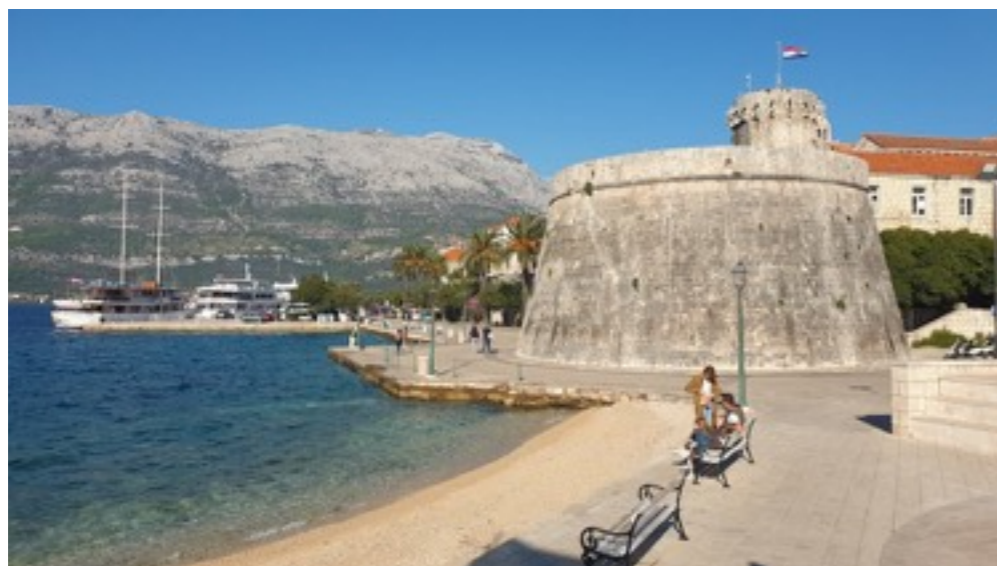
After 4 hours we landed back at Korčula to explore her enchanting ancient walls. A town steeped in tradition and history that forms a robustness that far exceeds its 'Little Dubrovnik' label. Her outer edges touch the sea with the deftness of a mermaid whilst steep, dark alleyways lead you to the pinnacle of this walled beauty. The main square opens up to reveal its intricately carved cathedral and cobbled streets. The building's artwork just drew my eye upwards to marvel at the masterpiece that had stone as its canvas. Archways, honey-coloured stone and alluring vine covered walkways made this brief encounter a joy. We would love to be here at the end of June to witness the **Moreška Sword Dance festival** which looks to embody the very soul of this island.

Korčula is definitely worthy of a visit and the scooter was a great way to explore its nooks and crannies. With a €34 investment for a 5 hour rental, it was a great value day out.





Korčula town, known as 'Little Dubrovnik'





Orebič, Pelješac Peninsula

PELJESAČ PENINSULA - ALMOST AN ISLAND!

Pelješac Peninsula isn't actually an island, well these days at least. Before the Roman times, there was an **isthmus** at Ston - which is a narrow strip of silted land that separates two bodies of water. The Romans fortified this so that the transporting of Ston's salt was easier.

Pelješac is the second largest peninsula in Croatia (behind Istria), and beautifully stretches 50 miles, nestled in between the mainland and Korčula island. It is one of the most serene places we saw and left us gawping and sighing at its charming beauty.

With its sparkling grey mountains, that shine in the autumn sunshine, radiant against those brilliant blue skies, this long finger

of Croatia's coast is part of a really important wine and seafood region.

As we inched up 'Snake's Hill' like a rollercoaster ride, we could see for miles. Behind us we saw the **Pelješki Bridge**, which opened with a hurrah in July 2022, much to the joy of travellers wanting to avoid passport control at the **Bosnian Neum Corridor**. In front of us the mountains stretched across the peninsula's spine in some sort of masterly control, leaving just an inch along the coast on which pretty villages and campsites perch.



Orebić, Kućište and **Viganj** (careful how you pronounce this one), were our homes, set in the peaceful arms of **Camping Lavander** and **Camping Palme**.

The waters here are incredible; the bluest, greenest most topaz colours I've ever seen. The sea dazzles your eyes and gently draws you in with its welcoming whispers upon its waves.

Tiny white stone harbours fringe the shore, sheltering the seafarers' vessels that once brought great opulence to these small hamlets. Where we might have a garage, in this part of the world you have your own personal harbour.

As the winds funnel down through the straight between **Korčula** and **Pelješac**, they are perfect conditions for wind/kite surfing although not so good for my SUP.

The gentle hum of mini-cruise boats gliding to reach the medieval town of Korčula and the sights of a dolphin's fin are your entertainment.

With peace and serenity assured you will fall in love with this peninsula that gives you easy access by car ferry to Korčula to the





east and west from **Trepanj** to **Ploče** back on the mainland. Of course you could, if you preferred, go back to the brand new bridge and take that route back.

We can highly recommend Pelješac as time stands still here, away from the rush of the coastal route between Dubrovnik and Split. A little oasis of heaven captured in a finger of mountainous delight.



Trepanj, Peljesač Peninsula





AND FINALLY... CROATIA'S CAPITAL ZAGREB

Whilst we didn't visit Zagreb on our 2022 trip, we did take a day to explore this fabulous Balkan capital back in 2017. Camped up on an aire just a mile out of town, which I believe has since closed down, Zagreb is on our list of best cities. In fact *city* is a very casual word to use, as this is nothing like the sprawling, commercial affairs elsewhere in Europe. The Balkans really do know how to do cities.

Compact and bijou, Zagreb has just enough vibe, culture and beauty without being suffocating and overwhelming for the introverted traveller.

Zagreb has plenty of historic buildings, a fusion of modern architecture and an old town full of charm and atmosphere. Check out our blog about our 24hours in the capital. [Click this image.](#)



Croatia Monster Mashup

Throughout our 3 month tour, we took regular video footage and shared it in a weekly Monday mashup.

We have compiled those short videos into one Monster Mash up, which we hope will give you a real visual feel for what we experienced.

Click on the image to the right and sit back with a cuppa.





8 CROATIA PRACTICALITIES

Croatia is a very easy country to travel around. There is very little research or pre-trip planning that needs to be done beforehand. Although to ease your journey, if it is your first time in this Balkan beauty, we hope that this section will be helpful.

With a comprehensive look at how to reach the country, what to expect when you are here and the all-important camping options, you have everything you need for a memorable trip. So let's dive on in.

Arriving in Croatia

Croatia might seem like a mammoth drive if coming from the UK. Yet, with their entry into Schengen in 2023, Croatia could well be just one part of a road-trip rather than a final destination. I say this only that now UK citizens must count a visit to Croatia as part of their 90 day Schengen allowance.

There are multiple entry points involving land and sea routes, depending upon where you are travelling from. Let's look at the sea routes first.

1. Car ferries to mainland Croatia from Italy

For vehicle ferries, there are **three** options:

- Ancona to **Split** (9 sailings pw high season, 2 in low season)
- Ancona and **Zadar** (High season only)
- Bari and **Dubrovnik** (High season only)

For more information, click on this link to Croatia's main ferry operator [Jadrolinja](#). They are a top-class ferry operator offering excellent domestic ferries and these routes to Italy. We recommend booking direct with **Jadrolinja** rather than using ferry comparison sites.

