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"Zdravo Trogir!"

by
Marilyn King

All photos by Marilyn King

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*Freshness of a crystal transparent sea.
Murmuring sounds of the sea in the morning.
Shriek of a seagull.
Twitter of a bird.
Rooster telling you dawn has risen.
Narrow lanes of Dalmatian towns.
Unceasing rhythms of restless crickets in the pine woods.*

Croatia, a homeland whose abundant beauty reflects the richness of tradition and culture.

We drive north along the coast from Makarska. A stop in Split, city of exceptional grace, culture and history. Early-evening arrival in Trogir—an island town, sometimes referred to as Venice in miniature.

Villa Jadran, by the sea, on the island of Ciovo—a 20-minute walk to the center of Trogir. Owner Milan Bilic makes you feel at home. Our room which can accommodate 4 people is EU50 per night. Each of his six comfortable studio apartments and seven rooms has its own terrace or balcony with a view of the sea and the antiquities of Trogir—as described in UNESCO's World Heritage List.



Dinner was being served to guests with confirmed reservations. Wonderful, appetizing food graced every table. But even without reservations, Toni, their superb Sicilian chef was able to fix us a wonderful fish dinner.

This man is a dynamo! Toni drives his scooter into town everyday for fresh fish, seafood, and vegetables. He cooks and seasons everything to perfection. He serves all dinner courses as well as pours the wine he suggests.

This multi-talented chef from Sicily can even help you with Internet/computer problems.

We ordered dinner from Toni for the following evening. "Dorada" (Grouper?) Did we like it? Was it good? "It was a Feast!"

Few can decide the color of the Jadran Sea. Sometimes dark blue, sometimes greenish blue. It constantly shines forth in a thousand hues depending on the time of day and the angle of the sun. Yet, it is always beautiful. Unique.

Walk along the road by the Jadran Sea. Cross the bridge to the island of Trogir. Enter by the South Town Gate, standing since the 16th century.



Statues, fortresses, palaces, churches, Roman pavements and walls. All glisten in their astonishing and eternal beauty.

Trogir was established at the end of 2nd century B.C. by Greeks, Romans, and Illyrians. In the 7th century the Croats developed this municipality into one of the most beautiful towns on the Adriatic coast.

A treasury of art—an open air museum! Ancient Greek and Roman fragments, some with inscriptions, along with early Croatian art all compete for your attention. Stand enraptured and admire Gothic and Renaissance masterpieces. Feel the coolness of sturdy walls and bastions, the lush beauty of the cathedral, the mystique of the ancient winding streets.

Harmony of color and form in paintings, miniatures, and carvings. In quiet museums, old libraries and amidst stone monuments. Trace man's creativity in a climate where the sun, sea, stone and nature have defined Croatian life. Delight your palate and your soul!



Our friend meets us that afternoon on the other side of Ciovo. Nikola Radic built a beautiful new apartment building on a hillside overlooking the Jadran Sea. Two of his 2-bedroom apartments are impeccably

furnished and fully equipped. The rest are being worked on. Peace and serenity just 25 minutes from Split airport. Call Nikola and rent your vacation accommodations in a beautiful paradise. Phone (mobil) 385-098-1699-567, (land) 385-098-886-617.

Croatian hospitality! Nikola invites us to stay the night. He leaves to buy food while we enjoy the ambiance of his lovely accommodations. Bread, cheese, vegetables and superb home-made wine. The wine is made by Nikola's brother. We go later to his brother's for "**coffee**" and partake of Ivor's and Anica's generous hospitality.

Grapes, Figs, Olives, Lemons, Oranges, Walnuts, Tomatoes, Herbs. The Rooster stands potentate over his harem of hens. Fresh eggs every morning.

Their in-home winery produces wines and liquors only for the Family—their wines are not available in stores. The 4-year old white wine is Bjelo Vino—an excellent wine blended from a number of grape varieties. They produce typical Croatian wines—Babic, Dingac, Playac as well as Prosek (a liqueur).



We talk long into the night and learn so much. A tourist from Moravia staying next door brings a bottle of Travarica to share—an herb liquor produced from over 25 herbs. Wonderful cultural exchange.



