

Post



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On the boat at last! - September 10, 2023

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SUMMARY

At last, it's the day we get on our rental 56-foot catamaran. But first, we have most of a day to continue exploring the charming town of Split. Late afternoon we were bussed north for about 45 minutes to meet Cool Change and her crew, our home for the next week. The boat is beautiful and the crew (Juré the captain and Matko the chef/bartender) are awesome. We motor a short while to a cove where we'll spend the night. First order of business is a swim in the Adriatic. The water is super-clear and refreshingly brisk. Cocktails, dinner and stargazing followed. - Karen

DETAIL

Finally today's the day we board the boat, if all goes according to plan. We wake. The city, Split, is quiet. After the raucous late evening yesterday, the deserted streets this morning are quite the contrast. Our room has a kettle for making coffee and there's instant coffee, but having been burned by this before we read the package carefully. It says coffee with milk and sugar. Thank you, no. We did bring instant coffee from the US but it's up on the third floor with Ron and Nancy. Grrr.

We shower and pack and take pictures of the empty street out the window. We've agreed to meet Ron and Nancy for breakfast at nine, but message them earlier and say we're ready. In no time there's a knock at the door.

Breakfast is included in our room rate, so we're going to take advantage. It's at a place called the Luxor, on the main square within the old city. It's just a two minute walk away. It's on the main square and obviously very old but it's decorated in a funky/eclectic style with a Roman-themed Rothko wannabe ceiling mural. Choices? Breakfast A, B, or C. Eggs/bacon/toast or granola/fruit or salmon/avocado sandwich. It's fine. As we eat a Roman soldier in helmet and full dress comes in for a drink at the bar.

We leave the keys to our hotel rooms in the rooms and leave our bags in the lobby. As we're doing this the host shows up. It turns out Ron/Nancy still have to pay and Karen and I still have to pay the city tax. Whoops!

In the "hotel lobby" is the back 95% of an ATM machine. We can hear it periodically spitting out Euros. We figure out that we can put our mouth close to where the money is dispensed and we can talk as if we're the machine. We say things like "Thank you for using this automatic teller machine" and "Don't spend all those euros in one place". We slay ourselves. (We later test to hear if the used of the ATM really could hear us and sure enough, they could.

We do more walking around town and head up a hill at one end of town. The stairs go on forever and lead up to the tiny church of St Nicholas. According to the information panel there they have a Christmas mass there every year. Nice view of town.

We walk down another route, through pine trees, and look for a drugstore (for more sunblock). We find a couple but they're closed. Duh. It's Sunday! By now it's getting late in the morning so we sit down at a table at a cafe in a large piazza and have our 11es. Some have coffee and some have (OK, just me) has beer.

At noon we meet the other half of our group for lunch at Chop Grill. It's a light lunch and it's good. So close to Italy the food here is quite consistently good. After our lunch we do more town wandering, killing time until we can get onto our charter boat. We head over to the most famous gelato store in town. It's like two euros for a scoop but there's a line down the block now, as there was when we passed this place late last night. They have interesting flavors, including some dark chocolate sprinkled with sea salt. Very good.

We spend the next hour looking for shade or somewhere with a breeze to counteract the mid-day heat. Eventually we hike back to our hotels, reclaim our luggage and walk to our pickup point at the pier. It's a big pier with lots of spots to park big boats. There are boats of all sizes. What they have in common is that they're all people ferries or local cruise boats. We see lots of holiday makers all rolling their luggage to and from the various ships. Alas our boat isn't here, but hopefully our shuttle bus will be (or maybe already is).

We finally find the small bus, just for us and start our long (45 minute?) bus ride to the boat. We haven't been told how long the ride would be to the boat or from what city/town we'll be departing. We see a city on our GPS up ahead and say "Maybe we leave from there!... (nope)" Eventually we get there and see our boat: the "Cool Change". In what city are we now? Marina! In our best Eastern European accents we joke "We leave from Marina!" Duh, of course we leave from a marina! No, no, we leave from the city whose name is Marina. Who's on first?