It is worth mentioning our experience with our sailing from Split to Ancona. The boat was, interesting! It must have been 100 years old at least and felt like a floating prison. It is very basic, which for an overnight sailing is fine when you are primarily in your cell - sorry cabin! An important note to make is that they only take cash

payments on board. So make sure you have some Euros with you or you will have to withdraw money their **Bankomat ATM** which will charge at least a €5 transaction fee.

Our biggest issue was actually our exit at Ancona. The ramp to the port was the steepest we have encountered on any ferry - even worse than our Fishguard disembarking in Ireland. They did place mats down although there was the inevitable scrape. Thankfully only a little bit of damage, which was easily repaired.

It cost us €404 for a one way sailing from Split to Ancona when we left the country.

2. Entry by land

There are multiple entries into Croatia via land-borders and with Croatia's Schengen membership, many of these crossings will be a lot simpler. The map over the page helps to illustrate the number of border options in their neighbouring countries.

The borders that will *still* be subject to Passport Control after January 2023 are **Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina** and **Serbia**. Of course it is important to state that with Croatia's entry to Schengen, a visit here now forms part of our Schengen Allowance - 90 days in each 180.

Our Route via Cherbourg

Whilst our route was via Cherbourg in France, we thought we would share our route via our [Interactive Map](#) page where you can find our **Route to Croatia**.

This Border Map is courtesy of [Croatia Travel Info](#).

A few entry points worth mentioning;

- Check that your route doesn't cross any **Green Zone** cities. We had to buy a German **Umwelt** sticker for €5 when we were in Germany.
- Check whether your route requires **Tolls** or Vignettes such as in **Austria** and **Slovenia**.
- If you come through Slovenia, watch out for their **H Roads** as they require a vignette of which the minimum is 7 days.





All things driving

We found driving in Croatia a breeze. We are always mindful when arriving in a new country, wondering how we will fair on the roads. Will they be as bumpy as Ireland, as potholed as England or have crazy drivers like Italy? We are happy to report that virtually all the roads we drove during our three months were great quality. More on this shortly. Let's start off with **driving rules**.

- Being part of the EU you must drive on the right which means that **headlamp beam deflectors** are required.

- **Speed limits** are in kilometres.
- **Seat belts** are mandatory for all occupants of the vehicle.
- **Children under 12** must not sit in the front seat.
- **Don't drink and drive**, the law has a **zero tolerance policy** for drivers under 25 which means that the blood alcohol level (BAC) limit is 0%. The BAC limit for drivers over 25 is 0.5%.
- If your camper is over 3.5T there is a total alcohol ban.
- The use of a **mobile phone** while driving is prohibited unless you have a hands free device.

- Between the end of October and the end of March **dipped headlights** should be used during daylight hours.
- **Winter tyres** (M+S are acceptable) with at least 4mm depth are required from November to March **in certain regions** irrespective of weather conditions.
- Vehicles entering a **roundabout** have right of way as do all forms of public transport and school buses.
- On narrow mountain roads, **ascending traffic** takes precedence over descending traffic.
- If you have a **moped, wearing a helmet is mandatory**, although it is not always adhered to by the locals.
- Whilst **cycling the wearing of a helmet is NOT** mandatory for anyone over 16 years old.
- Have a **UK sticker** on the back of your van as we would normally have for other trips to the EU.
- Drivers are to carry a **valid driving licence, registration and insurance documents** at all times whilst driving. A UK licence continues to be valid in Croatia following Brexit.
- You must carry your **passport** on you at all times as a form of identification.
- A **reflective jacket** is to be kept in the car and worn and if you are in an accident or if you have broken down.

- In the case of emergency, call **112**. **Emergency road** assistance with advice in English is on **987**.

- **Motorway signs** have the letter **A** followed by one or two digits. They have a green background with a picture of motorway in white. State roads have the letter **D** and country roads have the letter **Z** followed by four digits.

Speed limits

In built-up areas	50km/h (unless otherwise indicated by local signs)
Outside built-up areas	90km/h – 110km/h (unless otherwise indicated by local signs)
Motorways	130km/h

Motorways & Tolls

Croatia has **11 motorways or Autocesta** as they are known. The map over the page illustrates where you will find them. They are two-lane routes and are pretty new; mostly constructed in 2000 after the war and their independence.

The two occasions we used the A1, we found it super quiet and brilliant quality. Each motorway has a toll which is collected at a Toll Booth and your fee is calculated based on the distance you have

Motorway Map courtesy of Wikipedia



travelled and your vehicle size. We didn't think they were expensive. You can pay by card or Euros.

We would though recommend taking the **D8** coast road, known as the Adriatic Highway, unless you need to crunch some miles. It might be slower although boy is it pretty.



Drivers and Driving Conditions

The drivers in Croatia are, what shall we say? Calm yet rule-breakers. You never hear horn beeping and rarely light flashing when a crazy manoeuvre is carried out. They drive very close to the middle white line, which can be disconcerting to us wide-waisted vehicles.

Also they disregard the rules - coming from a compliant Brit that is saying something. So they will overtake over solid white lines and drive very close to your far side bumper and often be helmet-less on scooters. That said we never felt unsafe.

Croatia is long and very beautiful so we found our pace of travel during our 3 months incredibly sedate. The villages and towns are intriguing and you won't want to travel very far as their coastal cuteness seriously draws you in. So don't over plan your road-trip would be our recommendation.

Roads leading to coastal campsites can be very steep so be aware if you have a long overhang as there is potential for scraping.

Getting to Croatia's islands

Croatia is known as the '*The country of a thousand islands*' and many of them are inhabited and have life-line ferry links to them.

So, part of any Croatian road-trip is bound to include an island or two. Getting to and from is so easy with **Jadrolinja**, the only ferry company that serves the island routes.

Our Croatian domestic ferry experience was akin to Norway's fjord network. Seamless, reasonably priced and efficient. The most pleasing fact to share is that **we didn't once have any problems with our rear end.** The entry and exits were without hitch unlike our exit at Ancona.



You can buy your tickets online and use the QR Code that comes with the confirmation email at the port. It is simply scanned when you board. Check this [link](#) for direct access to their **website**.

Crossing Bosnia at the Neum Corridor

One of Croatia's historical driving challenges has been the 5.5miles (9km) stretch of land owned by **Bosnia** that dissects the Croatian coastline near to Dubrovnik. The border has always taken time to navigate especially in high season. Although since July 2022, the new **Pelješac Bridge** means that traffic can now avoid the border crossing completely. There is no toll fee on this bridge.



Diesel and LPG

After the fuel price hike in Ireland and through western Europe in 2022, we had prepared ourselves for the same in Croatia. Yet we were pleasantly surprised. We arrived with prices being €1.70 in September 2022. They rose to €1.77 and then sunk back down to €1.66 when we left on 30 November. Stations are everywhere so filling up is never an issue.

Petrol prices are set by the government so don't go chasing cheaper prices. They will be the same where ever you go. LPG however is variable we found.

In terms of LPG this ranged from €0.86 - €0.97 and is everywhere. You never need to worry about searching for a station on my.lpg as 90% of stations supply LPG.





All Things Camping

Until our visit in 2022, we had been skeptical about Croatia's campsites. If we're honest, their reputation for gigantic sites, steep prices and prohibited off-grid wild camping, put us off coming. However, Birthday celebrations and Croatia's expected entry into Schengen were both drivers to bite the bullet. Having now experienced nearly 3 months in the country and probably only 30% off grid spots, we are happy to report that camping in Croatia is far better than we ever imagined and a most pleasant experience.