Nikola's sister owns a unique business—**Fish Picnic**. We are invited to her traditional Croatian Fish Picnic, which happens every Friday. Awaken early? No problem! The rooster tells us—dawn has risen. It is time to awake. Let's go to the Fish Picnic.

Drive to **Filip's Marina** early. Coffee with the Captain and deck-hands. We board. Is this only for us? No. A few minutes later approximately 50 other picnic-ers waiting dockside in front of the Medena Hotel join us. We cruise past many beautiful islands. Drinks and cookies are served on board.

A shore visit on Drvenik Veliki—a picturesque island also served by Jadrolinija Ferry Line from Split. Walk



around and explore. Nikola has a friend on this island—but has never been there to see him. His friend was not at home. Take some pictures and leave him a note.

Re-embark on the "Filip." Cruise past more beautiful islands. Arrive at "Rat" cove on Ciovo Island. Walk the plank to the rich lunch awaiting us—mackerel, salad, bread, juice, wine, and watermelon. "All you can eat." After lunch it's the sunny beach, a refreshing swim or a nature walk in the woods.

Cost of this "Fish Picnic" experience is EU22/adults, children age 6–12/half price, children 5 and under/free. If you don't like fish, you can special order meat—a variety of meats are served at EU33/adults. For reservations call—385 (21) 881-910 or 385 (91) 519-0053.



Wonderful day! We say our goodbyes...and depart. Flicker of moonlight on calm sea—follow the Jadran to Zadar...



Ireland's Great Vacation Deals Air, Car & 6 Nights From \$399

A glance out of the window of your plane as you approach Ireland—is all that's required to learn why this ancient land is known as the Emerald Isle. Forty shades or more of green sewn together in a patchwork quilt of lush countryside. A rich, rolling, vibrant land combining youthful vigor and a long tumultuous history into an alluring combination. Cliffs and craggy coastline—quaint villages and castles—crystal lakes and rolling glens. Ireland has much to offer you!!

Emerald Package—

Ireland's most popular vacation package inclusive of Air, Car, and 6 nights B&Bs from \$399

Emerald Castle Package—

Popular week in Ireland includes the charm of local B&Bs and the luxury of an ancient 5 star castle from \$499

Treasures—

The most memorable of Ireland experiences available all year round. The most complete 8-day luxury escorted vacation available from \$999

Sights & Sounds Pub Tour—

Best Priced European Escorted Vacation in November including Air, Hotels & Transfers from \$499



[For Information and Reservations—](#)

Please note: Package is based on 2 people traveling, double occupancy accommodations and midweek travel. Non-Changeable, Non-Refundable & Subject to availability. Departure taxes are not included.

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and receive your **FREE** eGift

Oh...We Sail the Ocean Blue... and our Saucy Ship's a Beauty...

Sail at Sea!...The sun shines down on the polished deck. Sea breezes blow gently over you. You lie on your lounge chair admiring the view from your well-appointed cruise ship. Your cares and worries are miles away. You have only the world before you and the sea beneath you to occupy your mind. Relax and enjoy the delicious pleasures of a cruise vacation.

Regatta (Oceania Cruises)

Miami to Miami Cruise

12 nights from \$1295 (USD), plus \$200 shipboard credit on Dec. 9 sailing—Explore the enchantment of the Caribbean in unrivaled comfort. Visit some of the most alluring ports. Immerse yourself and explore the local flavors, culture, tastes and sights of these islands so steeped in history. Sail at night arrive at a new port each morning.

Maasdam (Holland America Line)

Buy an Inside-Stateroom & get a FREE Upgrade to Ocean-view Stateroom!

FREE Upgrade to Ocean-view Stateroom on new Norfolk, VA homeport cruises!—In 10 and 11 days you sail deep into the Caribbean to places like Antigua, Dominica and Barbados beyond the range of the 7-day Florida ships. Save an average of \$300 per person on airfare to Florida apply this to your cruise fare. From the mid-Atlantic region, enjoy 3 or 4 additional days of cruising for minimal additional expense, better ports, and far more convenience!

Legend of the Seas (Royal Caribbean)

14-Night Panama Canal Cruise from San Diego to Miami

14 nights, outside stateroom, from \$1299 (USD)—The magnificent Caribbean Sea... Or spectacular views and

Mexican heritage of Acapulco? Experience both worlds and behold firsthand the Panama Canal the technological marvel that connects them. It only takes a day to cruise through the Panama Canal, but your memory will last a lifetime. Let Royal Caribbean take you on this truly unique adventure.

