

Post



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Onward to Istria - September 17, 2023

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SUMMARY

We managed not to kick and scream but were very sad to say goodbye to Ted, Noël, Jure, Matko and the Cool Change. We spent a truly amazing week together! Today we drove north, leaving Dalmatia behind and arriving in the Croatian region known as Istria. It is stunningly beautiful with a mountain backdrop behind huge tree-covered hills topped with ancient villages and their red tile roofed buildings. Our rental house was also stunning and beautifully appointed. As a bonus, it had a washer AND dryer - a luxury we hadn't had yet. The views from the house and grounds were jaw-dropping and the negative edge pool was cool and refreshing. Cooked dinner at home and

enjoyed much local, delicious local wine
(and laundry!). - Karen

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DETAIL

We wake knowing today's the day we head to shore and say bye to the Cool Change catamaran and Captain Jure and Chef Matko. We have one last breakfast, including my leftover steak from last night. Jure ferries first all our luggage to the shore and then all of us, less Noël and Ted. They're headed for a hiking tour around Salzburg. We say our good byes to them before we're whisked ashore. We thank and tip the crew and then pile into our taxi to the airport.

It's a very short ride to the airport where we pick up two cars. It's early which is good as we have a long drive ahead of us. We're headed to Zamask, Croatia which is in the Istria region, not far from Italy and Slovenia. We'll be relaxing there for three nights, exploring the region and hunting for white truffles.

To break up the drive we stop for lunch in the city of Rijeka. It's where the boat we just left behind spends the winter, and also is the home of Matko, our chef. To get there we are mostly on the A1 autoroute, which is a toll road. We stop for gas, coffee and snacks. The coffee machine, of which there were two or three, is totally automated and offers a couple of dozen different options, for all of the different nationalities and tastes. You pay with a charge card.

The bathroom is also very popular but doesn't work quite so well. You pay, but if you bought something you get a QR code on your receipt and in theory show it to a camera which lets you in. But it doesn't let Karen in and she asks for help. Needless to say the cashier has very little patience for such things and it showed.

Four hours after getting our rental cars we're in Rijeka at the toll booth for the toll road. We didn't plan it this way but Mike and Liz's car is the one immediately in front of ours. We drive through town and find where we want to have lunch, and find parking nearby. Lunch is enjoyed outdoors at a very funky place called Pivnica Cont. We have our first burgers in a while, lentil soup, and a salad. It's tasty.

Looking around we see that the town isn't as shiny, clean and attractive as many of the other towns we've visited in Croatia. The old buildings look old and in need of a lot of maintenance. Maybe they have good bones and had attractive exteriors, back in the day, but the intervening years haven't been kind to them. We're just here for one meal so we'll miss some of the interesting sounding attractions, like the Peek and Poke Computer Museum and the Old Torpedo Launching Ramp. We also missed the Rijeka Pedestrian Tunnel. It spans 1,150 ft and was built around 1940 by the Italian military to protect civilians from aerial bombings during World War II.

We do visit the grocery store. The one we're visiting, our old friend Plodine, is attached to a shopping mall. We park and go into the mall. We're on the top floor and the grocery store is three levels down, on the bottom. The escalator will get us down one floor, but from where we have to walk the length of the mall to get to another escalator that will get us down to where the grocery is. But of course we'll need, again, to walk the entire length of the mall. It's interesting to see the stores and marketing. In the grocery store we find milk, coffee, and breakfast stuff. We also find the wines, sardines, truffles, etc. that we've been eating on the boat. They're very inexpensive.

Back in our cars we drive on, up and up from sea level to 1,400 feet. We drive through a tunnel that has one bore, and another being dug out just over from where we're driving. We don't get a picture but it's interesting to see how they're pumping huge amounts of fresh air into the tunnel for the construction.

The last twenty minutes getting to our VRBO takes us just a very few miles. The road is windy and slow. It takes us through narrow streets where we have to guess if our small car will fit. We're able to automatically turn in the side mirrors and consider doing that.

The house itself is amazing. It's only affordable for us as we're splitting it three ways, it's in the middle of nowhere in Croatia, and we're just beyond high season. There are many interesting things around, like the Truffle museum we'll be visiting tomorrow. It's less than three miles away, but that's a twenty five minute drive, given the twisty, windy narrow roads.

Mike learns that the house belongs to what was, in essence, the head of the chamber of commerce for the country. The house itself is amazing with very high ceilings, huge open rooms, luxury knobs and faucets. In back there's an awesome porch and across the grass is a long, sweeping negative-edge pool that turns a corner of almost 90 degrees. The views are breath taking.

We unpack and Ron and Karen make a delicious mushroom pasta dinner. We enjoy it with bottles of the \$5 wine we've been drinking on the boat. We do get the A/C working upstairs, in the bedrooms, and go to sleep in normal beds with normal bathrooms for the first time in a week.

Photos



One last yummy breakfast together on the Cool Change. I do eat my leftover steak from last night.



Captain Jure being captain of a much smaller vessel, ferrying our luggage ashore



Jure also shuttled all of us over, Ron and Liz shown here, with our old friend, the Cool Change, one last time in the background



At the airport we secure our two cars and wheel our bags out in their direction



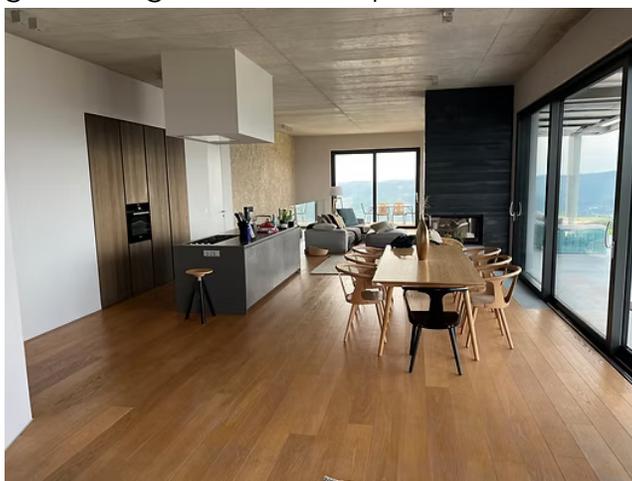
We inspect and photograph every blemish on each car



After four hours of driving we stop for lunch. The Cont. undoubtedly used to be some top-end elegant hotel, like the Continental, but now it's just an eclectic coffee shop and restaurant.



But it's very well reviewed. We loved the food. It'd been too long since we'd had a good burger with sweet potato fries.



At our new home, at last. It's only for three nights, but it's really nice and spacious



Our upstairs bedroom. A real bed and a real bathroom. Sigh.



The property also has a big vegetable garden and fruit trees. Help yourself.



The top feature? The pool. The water temperature? Delightful.



And the view. In almost every direction



It looked like something out of a fairy tale.
We kept looking for Shrek and Donkey.



Ron and Karen getting into Chef mode.
Making the lucky rest of us a tasty dinner
to go with our wine.

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