Campsites

So let's delve into the elephant in the room. **Campsites in Croatia.** Yes they are huge, sometimes with 1000-2000 pitches although they are all pretty informal sites, or with pretty views and well spaced pitches so you are never too close to your neighbour. We

actually found ourselves enjoying the sites we stayed at. **Porto Sole, Vrsar** in particular felt a bit like a holiday with its incredible swimming pool, coastal position and tree-lined avenues.

Most of these large sites also have cabins or villas for visiting family or friends. We welcomed Myles' bestie and his daughter to Split in October and they had a great little apartment at **Camping Belevedere.**

Our chosen campsites were great, with outstanding facilities. In fact they had the best showers we've ever experienced throughout Europe. Interestingly most of them have the all-important drive over grey waste disposal making life a lot easier. In the autumn shoulder season, costs ranged from €11 per night to €25 and were often location influenced if you wanted a sea view.

You will be **charged a 'per person tourist tax'** in addition to the main camping fee.

Campsites are still really **busy until mid-September** when the Austrian and German schools go back after the summer holidays. So if you travel here **early September** expecting things to be quieter, you will be disappointed. We enquired at a couple of sites when we first arrived in early September and they were fully booked. So booking ahead may be worth it until the second half of September. Thereafter no bookings are necessary, as whilst still busy with a large majority of German visitors, things do thin out significantly.

Do buy the ACSI card for any out of season Croatian trips as it will save you a lot of money.

All the sites we stayed on had **washing machine** facilities, always a restaurant or three and sometimes a swimming pool. At Porto Sole they even had a hairdresser, which I indulged in whilst were there.

All the **staff are multi-lingual** so being understood is never a problem yet they do appreciate a little Croatian. More on that later.

Campsites all take **credit/prepaid cards** and more importantly from around 15th September **ACSI** rates are offered. We generally paid €20-22 with the ACSI discount, so very much the upper end of the discounted scale. We believe that having ACSI for Croatia is absolutely essential as it can save you €10 per night. And that can make a huge difference to the budget.

Winter camping in Croatia

This is a whole different ball game from summer to autumn/winter. And when I say winter I mean anytime from mid to end of October until perhaps March. Whilst a large majority of campsites close towards the end of October there are a handful that remain open all year.

I would love to offer you a definitive list of those that *are* open yet there are no guarantees that the information would remain accurate. Many sites on P4N or Search for Sites close early depending on the weather, so it can be a trickier season to navigate, yet not impossible by any means. Here are the ones we stayed at which might give you a starting point.

- **Camping Galeb, Omiš**; they have a winter rate of stay 3 nights or more and pay €15 per night.
- **Camping Split, Stobreč**; they offer a half-day rate if you are catching the evening ferry for just €10.
- **Camp Slapovi Krke - Krka Falls National Park**. This is a brand new aire/campsite that stays open all year for €16 per night.
- **Porto Sole, Vrsar**; we have it on good authority that this site is also open throughout the year.
- **Falkensteiner Premium Camping, nr Zadar**; another site that we have on good authority of being open all year. It is not cheap though at €25 pn inclusive of all the premium spa facilities.

If you travel to Croatia in late autumn/winter, bear in mind that often campsites' **Winter Rates** can be cheaper than ACSI so make sure you enquire about both rates.

Wild Camping - off grid homes

For those of you who want to experience a more off-grid style of 'home', there are some options despite Croatia's laws against it.

Although only out of season.

As far as legal issues are concerned, according to the current regulations, it is **not** allowed to camp outside designated camping sites and areas. This kind of activity is regulated by the Croatian Tourism Act issued by the Croatian Ministry of Tourism.

Wild camping is only tolerated out of season. Between the months of June and September you may be fined if caught staying overnight in an undesignated area. Or at the very least moved on.

However, from 1 November many town car parks become free to stay in as their payment machines are either covered up or are simply turned off. There are some wonderful options at coastal towns where you could stay the night without issue. We loved **Rozognica** on the Dalmatian coast, which we paid for when we visited in September and then by November when we returned, it was free to park.

A point to mention about wild spots... some access to places along the coast can be tricky to reach depending upon your vehicle. 4x4s and smaller campers will experience fewer problems than motorhomes and larger leisure vehicles, although it is still worth being mindful. You may experience *steep* and *narrow* access roads, rocky terrain which could damage your tyres or be in exposed areas, which anytime after September could be a challenge with the unpredictable Bora Bora winds. So choose your homes wisely and check P4N for the latest reviews from fellow campers.

Also it is worth saying that despite its southerly location, Croatia's **weather in autumn is unpredictable**. We were incredibly lucky in 2022 with daily temps of 20-25° and clear skies. Although this is not the norm. So if like us you require solar to keep your batteries charged to run your 'digital life', then this period can be tricky to navigate. We often found ourselves changing plans, often to seek out an open campsite for EHU from mid-November. Despite our love for off-grid homes, the lack of sun and put too much pressure on our batteries and thereby cranked up our stress.

As ever, rules for wild camping must be applied, especially in Croatia when in the summer it is forbidden. If we can be respectful of their tolerance during the autumn and winter, then these places will remain homes for us for the future. So park sensitively and discretely, spend your money in local bars and bakeries, take away your rubbish and leave no trace of your presence.



Aires/Autocamps

Something that is HUGE in Croatia is the emergence of **Autocamps**. Some of these are just less formal campsites with perhaps 20-50 pitches. Whilst others are simply a resident's garden where you are invited to stay. During busy periods, it certainly gives us plenty of options, although they are not always a cheaper option - just a smaller option than the larger and more commercial sites. You will see them perched all along the coastline and advertised frequently on the road-side. Many of them are not even on P4N because they are too prolific to add to the websites.

Also there seems to be an increasing number of entrepreneurial Croats and communities recognising the need to provide visiting motorhomes a place to stay. So we we were welcomed at some lovely, less conventional places such as;

- A hotel parking area in **Poreč**, which was €16 per night with some EHU available.
- The harbour at **Senj**, that remains one of our 'home' highlights, which for 24 hours cost us a mere €9.
- Another hotel in **Karlobag**, which in high season allows you to park for a small fee. When the hotel is closed for the low season, it is free to stay and perfect if you need to shelter from a Bora.
- A restaurant just inland from **Primošten** had created three park up areas for campers of varying sizes, all for free with no obligation to eat with them.

- **Grabovaca Caves** inland from Karlobag invited motorhomes to stay as long as they wished for just the cost of an entrance fee to their caves, which cost us €15. We stayed two nights and had had free EHU, water and toilets.
- A free Aire has been set up in **Slunj** 30 mins from Plitvice Lakes with services soon to be available.

We have listed all our overnight stopovers at the end of this book and also you can find them by clicking this [Interactive Map](#) link.

We used [Park4Night](#) for most of our stopovers and entered a lot of new stops and updated information over at [Search for Sites](#).