Seven Seas Mariner (Radisson Seven Seas Cruises)

19 Day San Francisco to Lima Cruise

18 nights from \$5996 (USD), \$200 shipboard credit per guest, and more—The golden Mexican Riviera. Costa Rica with its amazing eco-diversity. The Panama Canal, and stunning Quito, high in the Andes. This sailing is awash with fascinating discoveries. The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and San Diego Zoo in California. The flavor of Mexico—Cabo San Lucas with its deep sea fishing, a Complimentary Mexican Fiesta in Puerto Vallarta and the world-class resort of Acapulco. Costa Rica and its national preserves. The man-made wonder of the Panama Canal on an air excursion from Fort Amador. All aboard the 700-guest, all-suite, all-balcony Seven Seas Mariner!

Norwegian Crown (Norwegian Cruise Line)

11 Day Canada and New England Cruise from Baltimore

11 nights, outside guarantee, from \$999 (USD)—Come and carve a passage through the Saint Lawrence Seaway to Georgian Sydney and French Quebec. Cruise along the Gasp Peninsula, and watch for whales on the Sauenay River. Cruise by opulent playgrounds of yesterday Bar Harbor and breezy Newport. And finally Boston you step back in time to the American Revolution.

Marco Polo (Orient Lines)

Mediterranean and Casablanca Rome to London

21 nights from \$3392 (USD), air from \$199, \$100 Onboard Credit per Stateroom—Stand before the Colosseum in Rome. View the masterpieces of Florence. Visit the French Riviera. These are dreams of many travelers. This vacation offers all this, as well as exotic Morocco and the intriguing worlds of the vast Iberian Peninsula. Andalusia with its Moorish palaces and sun-baked villages. The great wine regions of Portugal and Spain. The exquisite isle of Madeira. Even the sequestered beauty of Galicia.

Zenith (Celebrity Cruises)

Bermuda Sailing from New York

7 nights, outside stateroom, from \$750 (USD)—Hear the spirit of Bermuda in the rhythm of calypso music. See it in the pastel-painted cottages. Feel it in the soft, pink sand under your feet. Bermuda is cricket matches and neighborhood pubs, afternoon high tea and regimental guards all blended with sunny island charm. On board, polished banisters shimmer in the sunlight. A lounge chair invites you to indulge in a lazy moment in the sun. Travel in classic style.

MS Nordstjernen (Norwegian Coastal Voyage)

Cruising Spitsbergen

7 nights from \$3485 (USD) - reduced rate, book by July 31—Spitsbergen, the largest island of the Svalbard Archipelago, is located only 600 miles from the North Pole. In this land of the Midnight Sun, two-thirds of the area is covered with ice. The sun never sets from April to August. More than 170 species of plants and more than 100 types of migratory birds flourish in this Arctic landscape. Among the wildlife you'll find wild reindeer, seals, walrus and Arctic foxes. It's not unusual to see polar bears during your visit. Our ship, the MS Nordstjernen, is small enough to visit areas that larger ships cannot enter. And, Zodiacs will enable you to make interesting shore excursions.

MV Wilderness Discoverer (Glacier Bay Cruise Line)

Wilderness Discoverer Cruise 1210

7 nights from \$2810 (USD)—The best of both worlds. Blend adventure activities with visits to favorite ports. You may spend one day touring Alaska's capital city of Juneau and the next sea-kayaking in Tracy Arm Fjord. Between adventures, relax on the newly remodeled MV Wilderness Discoverer. Keep on the lookout! Your Captain and crew alert you to any wildlife in action as you cruise.

Wind Surf

10 Day London to Lisbon Cruise

10 nights from \$1995 (USD) - air for \$495 from NYC—Your sailing ship. The one in the harbor three berths

away from the yacht belonging to a member of European royalty. It's a good feeling walking up Windstar's gangway, feeling part of Europe's elite. Drop your carry-on bags in your stateroom and go see all the fascinating places on board. The cozy wood-paneled Library ... the airy, light-filled Veranda for breakfast and lunch ... the spacious Lounge where guests gather ... an intimate WindSpa. Poke your head into the Bridge and visit the Captain. Say goodbye to land and hello to the person you're with. Listen to the wind, the water, the sounds of silence, freedom, space. When was the last time the choices before you stretched to the horizon?

