



Of pearls and hidden gems

A voyage on the Dalmatian Sea

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For this year's trip along the Croatian coast we started out from our mooring on the island of Krk or, more accurately, from Punat Marina. We also returned there after a few eventful weeks and 666 nautical miles.

Our Linssen Grand Sturdy 40.9 once again proved to be an extremely reliable boat – which is something of a life insurance policy, especially in unfavourable weather conditions! After almost 40 years of experience of the Adriatic weather, we are very well aware that the “bathtub” Adriatic can get quite rough. Although Linssens are not a very frequent occurrence hereabouts (but increasingly frequent now), they are unsurpassed in their class in terms of comfort, convenience and safety. But now to our trip, about which we'd like to give a partial report at this point. In 2018 we were planning to return to Dubrovnik after almost four decades to make a “trial trip” to Montenegro from there. Suffice it to say, we got to Dubrovnik but, for a variety of reasons, we postponed Montenegro for another day.

Dubrovnik, the pearl of the Adriatic, is admired year after year by thousands of tourists, who are disgorged there from large cruise ships and then try to take in the extremely interesting history of the city in a day. Does anyone really need to write anything more about Dubrovnik? That's certainly a fair question. In our report, the World Heritage city takes a back seat, sim-

ply because there are many other little known places of historical interest that can be regarded as hidden gems. But – let's start northwest of the famous city on the island of Mljet.

The island became part of the Byzantine Empire in the 6th century, and was settled by pirates in the Middle Ages. In the 12th century, Benedictine monks from the abbey of Pulsano (Puglia) were gifted a large part of the island. They built their monastery on the island of Sveta Marija (Saint Mary) in Veliko Jezero lake (picture 1).

Parts of the island are now a Croatian national park, which means that you have to pay an entry fee. However, the fee does include a short boat trip to the



monastery island. Although located on the island and without direct access to the sea, the emerald green waters of the lake are salty. The lake is connected to the sea underground and has its own ecosystem. This is another “pearl”, although less well known than Dubrovnik! We moored our “Hippo II” at the jetty belonging to the restaurant “Dalmatinac Ivo” in Tatinica bay (42° 47.239' N / 17° 24.064' E) (image 2). The restaurant is now run by Daniela Matana. The cost of the mooring is compensated by the food in this traditional restaurant or konoba (very tasty and quite inexpensive). We stayed for two nights, got our bikes out of the “cellar” (folding bikes we stowed underneath the cockpit) and cycled to Polače (42° 47.4' N / 17° 22.6' E) and Pomena (42° 46.8' N / 17° 19.9' E). Both places can also be reached directly by boat. Polače is situated by a well sheltered bay on the north coast of the island of Mljet. In Polače, a Roman palace was built in the 3rd century, which is still the dominant feature today and which was clearly much more than a “Villa Rustica”.

The fishing village of Pomena is located not far from the salt water lakes of Veliko Jezero and Malo Jezero, a rural idyll in the middle of the 53 km² national park.

According to official figures, the village has only 50 inhabitants. From there you get a good view of the Pelješac peninsula and the island of Korčula – a very attractive area for sailors. Pomena is well set up for tourists. There are small retail outlets, a few souvenir shops and the only hotel on Mljet. In addition, there are numerous restaurants and konobas – a very varied range of food on offer. So there’s more than just the above-mentioned Benedictine monastery to admire on the island of Sveta Marija!

After the stopover on Mljet the next destination on our journey was ACI Marina Dubrovnik (42° 40,201' N / 18° 07.546' E). The marina is situated at the end of the long Rijeka-Dubrovaca fjord, the beginning of which is dominated by an imposing bridge. We travelled into the city by bus, which runs every 15 minutes from a stop close to the marina. We don't recommend cycling on this road under any circumstances! Croatia is simply not equipped for cyclists and cycling can sometimes be a dangerous undertaking. Costing the equivalent of €1.50, the bus is very inexpensive – which, by the way, you can't say about the marina or anything else around Dubrovnik! Here are a few examples: A tour of the city wall will cost you 150 Kuna (kn)



– approx. €20. A scoop of ice cream costs between €2 and €2.30 in the Old Town and a postcard is 14 kn (€1.90), which costs 4 - 5 kn outside of the Old Town! So it's no wonder that the fee for berthing in the marina (off-season) is €105 for a 12.85 m vessel! If you book in advance (via Internet), you will have to pay an additional 20% booking fee for the first day. We made the mistake of emailing to ask whether a berth was free. This was deemed to be a "reservation" and we got hit with this 20%. At this point it should be mentioned that Croatia drastically increased* the tourism tax for boaters (up to 700%) in 2018. It remains to be seen whether this was a wise decision in the longer term or whether it will provide incentives to reconsider visiting. (* Update: Croatia has reduced the increase).