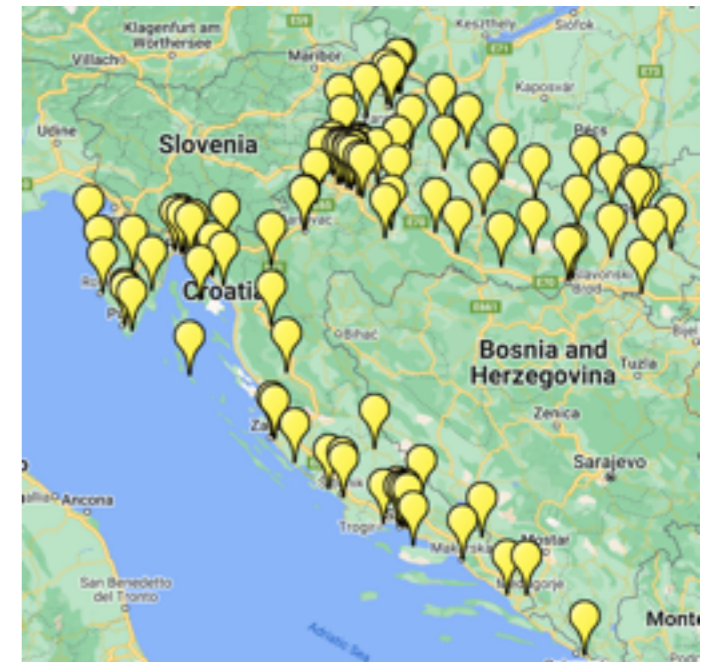
All Things Shopping

Shopping in any new country brings with it a mixture of jubilation and anticipation as we explore how best to nourish ourselves. We love to see what unique cultural foods are on offer. Yet with all the different eating styles that we choose for nutritional or ethical reasons, food shopping abroad can bring a range of emotions. So let's see if we can share a bit about our experiences.

Supermarkets

There's a lot of familiarity when buying food and drink in Croatia. You may be pleased, or perhaps relieved to know that the good old staple - Lidl is well represented in Croatia as you can see from the

map (courtesy of Scribblemaps.com). Aldi has only 1 store in the north from what we can tell. Certainly we didn't see any stores during our three months. So you will find roughly all the same brands here as anywhere else across Europe, with a greater emphasis on smoked hams, sausage meat and dried pork. This is big in Croatia.



Their fruit and veg range was pretty good except for greenery like kale, green beans or French beans. Otherwise veg like cabbage, spinach, cauliflower, broccoli were all widely available. Their produce is not up to the incredible standard of Spain's markets although for road-trip here it did us very nicely. They are slowly beginning to stock more vegetarian and vegan options, in Lidl especially. At the very least you can easily get plant-based milk.

There are of course other supermarkets available, which are always worth exploring for local delicacies. Expect to see in abundance larger stores like **Plodine**, **Konzum** and **Tommy**. We visited all three and Tommy was our favourite of the three. Also in smaller towns you will see **Studenac** stores. These are like a UK Co-op and roughly the same price as the other three. Lidl came out marginally cheaper than all the alternatives although they were not always in every community.

Food and drinking Culture

Croatians, much like Bosnians are generally carnivores. They love their protein and sweet treats and cakes so expect to see a plethora of **Mesnica** (Butchers) who will offer you almost any cut of meat you desire; they don't let anything go to waste. Check out **Ćevapčići**, (pronounced chevapachichi) which is classed as street-food and is a small sausage made of minced meat served with a tomato or red pepper based sauce.

Croatia's **Pekarnica** or bakeries are amazing. They sell a whole range of yummy sweet and savoury goodies to tempt any palate. Their bread in particular is incredible and very cheap. You will always find at least one if not two bakeries in every community. It was almost as good as being in France. **As a personal recommendation**, we would suggest not buying the pre-packaged bread from the supermarkets as their freshly made offerings were far superior, easy to buy and so much more delicious. We often ended up throwing away packet bread.



Top tip; Croatian baguettes are huge so ask for half or *pola*.

Buying alcohol, seemingly has no restrictions and is easy to buy at any supermarkets with cheap price tags.

We suggest buying bakery's freshly made bread than the pre-packaged supermarket bread. And never decline a Croatian invitation for coffee.



Croatia has a huge **Cafe Culture**. Even in winter, the one thing you can rely on being open are cafés and bars. Snuggled up beneath their umbrellas, stoic Croats will meet for coffee. Be under no illusion, having coffee is so much more than just a drink. Coffee is an experience and, it is said that all types of business is facilitated over

coffee and a sweet thing. 12 noon might, for many, signal lunchtime, yet Croats are still on coffee and in fact their practice goes on throughout the day. So if you are invited for coffee, it is seen as an insult to decline such an important tradition, that runs deep through their veins.

Eating Out

We only ate out a few times during our three months and the menus, especially in tourist destinations, spanned a wide variety of options. Not only did the restaurants reflect that tourist market, Croatian food

is influenced by their history. So you will see plenty of Italian, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish influences in their meals and their restaurants.

Vegetarian options were available in places we visited along the coast, given the influence of the tourist market. Although for Vegans it may be more of a challenge, given the propensity of meat-lovers, especially in the countryside and mountains.

The Croatian mind-set is that no meal is complete without meat (usually either pork or beef) and coffee. Vegan and vegetarianism is for Croatia, still a novelty. Yet with a strong value around hospitality, their desire to please people means that they are beginning to cater for a wider range of dietary requirements. If you go out and worry about the abundance of meat, our advice is to ask for a plant-based meal. Chef's will often whiz you something up.



Croatian Food Specialities

If you love seafood, you will love Croatia; of course being beside the coast, fishing is a core industry. In particular if you go to **Ston** on the Dalmatian coast, they serve up the greatest mussels and oysters, which are delicacies here and the **Pelješac peninsula**.

The **island of Pag** is famous for its cheese (in Croatian *Paški Sir*). The moon-like island is home to the hardy sheep and so their cheese has become a bit of a delicacy. As is salt. So if you fancy

taking some authentic Croatian salt home, Pag is one of a few really good places to make a purchase.

The **Istrian peninsula**, especially inland is big for its truffles and olive groves. Croatia's Olive Oil is award winning; back in 2016 at the New York Olive Oil Convention - yes there really is such a thing, they won 9 awards, six of which were from Istria. So bag a bargain if you visit inland Grožnan or Montavun.

The **island of Korčula** and in fact the whole Pelješac peninsula is massive for its vineyards. It was one of Croatia's greatest surprises for us; its wine industry is massive - well relatively speaking. Whilst our visit was out of season so most of the vineyards were shut, in season they all offer free tasting sessions in their rustic informal estates.

In the **Lika region** you will find honey and cheese being sold on road-sides and in autumn **cabbages** are a staple food. **Mandarines** will burst on the scene in October/November and soon to follow are **walnuts** and **chestnuts**. In fact in the hinterlands, the older generation would sell their foraged nuts on the roadsides.

And all over Croatia you will find **smoked meat**. There is, we found, very little unsmoked anything, especially ham. So salami, a Croatian version of Chorizo and pork crackling are all available everywhere. Although a word of caution; the crackling is not like the English version! That's all I'm going to say on the matter.

DIY Emergency shopping

If you run into trouble for van bits, then Germany's brand **Bauhaus** is on hand. This is a bit like the UK's B&Q or France's Castorama.

There are 8 stores across the country; 4 around Zagreb and then one in Pula, Rijeka, Zadar and Split.

Also if you hit a more major problem under the bonnet, then cities like Rijeka, Zadar and Split all have branded and independent mechanical garages.

Laundry

We did all our laundry whilst on campsites which cost between €3-6 per load. They all had tumble dryers if you needed them, although throughout our stay we managed with air-drying.



Currency and payments

With effect from 1st January 2023 Croatia moved over to both the **Euro** and joined the **Schengen**. So we no longer need to worry about sourcing Kuna - their original currency. This will certainly keep our travels simpler. If you still hold Kuna from previous visits, you will be able to exchange them for Euros once in the country, up until **31 December 2023**.

When it came to payments, **Supermarkets, petrol stations** and the more **commercial campsites** happily took **cards**. The smaller **autocamps**, markets and **Konoba** (taverns) preferred cash.