Convince your *"significant other"* to take a cruise with you!—
[101 Reasons Why to Choose to Cruise!](#)

[Find My Lowest Air Fare on FareBeater®!](#)



Soft Scuba

"The Soft Scuba Adventurer"

Very Special Announcement—We have re-hosted
[Soft Scuba](#)

We are re-doing all webpages there—at this date the Homepage, Bay Islands page, Bonaire page, Dominica page, Puerto Rico page and Tobago page have been re-written in a new format...watch for more improvements.

Your diving and accommodations cost about the same—whether you use our services or our competitors'. We simply give you better service. We want your repeat business to our dive adventure destinations. When we work together, you receive customized service. We "mother hen" a little. You deserve your best-possible underwater adventure. We want you back with us again...and again.



Let's talk about airfare. Airfare can vary considerably. Many times, if you reserve with sufficient lead time, we can get the lowest fares through bulk air contracts. We always compare our bulk fares with what our wholesalers offer. Wholesale fares can be lower than bulk air! We also make use of the leading Internet technology available. Our FareBeater® Engine sometimes beats our wholesalers! For your **FREE** consumer report about how much FareBeater® fares are lower than those offered by Orbitz®, Expedia® and Travelocity® visit—

[FareBeater® Engine beats Travelocity®, Orbitz®, and Expedia® by up to \\$341 per ticket!](#)

[Yes, you may use it!—test fly it and compare!]

Bonaire—"The Natural Choice"

General Information

Bonaire is the eastern-most island of the ABCs—Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao—and is located about 40 miles north of the Venezuelan coast, less than a 3-hour jet ride away from Miami. Bonaire is **outside** the hurricane belt, but can feel the effects of large hurricanes. Why is Bonaire a world-class dive destination?



- **Over 60 dive sites around Bonaire and over 26 around Klein Bonaire** with wrecks, reefs, walls, shore dives and a protected underwater park (since 1979).
- All dive sites are marked by **mooring buoys**. Some sites are retired for several years in order to remain healthy.
- **The visibility** often reaches 130 feet and averages 60–100 feet.
- **Abundance of sea life** of every size and color imaginable! Over 500 species of colorful tropical fish and over 120 types of coral—all living within a protected marine environment.

Clear, warm water, and the abundance of a great variety of sea life surrounding Bonaire, much of which can be experienced by shore diving, makes for a spectacular, dynamic, marine drama constantly changing shape, motion, color and texture.

Diving!—From the newly-certified to the experienced olde-pro underwater photographers, Bonaire offers a very safe, pristine underwater environment. Shore

diving is very easy. Generally after entering the water, a relatively short swim along the surface, descend near the top of a wall or mooring buoy, multilevel up the wall, towards shore—much to see and experience!

Most dive sites are within a 15–20 minute boat ride away, or easily reachable as a shore dive. Most of the dive operators use the large social boats, making for more comfort all around—shade, drinking water, room to spread out, relax, play "one-up-man-ship" about the biggest fish you ever saw and other spectacular dive adventures you ever had, while you assemble your gear.

Weather & Water—Year round air temperature averages—82 deg.F. Water temperature ranges between 78 deg.F. to 82 deg.F. Visibility runs between 60 to 130+ feet, and is usually around 100 feet.

Price Validity—All Package Prices are subject to change without notice, unless Paid-In-Full. Changes may be required in the event of increases or decreases in the cost of services imposed by hotels, dive operators, air carriers (if included in package), or other contractors. Government taxes can change at any time.

Air Fare—We provide the lowest air fare from your City of Departure.

Dive Sites

The Marine Park extends all the way around Bonaire, from the high water mark to approximately 200fsw. Bonaire's narrow, fringing coral reefs encircle both Bonaire and Klein Bonaire. Recent survey by REEF has shown that Bonaire's fish population is the most diverse in the Caribbean and ranks among the best in the world..

There are four distinct zones, three of which are easily visited by snorkelers and about 80% of Bonaire's sea life is found here.

