**SC Senior Lawyers Travel Again—To Croatia!**

Nancy S. Layman, Columbia

“Thanks to all for another wonderful experience to travel to places I never imagined going and in a manner, I never thought possible!!”

“While we are glad to be safely home, we’re already looking forward to soon traveling again with such an affable group of friends, old and new.”

“’Dobar Dan’” (Good Afternoon!) to everyone. “’Hvala’” (Thank you) for being such excellent traveling companions! . . . It was a splendid trip, and I am ready to plan the next one.”

“A huge thank you to everyone for the warm welcome to the new travelers.”

These were just a few of the complimentary responses from travelers following the Senior Lawyers’ recent trip to Croatia. Leaving Charlotte May 4, we flew to Munich on Lufthansa Airlines and then from Munich to Split, Croatia, arriving the following day. Located on the Adriatic Sea 135 airmiles across from the Abruzzo region on the coast of Italy, the Croatian coast has become a tourist destination, especially in the summers when numerous ships and yachts dock in its many ports. In 2022, Croatia welcomed 18.9 million tourists, 37 percent more than the previous year.[[1]](#footnote-1) For a country slightly smaller than West Virginia,[[2]](#footnote-2) that’s a considerable achievement. Facilitating tourism was the replacement of the kuna on January 1, 2023 with the euro as the official Croatian currency. Although small restaurants and stores still use the kuna, credit cards and the euro are most frequently used.

Originally part of Yugoslavia, Croatia declared its independence on June 25, 1991. On the same day Serbia, to the south and east of Croatia, declared its independence from Croatia.[[3]](#footnote-3) After years of conflict, Croatia prospered and now counts tourism and agriculture among the main contributors to its economy.[[4]](#footnote-4)

For the Senior Lawyers, this trip marked a landmark: our tenth trip abroad. Of the 30 lawyers and their companions on the trip, 26 had traveled with us before. Within two weeks of the first Croatia announcement, 90% of the reservations had been filled. For the first time this trip was primarily by ship, which was restricted to our group. Our visits were along the Dalmatian coast, starting in Split. Temperatures were in the comfortable 70’s during the day and a bit cooler in the evening. All nights but the first and last were spent on the *MV Fantazija*, a three-level “motor yacht” managed by Katarina Cruise Lines that accommodated all of us with room to spare. No other passengers were on the trip. We ate all breakfasts and some lunches and dinners on board. All the meals were plentiful, the service excellent, and the view of the Croatian coast as we sailed magnificent. Our guide, Mira, was with us the entire time—explaining what we would see next, introducing us to the crew, and even joining in the dancing one evening.

After spending the first night at the Hotel Cornaro in Split, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, we boarded the *Fantazija* where our luggage was delivered, then soon left the ship for a tour of Split. Like the rest of the Dalmatian Coast, the streets, buildings, and background mountains are covered in limestone. A strong Italian influence pervades the Coast, observable in the architecture of churches, ancient buildings, and schools. In the Old Town is the Diocletian’s Palace, dating to the late 3rd century A.D. and once used as both a villa and a garrison. The palace is now surrounded by shops, restaurants, cafés, and boutiques. Diocletian was a soldier and became emperor at the age of 40. When he died, he was laid to rest in an octagonal mausoleum around which the cathedral of Split was built.[[5]](#footnote-5) After strolling through the town, we returned to our ship in the late afternoon for a welcome cocktail reception from our guide Mira and our essential yacht master, “Captain Nemo.”

Ten nautical miles from Split is the town of Bol on the island of Brac where we sailed the following day. “Zlatni Rat,” or The Golden Cape there, is known as one of the most beautiful beaches in the world. Also in Bol are fine wineries, whose grapes grow incredibly up vertical rocks. We visited Stina Winery, one of the oldest Dalmatia wine cooperatives, toured the many rooms with casks of fermenting wine, and wound up in the tasting room to enjoy Plavac red, rose Opal or Vugava white. All good. A short sail from Brac is the island of Hvar to the south, which bills itself as “the sunniest island in the Adriatic.” Hvar (both the name of the island and its capital city) has a hilltop fortress and protective small islands around it. Along its palm-lined beach road are cafés, restaurants and many small stalls selling hats, clothing, household decorative items and souvenirs. In the main square is the largest piazza in Dalmatia, while in the background is St. Stephens Cathedral that dates to the 16th century. At the Giaxa Restaurant that evening, which bills itself as a “. . . modern restaurant in the 15th century palace,” we enjoyed an Italian-themed meal of ravioli stuffed with mushrooms and Parmesan, tomato pies, lamb, risotto and, of course, wonderful olives.