Bora weather

We want to say less about Dubrovnik itself in our report, since the history and sights of the city have already been described many times before. We were lucky to catch a day when the bora wind was blowing and learned that you can actually enjoy bora weather!



What tends to annoy us while on the water benefited us during the city tour, i.e. moderate temperatures and fewer visitors. The hordes of people who usually crowd the streets would have been even more unbearable otherwise! There were already more than enough (image 3).

From Dubrovnik we set course for Pelješac (Stonski Canal). The Pelješac peninsula is one of the best wine-growing areas in Croatia and it is not for nothing that Pelješac is nicknamed the "Peninsula of Wine". The landscape is characterised by original natural features of the Mediterranean, including karst rocks and valleys, olive and fig trees, beeches, pine trees, etc.

At this point, we'd like to make a quick digression concerning the records we made on board. For years, keeping the logbook was a somewhat tedious evening task of comparatively moderate accuracy. This year for the first time we used an application on the iPad, which – like an anchor alarm – is maintained by Florian Kriesche (info@logbook-app.com) and is available for a small charge. Originally developed for sail boats, this app has now been adapted for motor yachts. What is remarkable, by the way, is the level of support provided by the app developer for questions and suggestions. So now we have very accurate information on our trips. We freely admit we are definitely not "computer freaks", but relics from the "analogue era". Nevertheless, we quickly got used to the convenience of this way of recording, which provides two (or more) pages per day, so in addition to the automatic

This section of the trip is recorded in our electronic logbook as follows:

Datum Mittwoch, 27. Juni 2018
von 42° 40,201' N 018° 07,546' E
 Marina Dubrovnik; Küste Dalmatien;
nach 42° 48,203' N 017° 44,605' E
 1.7 sm NNW Bucht Pržina; Stonski Kanal;

Uhrzeit	Status	Wind		See-gang		Strom			Wetter		Kurs / Fahrt		Seemeilen		Position	
		Richt.	kn	Richt.	kn	Richt.	kn	allg.	mbar	mm	KÜG	FÜG	Segel	Motor		Log
12:07	☀	046°	0	2	---	-	●	●	1007.3	0.10	---	0.0 kn	.0	.0	.0	Marina Dubrovnik; Küste Dalmatien;
12:08	☀	046°	0	2	---	-	●	●	1007.4	0.10	---	0.0 kn	.0	.0	.0	Marina Dubrovnik; Küste Dalmatien;
12:23	☀	046°	0	2	---	-	●	●	1007.3	0.10	258°	6.5 kn	.0	1.3	1.4	Fischerhafen Mokosica; Küste Dalmatien; Adriatisches Meer
13:30	☀	290°	19	2	---	-	●	●	1007.0	0.10	297°	6.1 kn	.0	8.2	8.2	0.5 sm westlich Leuchtfeuer Trsteno; Insel Lopud;
14:30	☀	290°	15	2	---	-	●	●	1007.6	0.10	294°	5.9 kn	.0	14.2	14.2	0.5 sm NE Misnjak; Insel Šipan;
15:25	☁	290°	9	1	---	-	●	●	1007.6	-	215°	0.0 kn	.0	19.2	19.2	1.7 sm NNW Bucht Pržina; Stonski Kanal;
Tagessumme													.0	19.2	19.2	
Vortrag													.0	206.2	206.4	
Gesamt													.0	225.4	225.6	



Der Betreiber des Restaurants fängt die in seiner Küche verarbeiteten Fische (und andere Meerestiere) selbst



Grabinschrift in der Kapelle



logs shown, there is also plenty of space for personal entries (including photos)! Back to our trip.

We had set our course for the Stonski Canal and moored in a small bay, which belongs to the village of Kobaš, at the jetty of a konoba, the "Tavern Ribarska Kuca Niko" (image RNO_1506.jpg), (42° 48.203' N / 17° 44.605' E). The restaurant itself is lovingly kitted out with historical artefacts relating to seafaring and the sea (image RNO_1472.jpg). This is a paradise for lovers of fish dishes! The proprietor of the restaurant himself catches the fish (and other seafood) prepared in his kitchen and so you can look forward to freshly caught local delicacies. His boat makes a rather audacious impression and we have captured it in the picture (4).

