

Post



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# Truffle Hunters-R- Us - September 18, 2023

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## ***SUMMARY***

After a leisurely morning at our gorgeous villa we headed down one hill and up several others, and eventually arrived at the beautiful little hill town of Grožnjan. Narrow cobblestone streets and lots of great little stores entice us. Ten o'clock is, in fact, not too early to sample the wide variety of spirits on offer. We buy several. The town is tiny and soon we were headed to Motovun, another charming village. We only had time for lunch, not exploring but we hope to come back another time. Next on the agenda was "truffle hunting" which was actually a group of us trekking through the forest watching cute dogs and cute guys find (a

few) white truffles. A truly spectacular truffle tasting followed, a great way to sell their numerous products. We buy several. A swim, light dinner, and we were done. - Karen

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### ***DETAIL***

We awake and for the first time in a week we don't have a gourmet chef making us a big yummy breakfast. Well this sucks. Not really. It's fine. The view is amazing. There's a fog settled in the valleys all around us. It looks like we're coming in for a landing somewhere. We do have a drip coffee maker and figure out how to use it. We have our cereal, yogurt, fruit, bread, and butter. We make do. Karen visits the garden and brings back a dozen or more gorgeous tomatoes. We'll have them tonight on some goat cheese bruschetta.

Our big event today is truffle hunting, just over 'there' (imagine me pointing), to the left of the big reservoir beneath us. First, though, we're headed out to see a couple of the quaint hilltop villages near by. First is Grožnjan. Don't ask me how to pronounce it. We park and get our parking ticket from the machine. We get down to town and find that it's seemingly just a series of looping quaint streets. Each is very picturesque, with cobble stone walks, wooden doors, cats, stone steps, and blooming plants. There are stone planters, that could be used as a one person hot tub, with the water up to your neck. Karen wants to take one home in her luggage. They have to weigh a ton or more.

There are shops open. We've seen so many fruit trees. Apples, pears, plums, citrus, loquat, and on and on. They have liquors from many of them. One shop is giving out samples and we buy a bottle of limoncello, but it's made from oranges. We figure that, and some fizzy water and ice, and you have a refreshing cocktail. Or just drink it straight. Karen and Nancy buy some cute bracelets... "one for me... one to give" and back and forth.

There are other tourists in the town, but not too many. It seems that every time we turn a corner we find another cute alleyway (aka street, wide enough for a wheel barrow and another foot on either side). Thankfully I'm able to photograph each with almost no one there. The 'streets' wrap back on themselves, so when you go down one, you come out at another, that maybe you've already been to. It's not unlike that M.C. Escher drawing with the stairs going in every direction.

It's getting to be time for 'elevenses'. We look for and finally find a suitable cafe. Sadly the sign out front explains "No Coffee... The woman who makes it is pregnant". That settles that. We pay for parking and head to our next stop: Motovun. We drive there, park and wait with a dozen other tourists for a parking ticket. A bus comes down, pack jam with tourists done with the village. More are waiting to go up.

Ron and I go shopping for dinner supplies while the other four hike up to the hill town to find a place for lunch (twelveses?). Done shopping and our food put in the trunk (boot) of the car we enquire about the next bus up. Twenty-thirty minutes? Who knows. It's a fourteen minute walk up, so we abandon the bus idea and start hiking up the chronically uneven stone walk/road/torture device to the town reportedly at the top of this hill.

There are people walking ahead of us and behind us. We're older than they, but we don't want to give away our age, so we try to keep up. That charade ends quickly with multiple stops to catch our breaths. We pretend we're messaging the rest of the group to see where they are. No, really we are. Mike and Liz found one restaurant and have a table for six. Karen and Nancy found another restaurant and have a table for six. Ron and I are way too smart to get into the middle of that one. We maintain radio silence in the interest of peace.

We eventually do hook up with everyone and sit at a delightful restaurant at a table for six. We know we have a big meal associated with our truffle hunting and so just get some fizzy water, arugula salad, four cheese ravioli, and the Istrian plate (olives, cheese, sausage). It's all good. By the time we're ready to go there are people standing many deep wishing they were us at our table. We hike back down, attempting to avoid any turned ankles on the way. We don't have time to see any of the town, but hey, truffle hunting dogs await, we're out of here. We can visit on another trip.

We drive to the truffle hunting museum, which we never see, and make our presence known to the host, for the tour. It's the six of us and ten other rando's. I explain to our host that we've been shopping and have some buffalo mozzarella for bruschetta for later and would she mind terribly keeping it in their fridge while we hunt for truffles and have wine and truffle yumminess. She's more than happy to help, but loves her some bruschetta and so can't guarantee that it'll be here if we forget it.

While all this is going on there are a bunch of huge, nice looking cages across the grass with the cutest dogs making the most god-awful noise. They all want to be the dogs who go truffle hunting with us and they believe, in their little dog brains, that if they're the ones to bark loud enough, they'll be chosen. Our host assures us that's NOT the case and tells them to hush and instantly it's ghostly quiet. Dang.

They bring out a tray with 16 shot glasses filled (we assume) with yummy liquor. You have our attention. Our host, the daughter of the owner, launches into her delightful presentation about truffles and their history and price and how you find them, etc. She explains about her first time actually working in the business, at age 10, sorting white truffles. After her mom realizes she's ingested \$10,000 worth of truffles she's given a different assignment for the day.

We're introduced to the truffle hunting dogs for our outing. It's two cute, clean, adorable curly haired dogs and one Dalmatian, the dog of our host. The Dalmatian is adorable, young, eager and an idiot. She's in training and has no idea what she's doing. But she's cute.