Our boat is awesome. Captain Juré and chef Matko help us get our bags aboard. We get barefoot (as required), divvy up the cabins, and unpack into the glovebox-sized storage available. In all fairness the bed does lift up and we're able to stow our suitcases there under.

We motor for a good while to the cove where we'll be having dinner and spending the night. We change into our swimming attire and jump into the clear water. It's cool but feels good. You get used to it quickly. We ask and are assured that swimming will be a daily activity.

There's another good sized boat sharing the cove with big male occasionally suitless swimmers. We joke about one guy perhaps using a bit more vigor that is really needed to dry off his naked body. We bob in the water and play with the mask and fins. Noël, who has competed in a couple of Ironman triathlons, does laps.

Eventually out we grab our assigned towels (beige 3 or blue 2, etc) and dry off. We write our names on water bottles that's we'll be refilling from big eight liter plastic water jugs. Do we want gin and tonics? Why yes, yes we do! And we enjoy them "upstairs" watching the evening light fade over the beautiful Adriatic.

Dinner is served on the main deck and the table accommodates us all. It's very tasty. First course is three kinds of anchovies: marinated, salted and smoked. Smoked mussels. Our main course is handmade ravioli with cheese from Istria (northern) region of Croatia and shrimp. The accompanying sauce is delicious. This is served with good local white wine.

We learn that the boat is only six years old. It's very well maintained. No obvious defects. There are no clues that the boat is other than brand new. We learn that three brothers trade off being captain. A friend, Matko, is always on, and is the chef. Matko makes dinner, and Captain Jurérhi serves, busses dishes, washes dishes. Boat has good full-size dishwasher aboard, good full-size clothes washer aboard. help serve. At the end of the meal Matko gets to relax while Captain Jure ("Yuri") clears and then cleans the dishes. Good system. As our wine bottles get empty another one appears.

Dessert is coconut gelato and chocolate gelato. After dinner beverage is self-serve grappa and two other liqueurs. Though not normally a grappa fan this is easy and enjoyable to drink.

We eventually retire to the front of the boat and lay on the two 'trampolines', looking up at the stars in the moon-less sky. There are a ton of stars and the Milky Way is quite visible. Before long everyone heads off to their respective cabin for the night. The boat is pulled tight one way by the anchor at the bow the other way by a line from the stern tied and pulled tight from from the stern a huge rock by the shore. They're very little, if any, rocking.

It's been a good day and we're excited for the days to come. For now, it's time for bed.

Photos



Up early we peek out our window and see fairly empty streets



Dressed and reconvened we head off for breakfast



Everyone, especially Scott, is happy to finally have coffee



While we're at breakfast one of the Roman Soldiers stops in for a drink



Waiting in our lobby. To Ron's left is the back end of the ATM machine. We put our heads close to the front of the machine and spoke, pretending to be the machine.



The fish market was closed as it is Sunday



Killing time, at 11es, Scott takes a selfie on Nancy's sunglasses



Walking with Liz through Split



Another selfie, this time with Nancy, in the lid of the pepper grinder



On the bus at last, but... where are we going? Are we being kidnapped??



We see some aquaculture farming offshore



Each time we passed anywhere with boats and masts we think we've found our boat, but no



We eventually do see our boat, the Cool Change!



Where are we?? The marina! No. You're in the city whose name is Marina. (Huh?)



Getting a tour of the boat. We've not gotten word, yet, that we're not to wear shoes while onboard



FARNSNIENTE 



In the water at last. It's clear and clean and refreshingly cool. Noël, in swim goggles, just finished more laps.



Matko indicates how he cooks our dinner, with flame!



Dinner, first course. We're done with our gin and tonics and moving on to wine. They seem to be having an effect.



Dinner was very tasty. Some of us turn the ravioli sauce into a soup.

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