



” Landcruising ” in Croatia — May 2009.



Introducing ...”**Tucker**” – the newest member of the crew, 7 months old, sea-dog in the making, and loving every minute of it. An ambassador of goodwill with a personality the size of the Titanic..everyone from customs officials to ferry crew , small children to old fishermen and restaurant waiters simply melt faster than ice cream in the now 36C heat... Forget about us...this is “Tucker on Tour”....

Originally, we had intended to sail from Prevesa, Greece to Croatia via Italy ,after making Havana ready in April. However, from feedback we received here, the distances involved and the extraordinarily high costs of cruising with own boat in Croatia, made it impractical and beyond our means in the time we had. But we really wanted to see it. So we did the next best thing and hired an autocamper which would give us the flexibility and freedom we wanted. We were, in fact, their very first customers! Landcruisers!



It was worth every minute.

We arrived via a bus, two overnight ferries from Igoumenitsa to Ancona and Ancona to Split, on 09 May to pick up Dad. We had 13 days of touring the southern part - Dalmatia - from Split south down the coast to Dubrovnik, over to the islands of Korcula and Hvar and back to Split. The scenery is stunning, the towns are spotless and prosperous. The resorts are lined with fashionable cafes and boutiques. The war of the 1990’s did not reach the coast and islands (apart from Dubrovnik which was shelled but has since been rebuilt). The cities remain full of well-preserved Roman and Venetian buildings, and are made entirely of grey stone, (wonderfully cool in the heat), often completely walled, with a warren of narrow alleys. The islands (over 1500 of them) are green, mountainous and peaceful. We were totally charmed. The small towns of Trogir ,Skradin and Primosten were three pearls.



Although tourism is widely-developed, the coast remains relatively unspoiled- no high-rise hotels, no billboards. The main road runs along the winding cliffs with spectacular views. Many small market towns sell the abundant produce from the interior. On the other side of the coastal mountain range are kilometres of vineyards, olive orchards, fruit orchards and fields of vegetables. Total population of Croatia: 4.5 million.



They are also famous for their smoked ham and Pag goats cheeses. The island of Hvar (also home to one of the jetsetter's resort of the same name) is covered in lavender in July. Many say Croatia is like the Med of 20 years ago (apart from the prices, that is..). Occasionally, we stayed in small, private campsites in people's back yards. Larger campsites had excellent facilities and were very reasonable (100-120 dkr 3 pers and camper). A little ahead of the main season, it was extremely peaceful to have much of it to ourselves.



We lost track of the number of Unesco World Heritage sites we saw within the walled cities – cathedrals, castles, fortifications and palaces in Trogir, Split, beautiful Korcula (where the home of world traveller Marco Polo still stands), Hvar and, of course, **Dubrovnik**. Even though you've seen it on countless posters, nothing prepares you for the jaw-dropping spectacle of this walled jewel. It will remain one of the highlights of all our travels. To appreciate it in full, you have to walk the 2 km. walls that encircle the city to see it from above. So we did. Tucker included. This caused quite a stir so perhaps he's the first spaniel to have done so...



So **Hvala** Croatia! (Thank you!) (pronounced havala...it rhymes with Havana!). It is now 27 May. We're back putting the finishing touches to Havana- a new electric winch for the mainsail to help us use it more. We launch **tomorrow** for a slow sail to Athens to pick up Dad, Barbara & Neil (from Canada) on 15 June for a 14 day family sail!