Next day we sailed to the walled city of Korcula, Southern Dalmatia’s largest island and the disputed birthplace of Marco Polo. A house, allegedly the family home of Marco Polo, is popular with visitors to the city. Along with lunch on our boat, we enjoyed a wine-tasting of red and white wines. Then it was off the ship to do some shopping in town. At 5:00 PM we had a formal tour of the city. We visited St. Mark’s Cathedral with its altarpiece painted by Tintoretto. Several travelers climbed the twisting stairs of the church tower to the top, a difficult trek, but once you arrived at the top, the view of the city with its palaces and piazzas, all built from local stone, was incredible. At night we had pizza at an open-air restaurant. We docked in Korcula that night stepping across two ships similar to ours that were docked in the same location. At one end of one ship, was an area full of bicycles used by the ship’s land and sea tourists to ride through the islands.

Then it was off to Dubrovnik, about 42 nautical miles east of Korcula. On the way we stopped at the island of Mljet, more than a third of which is contained within Mljet National Park, also called “The Green Island.” The Park is rich with animal life and fauna, many of which are protected species. The walk up the stone path and stone steps toward the park was difficult and sometimes slippery. At the top of the steps in two groups we boarded pontoon boats for the Benedictine Chapel on the Isle of St. Mary, which houses beautiful stained- glass portraits of Mary and St. Benedict. Back at Mljet we descended the stone steps and entered our ship for lunch and some rest while the ship headed east for Dubrovnik.

Dubrovnik was a short ride from Mljet and that night, a buffet dinner was served on board. Once the ship moored, our guide Mira gave a brief lecture on the history and architecture of the city. After, we had the option of taking a brief walk about Dubrovnik. The next day we gained more information and a greater appreciation of this city which was surrounded in the thirteenth century by thick, fortified walls and white streets. A bus took us from our ship to mid-city Dubrovnik. After a walking tour of the old city, we took a cable car to the top of Mount Srd, the Dubrovnik flag flying atop the mountain. In the distance we could see the countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Other highlights of the day were a visit to a Hard Rock Café in the old city and the Red History Museum, which tells the story of the rise and fall of communism in Croatia and focuses on everyday life under Communism. After a cable car ride down the mountain and a short walk back, we were on our ship again, docked in Dubrovnik.

The next day swells tossed the ship as we headed west to the Peljesac peninsula. But they calmed eventually, and we landed on the peninsula, which is especially known for its red wine. Prior to attending a typical village party and eating traditional Croatian dishes that night, two couples threw an unannounced cocktail party on board to celebrate their anniversaries. The crew surprised everyone with a cake lit with sparklers. That evening, by bus, we climbed a large hill to a local farm where donkeys roamed, and produce was abundant. Then we entered a banquet room for a hearty farm-to-table dinner. We were served by the owner in traditional Croatian dress, including a colorful vest and hat. Dinner was meat and potatoes, red wine, and a layered chocolate cake. Full and tired, we returned to the ship. The next day would be a day-long ride back to Split.

Rough waters in the morning careened the yacht from side to side. But again, the Adriatic calmed eventually as we headed west. The evening featured a special farewell “Captain’s Dinner.” A piano player and a singer provided lively Croatian music and soon most everyone was dancing, including our Captain. That evening we arrived in Split and spent the night on board. Next morning, we returned to the Hotel Cornaro. The last day was ours to spend in Split. However, a 5:30 AM departure the following day led most of us to retire early that last night.

It was a great trip. Memories of the enormous limestone walls, churches, olive trees, grapevines and beautiful cities still linger. We now say “Zivili” when we clink our glasses, the Croatian toast encompassing the good wishes of its people: “Be filled with life!” Best of all was the companionship of our fellow travelers, the insight and friendliness of our guide, the attentiveness of the staff onboard, and the astute navigation of our capable Captain.

1. <https://www.croatiaweek.com> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.nationsonline.org>oneworld>croatia [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. https://apnews.com>article [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.liveandinvestoverseas.com> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Fodor’s Essential Croatia, 2021. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)