There are plenty of ATMs around, so we recommend you have Euros with you as well as a pre-paid card such as Caxton. For conversion of currency into Sterling, we always use [Xe.com](https://www.xe.com).



Which season is best to visit?

I guess this is a matter of personal choice. If you like mega hot then Croatia in summer is a perfect destination for you. If you dislike crowds then the shoulder seasons are better.

Croatia has two basic types of weather patterns; **Mediterranean** influenced by the coast and **Continental** influenced by the massive land-mass behind the **Dinaric Alps**. They split their seasons into three; **Summer** season July and August, **Shoulder** season May, June, September and October and the **Winter** season which runs from November to April.

Each season brings with it its own joys and complications, which we will endeavour to summarise. I do temper this section with an

element of 'half the story' given that our trip was from September to the end of November.

1. **Summer Season.** Undoubtedly Croatia's most popular time to visit for many European families who simply just cross the border from Italy and Austria. This is a German hotspot and they make up around 80% of the visitor's demographic; which we offer merely as a statistic and for no other judgemental reason.

Summer is a time when the weather is at its hottest, the campsites are at their busiest and most expensive. Your ACSI will not count during this season. You can expect temperatures averaging around 25-30°, although massive heatwaves of 30°+ have hit the coast in recent years. It is always a bit cooler up in the mountains,

so there's always chance to get away from the searing heat. This is of course when most families will visit, thanks to the school holidays, so this might influence your visit.

2. **Shoulder Season.** May, June, September and October can be lovely times to visit. Friends have been here in May and had gorgeous temperatures that are less debilitating than the summer scorchers. Having arrived in Croatia on 4 September 2022, we had fabulous temperatures, although it was busy and still top-end priced campsites. ACSI can kick in anywhere from the beginning to mid September. It is worth bearing in mind that many European schools break up around the third week of June and won't return until early September; German schools often not until mid September. So you may need to factor into your plans.

The other challenges that need considering during the shoulder season is firstly, **the less predictable weather.** In previous years we had the intention of coming to Croatia only to find that the conditions had been so bad that roads had been washed away. So not every autumn is blessed with such gorgeous weather as we experienced. Secondly the autumn is typically when the **Bora Bora winds** start to brew (Bura Bura in Croatian). More on this in a moment, although these are not any old winds, they are vicious. Whilst it should not stop you coming, we wanted to flag it.

Crowds in the shoulder can be pretty busy too. It's a great time for the cruise-liners. We found Krka, Dubrovnik and Split still really busy in September/October. So it isn't a guarantee that the shoulder season means quiet.

3. **Winter season.** Whilst we don't have direct experience of winter per se, I think our stay during November gave us enough of a feel for what the following four months might be like. The most important point we need to make is that there are **only a handful of campsites that are open all year round.** As we mentioned earlier, whilst wild camping is tolerated more out of season, if you rely on solar power, then it can be a bit tricky. Plus of course we need services. So whilst it is not impossible, it does become more of a strategic affair during the low season. Of course at this time of year there is no one around. We were lucky if we saw a handful of motorhomes on the roads and even locals didn't seem to venture out very much. And many campsites we had to ourselves.

By mid November the weather really had turned and we regularly experienced Bora winds. With nights drawing in there is a very autumnal feel to Croatia. The water is still warm enough to swim on sunny days and when the wind doesn't blow, it's still very pleasant out and about. Restaurants tend to shut during the week although are very much open for business during the weekends for the local trade and cafés are *always* open. Also many visitor attractions like castles and gardens are shut. Krka Falls however is open all year round. So late autumn early winter can be a bag of mixed blessings.

In winter, in the hinterlands and mountains expect snow. Even in November whilst we were still there, Zagreb up in the far north had had their first wintery conditions.



Weather Warnings - Bora Bora

As the title of the book suggests, **Croatia is a country of contrasts**; in so many different ways. And when it comes to weather this most definitely fits into that contrast category.

Summer warnings can often be of high temperatures with risk to animal health and dehydration for us humans. Whilst autumn and winter is more about the **Bora Bora**. Without wanting to be too melodramatic about this wind, fair warnings are needed as the Bora is like no other wind we have ever encountered.

The Bora is unique to Slovenia, northern Italy and Croatia where high pressure from the Continental influenced Dinaric mountains is dragged seawards to a Mediterranean low pressure. It is most poignant in the **Velebit mountain region** which spans 87 miles (145km) arcing from Senj southwards towards Zadar and Omiš.

Now I'm not talking a bit of a breeze, I mean hurricane strength winds. In December 2003 a record breaking Bora was set at a staggering 180mph (304kmph). The most concerning part of the Bora's nature is that there can be little warning of these brewing

beasts. It is said that when the clouds hang over the top of the mountains, then Bora is coming.

During our time in Croatia we experienced a number of reasonably mild Boras; the first of which was mid-September. Then in our last week we had two more major storms over a couple of days with winds reaching over 80mph (120kmph). And it is hairy. You don't want to be in its path or if you are, then you need to position yourself strategically so that you can stay safe.

Having driven through its westerly path down through the Velebit mountains, it is not an experience I really want to repeat and we had to change our overnight stop in order to seek shelter.

So with autumn/winter in Croatia comes the chance of meeting with this tempestuous phenomenon. And please, we don't say any of this to create fear, just to raise awareness of what winter might be like in this stunning contrasting country. Here are our recommendations for handling these challenging conditions.

1. Keep a regular eye on [Windy.com](https://www.windy.com) when you are travelling anywhere from Senj down towards Omiš.
2. If you notice clouds forming on the mountain tops, use this as a trigger for checking the weather forecast and be prepared to move if you are in an exposed area.
3. If you are on the coast when Bora brews we recommend finding either a campsite or a sheltered place to sit it out. It can last for 12-48 hours.

4. Park behind a wall or buildings to get the best protection.
5. Don't park side on to the wind; we suggest front on.
6. If you have stabilisers we suggest you use them.

We did this very short video of 'after the Bora' when we were in Karlobag.



Bank Holidays

In case it influences the time in which you visit here are a list of Croatian specific holidays.

- **1st May** - Labour Day
- Between **end of May to mid June** Corpus Christi is a National holiday. Check [here](#) for which date it applies for your visit.
- **22 June** - Anti-facist Day to remember the uprising of the Partisans in 1941 to free Croatia from facist rule.
- **5 August** - Homeland Thanksgiving day is a commemoration of the military action known as Operation Storm that gained independence for Croatia in 1995.
- **15 August** - Assumption day celebrates the day when, according to Catholic tradition, the Virgin Mary was assumed bodily into Heaven.
- **1 November** - All Saints' Day.
- **18 November** - Remembrance Day for the Homeland war, commemorating the Battle of Vukovar that took place in 1991.
- **Summer holidays for schools** - 3rd week in June to last week in August.



What to pack

I guess the packing list for Croatia is completely different depending upon the season and potentially in which part of the country you are spending most of your time. Certainly summer clothes for late spring, summer and early autumn. Then layers for early spring and autumn with winter coats, hats and gloves for winter.

- If you love waling there is loads of hiking to be done, so pack a decent pair of **walking boots**.
- If like me you love a **SUP or kayak**, then Croatian waters are simply perfect. I used my board loads.
- **Swimming shoes** as the coast is incredibly rocky so can be tough on our little puddies. Also in Istria's waters we encountered Fried Egg jellyfish and further south you find Sea Urchins. Whilst most of the tourist beaches are clear of them, it is worth being mindful.
- Pack **waterproof and windproof** attire for hiking in the mountains as weather at any time of the year will be cooler and less predictable.