One of the dogs not chosen is a gorgeous long haired spaniel. Tall and lean with long auburn hair. As sweet as can be. Everyone want to take her hunting. She's a true idiot. She's never found a damn truffle in her life. But god she's sweet and beautiful, so they keep her around. When the dogs were doing their barking thing this regal spaniel was jumping. She could leap vertically a good three feet, repeatedly. Quite the talent but not the one they're looking for.

We get back in OUR cars and follow their micro-van, with the two truffle hunters and the three dogs, and we drive five minutes back down to the bottom of the hill. We get out and soon we're walking through the forest. It's dense with 'kind of' trails. They hunt for truffles in these woods three or more times per day. Others do too. It's a big space and it's thickly wooded. We step over and around bushes and branches. The dogs of off looking for truffles. The two real hunting dogs are really looking. The young Dalmatian is trying to look like she's looking for truffles.

Every so often one of the dogs freezes and then starts digging. If it seems in earnest, one of the hunters will shoo the dog away and see what the dog's found. If they don't see anything they tell the dog "show me" and the dog starts digging again. They do this until they either are confident there's nothing there or they find something. It's early in the season and the rains haven't started yet, so we're unlikely to find anything really big and good. The first two we find have worms eating them from the inside. You can hear them eating! We find a couple that are pretty small and the dogs are allowed to eat them. They do find one about golf-ball sized. 80 euros worth. Nice! It smells heavenly.

After an hour our shoes are covered in mud. The dogs are now 1/2 black. They adore wallowing in the mud. We drive back to the truffle museum where we eat way too much of so many good truffle dishes. We're eating the white truffle we just found! And we're drinking wine. Way too much wine. We have fun and eventually figure out we need to go home. We tip the cook and buy some goodies and thankfully remember the groceries we have in their refrigerator.

We drive home and... I'm sure we did some other stuff and maybe ate some bruschetta at home, but dang'ed if I can remember.

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## Photos



Up in time for sunrise. The valleys below us are shrouded in low fog. Maybe better for truffle cultivation? One can only hope.



To our west is the hill town of Motovun, where we'll be having lunch.



Karen's haul after just a short morning visit to the garden. If you can't grow it here, it's a rock.



So many olive trees, so many yummy olives. Pro tip? Don't eat them right off the tree.



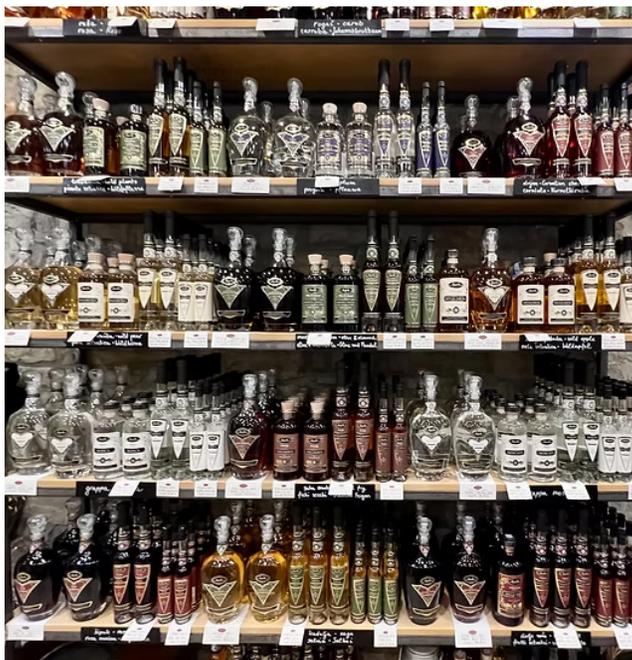
The main square of the tiny village of Grožnjan. Hard to pronounce. Fun to visit.



So many cobble paved pathways. They all just exude cuteness.



Liz find an obliging cat. What are the odds?? (Pretty good... the country's rotten with them... funny thing... didn't see a mouse the whole time!)



You got a fruit? They got a liquor. I love this country. We bought the orange version of limoncello. Yum!



Done with lunch in Motovun and hiking back down to our car. Taking our lives into our own hands (or is it feet)?



Our host for the truffle hunting excursion. Day one of working in her mom's truffle hunting business she ate \$10,000 worth of product. Whoops! (Aw, come on! Who among us hasn't done that??)



Karen's in her happy place. [Karen. Give us the truffles. Karen? Karen?]



Not FiFi, but Truf-ee. Our lead truffle hunting dog. A true champion. Notice how clean she is.



Time to get started. Truf-ee is already on the case.



The whole forest floor is covered with these worm towers. 6-8" tall.



Wait, what? Have we found a truffle? Must check. [Truf-ee... get away...]



Truffles are very often found next to the muddy bogs. The dogs adore going armpit deep in the mud. [Bad Truf-ee]



Our big haul for the day. Small, but oh-wee the smell was divine.



Dalmations? Black and white. Truf-ee?  
Now black and white.



FARNSNIENTE 



Round one. Bread with three kinds of  
truffle spread with truffle on top, truffle  
cheese, truffle cheese, two kinds of truffle  
sausage, truffle oil, truffle vinegar.



Cooking the truffle omelette. I'm hoping Karen's taking notes so she can make it for her adoring husband back home.



Bread... cheese... and... well, you know.



Dessert? Lots of sweet truffles goodness.



Lots of wine. Holding each other up and taking another reflection picture.



Sliced truffle in olive oil. What they recommend you buy.



Karen detoxing all of the truffle smells off her in the pool. [Note, in real life she's taller than that.]

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