The bay is safe in all weathers, only a wind as strong as a bora can sometimes be unpleasant, although this should hardly have any effect at a proper jetty like



this one. We had already read in a travel guide that there is a 300-year-old oil mill there. On the Internet, 500 years was also mentioned, but this is implausible, since a grave inscription in the chapel refers to the year 1697 (picture 5). The oil mill is part of a baroque estate, which was built in the 17th century by a literary man from Dubrovnik, who had obviously become very wealthy. In those days, anyone who could afford it tried to escape the heat and stress of the city during the summer months. This included the Betondi family, who, in addition to the stone-built baroque mansion, also had a beautiful terraced garden with a sea view. The houses of the other villagers nestle against the mansion as if seeking protection. The summer villa also has some other historically significant features. The family crest consists of two crossed dolphins, which can be interpreted both to mean that this is a Christian family and as a reference to the Middle Ages. Wide steps lead to a relatively narrow, barrel-vaulted entrance, above which a machicolation (floor open-

ing in a projecting parapet through which objects can be dropped) threatens invaders. The only preserved window grille suggests oriental craftsmanship (picture 6). The Betondi family had no direct descendants and the property has changed hands several times. Today the whole things belongs to the family of the emeritus scientist Prof. Helga Milovčič, who moved there from Vienna in the 1960s through marriage. We were fortunate enough to meet the lady herself, now almost 80 years old, who made it possible for us to visit the mill, which at one time was operated solely by animal and human power, and the adjacent chapel.

We learned a lot about the history of the place that we didn't know before. The photograph (picture 7) shows the old mill and the ruins of the house. There is a particularly tragic story about this which Mrs Milovčič told us.

Her story took us back to 1943. German troops had been attacked by partisans in the local area. It had been revealed to the German occupiers that there would be a group of partisans in Kobaš, which was quite true. However, the partisans had supporters

among the population and the imminent operation of the German army became known to the fighters, who fled at night in wooden boats so that when the soldiers arrived there were no more partisans around Kobaš. In order to escape the feared retaliation that was often meted out to the male population, the remaining men and boys hid in the cellar of the medieval dwelling house (which now houses the above-mentioned oil mill). The cellar entrance was closed in such a way that it would not be noticed by the troops. The feared retaliation took place. However, since there were no male inhabitants, the soldiers set fire to the palazzo. As a result, the men hiding in the cellar were killed before the villagers could do anything about it. Once the soldiers had left, any help would have come too late. The fact that, despite this tragic past, we Germans are made welcome by the locals in a courteous manner, puts things in a different light. A memorial gives the names of the victims and the date: 24 October 1943 (picture 8).

On 28 June we continued along the Pelješac peninsula, reaching the harbour of Trstenik (42° 54.941'

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N / 17° 23.975' E) after 22 nautical miles. It is from there that the famous Pelješac wines "Dingac" and "Postup", which are produced nearby, are exported. Due to the precipitously sloping hillsides, the use of machinery is impossible, so the vineyards still require a lot of laborious manual labour to this day. However, the advantage of these slopes is that the grapes are exposed to the sun, which explains the special position of these vines. Added to this is the quality of the soil, which is said to produce the best wine in Croatia. Genetic studies prove that the "Plavac Mali" variety, for example, is listed under the internationally much better known name of "Zinfandel". Mike Grgič, one of the world's most outstanding specialists in viticulture, was born on the peninsula and later emigrated to California. Trstenik itself is one of the oldest towns on the Pelješac peninsula.

The next day, after covering 21 nautical miles, we anchored in Lovište bay (43° 01.747' N / 17° 01.385' E). Continuing our journey we travelled the Neretvanski Canal and had a look at Korčula's old town with its impressive town wall and watchtowers. After a stopover in Uvala Duga bay (island of Hvar) we moored in the Milna Marina (island of Brač). Since even an economical Linssen gets thirsty at some point and cries out for diesel, we had refuelled our "Hippo II" beforehand on the Milna canal. As is so often the case in Croatia, we encountered older and more recent history at every turn in this town of only 830 inhabitants. For example, the parish church of Our Lady of Annunciation was built in 1783, with its monumental baroque façade and a cycle of stucco work (late baroque) dating from the early 19th century. In 1800, during the Napoleonic Wars, the Russian fleet had its base in Milna.



Fishing and seafaring have left their mark everywhere you go in Croatia. As a boater, it's strangely touching to see the remains of a fishing boat. We found this on our trip on the island of Prvič (picture 9). Although the harbour on Prvič is quite small, it not only provides nice restaurants, it supplies electricity and water as well. It's a good opportunity to take a breather with some shore leave.

So much for the commercial for Croatia! It's really a wonderful cruising area. Even after the many years we have gone cruising there, we keep discovering things that mass tourism passes by. Even travel guides are sometimes incomplete, but it's not surprising either that some things slide into the background, when we think they should be in the foreground. It just depends on the observer's point of view. Perhaps that's a good thing and preserves our individuality, which skippers should possess in bagfuls.