- Grab your **camera, binoculars and your travel journal.**

Especially keep your eyes peeled for dolphins and the plentiful coastal Kingfishers.



- Rucksack or three.

- Bicycles or moped.

- And most definitely **mosquito repellent.** They are monstrous in summer and through to mid November or until the winter weather turns.



Animals, Pets and Vets in Croatia

When it comes to our furry companions, entry to Croatia is no different to other European countries. Being part of the Union, Croatia abides by the same Animal Health regulations. So please follow the guidance from your Vet or the [Government website](#) to ensure you have the adequate cover and injections for your fur-ball.

Most campsites have a **‘Doggy Beach’** where you can exercise, allow them to accompany you and swim without interference with other guests. And in fact many campsites have **Doggy Showers** that you can use. So visiting animals are well catered for here.

In the National Parks, like Plitvice and Krka, dogs are allowed to enter the parks with you, although strictly on leads only.

In terms of travelling around on **public transport**, it seemed a bit hit and miss from what we heard. On **Water Taxis** in Dubrovnik, dogs were welcomed without issue or restriction. **The Panorama Train at Plitvice Lakes**, dogs were allowed. And **ferries** to and from the islands pets were also allowed to board.

Although we understand that on **public buses**, dogs were not welcome unless in a box, which for any big dog isn't going to work. Larger dogs can travel if they are on a small leash and muzzled, with the right paperwork and fare payment.

Should you need a vet whilst on your Croatian trip, click this [link](#) which provides you with a comprehensive list and map of all **Vets** in the country.



In terms of **animal welfare** Croatia presents very few problems. Unlike Bosnia, we saw very few stray dogs around Croatia- *cats* yes, although dogs no. Most campsites have a handful of cats and respective kittens floating around that will be on the scrounge for food. I'm guessing they are probably feral and rely on visitors feeding them. Interestingly dogs are loved pets in Croatia whereas cats seem to be the poor relation.

So we took the approach of having an added tin of tuna or a tin of cat food for moggies in need of some TLC.



Communicating

Data and Telephone Connectivity

Given Croatia is in Europe and therefore part of the Europe Zone for phone suppliers, your UK phone supplier will subject you to their Roaming and Fair Usage policy. We have 25GB per month each with O2 and we also have a **Lobster card** that we bought in Spain, which we activated here without any issues. Campsites do all have WIFI although we found them to be generally weak and not worth logging into. Some towns also have the free WIFI4EU that you can connect to.

We found one area in our 2 months where we couldn't connect at all - **Prevlaka** Croatia's most southern point. Due to its geographical

location next door to Montenegro, you can only pick up a Montenegro network.

You can of course buy SIM cards in Croatia with varying data amounts depending on your usage.

Telemach NET2Go do a 20gb SIM card for €9 which is valid for 30 days. You can buy them from **Telemach** shops or **Tisak** kiosks which are in every town we visited. You can also buy on line [here](#).

Telekom also do a pre-paid SIM card that for heavy internet users, offers unlimited mobile data for 7 days for €11. As long as you keep your account topped up sufficiently, they will renew week. Click [here](#) for more information. You can buy these from local Post Offices or Telekom stores.

Getting by in Croatian

The Balkan states all have some similarities in their language, so once you have some basic phrases nailed in say Slovenia, then you will be able to adapt to Croatian. Similarly in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Whilst many Croats are fluent in English, German and Italian come to think of it (especially in campsites), with just a few phrases of Croatian, you will win over their hearts.

We saw a lot of visitors not even trying and relying on the locals conversing with them. We have never held the belief that this is the right thing to do. When in Rome and all that... So here is our brief guide to getting by in Croatian.

Phrase	Croatian	Phonetic
Hello (once you know someone)	Zdravo	Stravo
Hello (formal greeting)	Dobar dan	Dobradan
Please, thank you	Molim, hvala	Molim, ha va la
Goodbye	Dovidenja or chow	Dovigenya or chow

Phrase	Croatian	Phonetic
How are you?	Kako se	Kako tsay
Can I....	Mogu li....	Mogoo lee
....pay	platiti	plat iti
....have	dobiti	dob iti
....stay	ostati	os tati
Do you speak English?	Govoriš li engleski	Govorish lee engleski



Some little nuances that are important in Croatian that will help you with your pronunciation...

- **č and ć** these are classified as a 'hard c' and a 'soft c'. So **č** is a 'ch' and **ć** is more like a 'ty' as in tune.
- **š and ž** these are pronounced as a 'sh' like in shoe and 'je' as in the s of measure.
- **j** is like a 'ye' as in dovidenja. When it is combined like this **nj** you pronounce it like the n in minion.
- **đ** you see this in dovidenja - and is pronounced as a soft g in the sound duke.

Our 3 month Croatia Spends

Spending	Price in £	Comments
Food	1,450	We found food to be on a par with Spanish prices
Diesel	460	Prices varied from £1.47 - £1.57 during our visit
LPG	40	Prices varied from £0.76 - £0.86 during our visit
Campsites	1,020	This included Sept that were high season prices
Tolls	11	This fee was for the A1 motorway en route to Kra Falls
Ferry outbound	360	Split to Ancona
Eating out	400	This higher than average price is based on meeting up with friends and family
Laundry	18	All done via Campsite facilities
Taxi/Bus/Scooter	100	This was most significantly Uber taxis to Split!
WIFI	169	This was our Lobster Card from Spain
Entertainment/ Entry Fees	180	This includes our Dubrovnik costs most specifically
Total spend	4,208	This equates to around £54 per day all inclusive.



9 CAMPING OPTIONS

Croatia is a haven for those of who want to tour, stay put or have some adventures. And to go with our lifestyles, there is a really wide range of overnight possibilities. We dabbled in all types of 'homes' whilst we were in the country and we have added every single overnight in this section with co-ordinates.

You will also be able to access these through our [**Interactive Map.**](#)



Here are all of our overnight stops to whet your appetite.

1. Camping Savudrija (45.486598, 13.492278)

Our first stop after crossing the border with Slovenia and just 30 minutes drive away. A great stop for 3 nights allowing us to get to grips with the Croatian coast.

2. Valamar Isabella Island Resort Aire (45.221088, 13.607116)

A super aire with ample parking and some EHU hook ups which was great for visiting the town just 1 mile away. €16pn inc EHU if you could get it as there are limited terminals.



3. Porto Sole Camping, Vrsar - (45.141803, 13.605494)

A huge site with different offerings of pitches available at different prices. There are villas, a pool, restaurant, supermarket and hairdressers all available. We paid €22pn with our ACSI card.



4. Pizan Zip-line Parking (45.239947, 13.927561)

We headed inland and stopped at Pizan with gorgeous views across the gorge. It is an off-grid spot and we were fine although the local council did visit us in the morning to ask how long we were staying. There was no issue about us staying they just wanted to check in.



5. Draga Autocamp - Route 66 Istria (45.239429, 14.250283)

On the south coast of Istria is the most stunning drive along the 66. There are several campsites to choose from; we stayed one night here for €22 with ACSI.



6. Senj Harbour Overnight (44.989628, 14.898215)

What an utter joy this place was. There are loads of Autokamps along the route south although they are crammed within an inch of their lives. We had this to ourselves. Just bought a day ticket which covered us for the night for €9.30 with water and outdoor showers with a private beach and launch. Payable by cash only.



7. Oaza Mira Camping, Drage (43.886064, 15.532178)

We were heading to Krka NP although it was super hot so we decided to retreat to the coast so we could swim. We found this campsite which is terraced and offers ACSI pitches for €22pn and a private beach. Stunning shower facilities as we have come to expect in Croatia.



8. Sarićevi Free Aire - nr Primošten (43.572242, 15.959297)

A series of 3 overnight aires offering 7 pitches, developed by the local village restaurant. Meals are not obliged although they do a good Peka for €18. (Croatian Stew). The top aire of the three is most suitable for Motorhomes, the other two for campers only.



9. Rogoznica Marina Parking (43.533774, 15.963894)

What a delicious place to stay and visit. The street parking allows overnight which is free from 12 midnight until 0600. The remainder of the time you pay for a day ticket €16 or by the hour €1. Depending on when you arrive, it might be cheaper to buy an hourly ticket. Download the **Bmove app** and you can pay and schedule payment online.



10. Camp Galeb, Omiš (43.440095, 16.680249)

This is a lovely medium sized campsite right on the beach many pitches with sea views. Has good facilities, laundry and cabins if you are meeting family. We paid €16 per night in mid September.



11. Camping Kate, Mlini (42.624367, 18.20787)

A great little campsite with an eclectic selection of pitches. You are on the number 10 Bus into Cavtat or Dubrovnik or the water taxi from Mlini down the steps. **Closes on 31 October.**



12. Vitaljina Harbour, Prevlaka (42.406171, 18.511523)

A great freebie **out of season**. There is a no camping sign, which prohibits overnighting in summer, although we were there with two other vans without issue. Great views across to Montenegro.



13. Autocamp Bambo, Slano (42.775338, 17.884994)

This was an amazing autocamp in the grounds of a family house. With direct access to a gorgeous beach in a sheltered bay, it was scenic and sublime. It does however have a narrow, single track road to access. So keep your fingers' crossed nothing is coming.



14. Camping Lavanda, Pelješac (42.982272, 17.205736)

A stunning 5* campsite that accepts ACSI out of season. With tiered terraces each spot will have a glimpse or full on view of the sea. Prices are set accordingly. We paid €25 for a close, sea pitch. Great swimming and facilities.



15. Kamp Palme, Kučište (42.977058, 17.129258)

A small yet charming campsite beneath the pines and close to the beach which was often windy. We paid €18pn with ACSI.



16. Omiš overnight (43.439982, 16.682998)

Although next door to Camping Galeb, this is fine for one night out of season. The ground is rough although suitable for one night and right on the beach.



17. Camping Belevedere, Seget (43.50946, 16.19191)

A large campsite, although high quality with a range of shops and restaurants to choose from. There's a water taxi to Trogir. We paid an ACSI price of €22 plus tourist tax. **Shuts on 31 Oct.**



18. Camping Split (43.503532, 16.527536)

Not a great fan of this site with its sewerage outlet in the river alongside the camping. Although ideal to visit Split and it is **open all year** and is ideal for catching the evening ferry to Ancona.



19. Krka River Parking, Knin (44.033454, 16.190963)

A small car park beneath Knin fortress and alongside the river. Used by locals, there's not much space for long vehicles although by 4.00pm they have mostly left. A great place to stay.



20. Camping Plitvice (44.9336, 15.6313)

A top class site 3 miles from the National Park - Entrance 1. We arrived at the end of their season and they allowed us to stay an extra night. Paid an ACSI price of €22 pn. **Closes on 31 Oct.**



21. Rastoke Aire, Slunj (45.116038, 15.580762)

A free aire set up by owners of the apartment, with services under construction. This is a fabulous set up, open all year and only 30 mins from Plitvice if you are looking for something free.



22. Gabrovača Park Cave, (44.642508, 15.363887)

Such a great facility. €15 for a cave tour for two, that includes a free overnight with EHU, water and toilets. You can stay as long as you want and a made to feel very welcome.



23. Hotel Zagreb, Karlobag (44.529636, 15.069496)

Free out of season, €10 in summer. We sheltered here from a Bora storm and the hotel is closed. There's water at the garage behind.



24. Parking, Jablanac (44.705457, 14.896482)

A superb spot overlooking the ocean with dolphins and stunning swimming. Jablanac is a super village and there is a great walk to Zavratica Bay, which is a must. **Out of season parking only.**



25. Camping Šimuni Village, Pag - (44.46363, 14.96747)

A large campsite which out of season is empty and you can choose a sea view pitch for just €20pp as a winter rate. **Closes on 15 Nov.**



26. Plaza Maletinac, Pag - (44.383133, 15.109637)

A small beach parking area in the middle of nowhere just 15 minutes from Pag town. **Free and out of season only.**



27. Kamp Nin, Nin - (44.245536, 15.173912)

On the off-chance struggling to find somewhere to stay they allowed us to stay for a night for free out of season. So kind. Lovely area to explore. It's worth calling in if you are in the area.



28. Puntamika Parking - (44.133486, 15.207493)

A freebie spot on the outskirts of Zadar on the beach by a small harbour. Lots of walkers and a few troublesome teenagers, although nothing to worry about.



29. Bibinje Marina Beach Parking - (44.053124, 15.295503)

A lovely, free beach parking area suitable out of season and payable in season. Great swimming and the Marina has showers and laundry if you are in need.



30. Betina Car Park, Murter Island - (43.81986, 15.60493)

A public car park right on the coast with Betina as your backdrop. Only suitable for out of season parking. **Free from November.**



31. Jasenovo Beach - (43.652363, 15.950581)

Out of season only, this concrete parking area is outside a restaurant, that was closed for winter. Great spot on a small harbour.



32. Camping Lozovac, Krka Falls - (43.791565, 15.971103)

A new autocamp that only opened 2022, just 1km away from the main entrance to Krka Falls. Full facilities available and cost us €16pn all inclusive. This was a great spot.



33. St Nicholas Beach, Šibenik - (43.719072, 15.860121)

This is a great spot to see the UNESCO St Nicholas Fortress. Whilst you cannot reach it from here the views are great. The car park is secluded from storms - in case you need it. A nice freebie.



34. Marina Parking Rogoznica - (43.533784, 15.964116)

We returned to this lovely spot and out of season it is free to stay. Rogoznica is such a lovely town and the walks around the island are well worth it.



35. Camping Galeb, Omiš - (43.440067, 16.681843)

Back for our final few nights at Omiš that stays open all year round. Stay 3 nights or more and you get a winter rate of €15.





10 TOP TIPS SUMMARY

Croatia has been one of our most memorable road-trips, especially when we combined it with our Bosnia and Herzegovina toe-dipping exercise.

We were truly lucky with the weather, which really does make a huge difference to our travel experiences. Whilst not the 'be all and end all', I think it certainly enhances our road-trips.

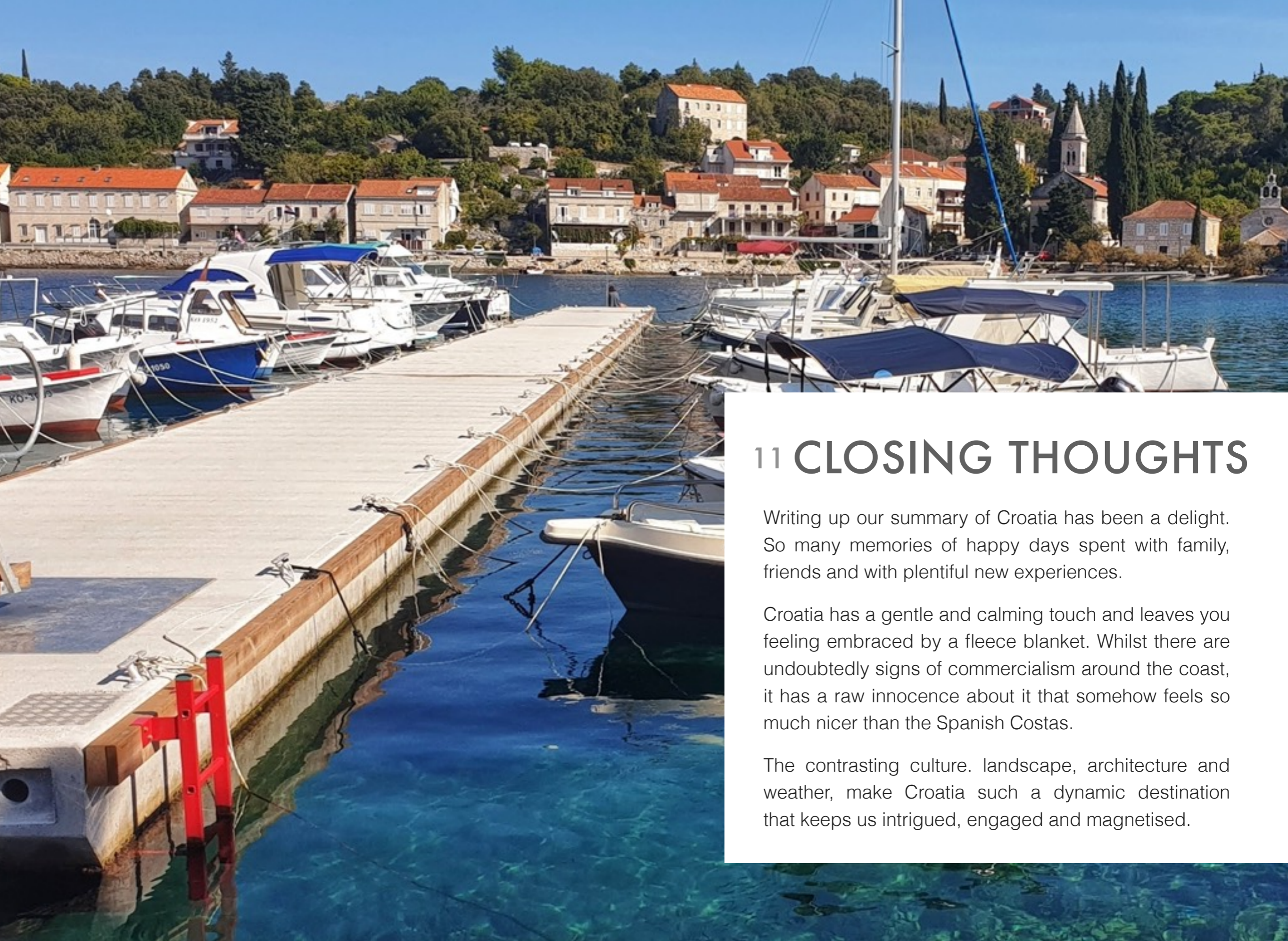
As we reflect on our Top Tips for getting the most out of this beautiful country, my mind is whirling with information to recapture for you.



TOP TIPS SUMMARY FOR CROATIA

1. **Make sure you have an ACSI card** as this can make a huge difference to your campsite spending out of season.
2. **Croatia's coastline is full to the brim with holidaying families up until 15 September.** Thereafter things quieten down a bit although up to mid-October can still be pretty busy.
3. **18th November is an official Holiday to acknowledge the Homeland War.** So be mindful that many businesses will be closed for the day.
4. Campsites that *are* open in the winter have special **winter rates**, so do ask them about these when you register, as they are often cheaper than the ACSI rates.
5. **Carry some cash with you as some smaller campsites and aires** will only take cash not cards. You will also need cash for the international ferries as well.
6. From **1 Nov** (often earlier in October) most car parks are free to park overnight if you want to off-grid for a while.
7. **Ferries in Croatia** are a dream for motorhomes. We encountered no issues with our rear end, until we arrived in Italy!
8. **If you have a kayak, SUP or snorkle kit, pack it.** Croatia's coast is just the best for water activities.
9. **Watch out for autumn and winter Bora winds.** They can spring up from nowhere. Retreat to a campsite if you know one is brewing.

10. If you arrive in Croatia in September to make the most of their late autumn weather, then **we recommend booking your first night**. As campsites are still quite busy until mid to end of September, having at least your first few nights reserved will give your trip a positive start and allow you to get grounded.
 11. If you have **Kuna left over from a previous trip**, the currency can still be exchanged up until 31 December 2023.
 12. Remember that Croatia is now a member of the **Schengen Zone** so any road-trips here must come from your 90 day Schengen Allowance if you are a resident from a third country.
 13. **Croatians do speak pretty good English**, although do try a few phrases, they really do appreciate it.
 14. The **commercial campsites** are huge although not as face-less as we feared. And their showers are the most superior facilities in the whole of Europe - in our opinion.
 15. Watch out up north for the **jellyfish** when swimming and **sea urchins** around the marinas down south.
 16. Don't worry about **LPG** - it is plentiful.
 17. **Visit during the shoulder season** for less crowds although bare in mind that campsite opening can be sporadic.
 18. As nice as the coast is, **do venture inland** as it has an amazing topography and is well worth exploring especially if the temperatures are high.
 19. Keep your eye open for **WIFI4EU** if you are wild camping as some areas of Croatia offer you free to connect wifi.
 20. **Wild camping in season is prohibited** with fines often issued. From October through to March may be April it is tolerated given that most of the campsites are closed.
 21. Be mindful of the damaging **Bora winds** that can spring up from no where. Just watch for the clouds gathering over the mountains as this is the first sign of something brewing.
 22. For visiting **Dubrovnik, Zadar, Split, Trogir and Zagreb**, it is worth going when the campsites are still open to give you somewhere safe to stay.
 23. Invest in an **ACSI** card to reduce your campsite bills.
 24. And whilst in Croatia, do consider nipping into **Bosnia**. It is so beautiful and of course saves you some of those precious Schengen days.
- Follow these guidelines and you'll not go wrong with a Croatian road-trip and you will definitely not be disappointed by what it can offer you. We hope you enjoy it as much as we did.



11 CLOSING THOUGHTS

Writing up our summary of Croatia has been a delight. So many memories of happy days spent with family, friends and with plentiful new experiences.

Croatia has a gentle and calming touch and leaves you feeling embraced by a fleece blanket. Whilst there are undoubtedly signs of commercialism around the coast, it has a raw innocence about it that somehow feels so much nicer than the Spanish Costas.

The contrasting culture, landscape, architecture and weather, make Croatia such a dynamic destination that keeps us intrigued, engaged and magnetised.

This virginal tour has whet our whistles beautifully and left us eager to see more in the years to come. And with their entry into Schengen it will provide a fabulous base to reach out into Bosnia again and venture into new territory with Montenegro, Serbia and Albania.

What a beautiful country that welcomes tourists and motorhomes with open arms. And whilst as a race they may be reticent at first, their joy at showing off their healing and independent country is obvious. We will certainly be back and whilst we realise that there is a recency about its mark on our memories, the pictures of those crystal waters will with out doubt draw us back like a waning tide.

If you have any questions, why not drop us an email at themotoroamers@gmail.com or check out the website for all our blogs and vlogs <https://www.motoroaming.com>.

Karen, Myles and Scoobie