- **The Elkhorn Zone**— Named for the large, dominant coral formations, this is the area closest to shore. These giant, branching corals (many measure more than ten feet across) are found in just a few feet of water, and provide a home for thousands of fish and other marine life.
- **The Coral Terraces**— About 8–10 fsw, the Elkhorn Corals are replaced by a combination of other corals. There are three types of terraces—Sandy, Patch (Brain and Staghorn corals), and Coral. **Sandy Terraces** are mostly sand with an occasional coral, and the Sand Diver, Peacock Flounder, tangs, parrot fish, damsel fish, butterfly fish, angels, grunts, coneys, rock hinds, goatfish, hogfish, wrasse, lizard fish, scorpionfish, and more! are found here. **Patch Terraces** are a mixture of sand and two main corals—Brain and Staghorn. **Coral Terraces** are found off northern Bonaire and Klein Bonaire—these corals are densely packed.
- **The Reef Crest**— In about 25–30 fsw, the coral dominates, with much action above the reef—schools of fish feeding of plankton, and others such as jacks which feed on these schools of smaller fish. Corals are of great variety—star coral taking shape in pagodas, pillars, mounds and even sloping, overlapping like shingles; and many varieties of soft coral and sponges. Sergeant Majors, grouper, parrotfish, snapper, shoaling chromis, jacks, tarpon, turtle, seahorses, frogfish, nurse shark, whale shark, rays and dolphin also frequent this area.
- **The Reef Drop-Off**— 30 fsw and below is where most scuba divers visit to see deeper creatures. Leaf Coral and Black Coral adorn this area which slopes down...and...down!

NOTE: Before you pay your \$10 annual Park Fee, you will go through about a half-hour presentation/orientation about the Park and dive sites, as well as the park Rules. It is a very informative presentation and well worth the time to absorb as much as possible. One of the best pieces of information we came away with was a comprehensive map of the island and the divesites. There are so many sites, that when you plan your day of shore diving, it is best to ask more about each site. With a rental car and buddy the majority of the sites are easily accessible from shore. Save your boat trips for Klein Bonaire and sites not easily accessible from shore—roughly six sites are boat only.

Dive Adventures with Plaza Resort and Toucan Diving

High Season and Low Season—High season generally begins mid-December and ends mid-April. Higher rates are found during High Season and some holidays.



Plaza Resort Bonaire and Toucan Divers—(Low season rates around \$1017 diver, \$778 non-diver)—Adventure per person, double occupancy includes: 7 Nights Accommodations (Junior Suite) - 12 boat dives(2-tank morning trips) - unlimited shore diving - weights/tanks/air/belt - r/t airport transfers - all service charges and taxes on room and diving. Note that other dive package options include only one boat trip per day with unlimited shore diving, or unlimited shore diving only.

Plaza Resort Bonaire, a stunning 5-Star property, is located a few minutes from the airport, just a little south of Kralendijk, Bonaire's capitol. Sprawled over 12 acres of pristine coastline, its 200 airy suites and villas are either lagoon side or seaside and, set amidst tropical gardens. While it is always fun exploring Bonaire, especially in a rental car, the Plaza offers every amenity one might find elsewhere on-island—cable TV, A/C, telephone, safe, mini-fridge or in the fully-equipped kitchens, refrigerator, oven, dishwasher and microwave, white sandy beach, pool, poolside restaurant/bar, several restaurants and more bars, watersports, tennis, fitness room and "day

spa"... **"Beverly Bio Aesthetics"**, casino, games for kids, and much more...

Toucan Divers is a PADI, NAUI and IDD dive center, located on the premises of the Plaza Resort Bonaire. Three Island Hopper dive boats never carry more than 14 divers per boat and their schedule is flexible throughout the day. For shorediving needs, divers can drive right up and load fresh tanks. Boats, shop, fill station and storage all located together—very convenient. They also provide guided shore diving on the east, windward, side (weather providing) as well as the sites located within **Slagbaai— Washington National Park**.

More Dive Adventure Options

Dive adventures can be custom-tailored re: length of stay, number of dives, type of room, and divers vs. non-divers in party. Do you want a Resort Course, to become certified, go for advanced certifications and specialties, use the OW Referral to complete your basic certification? If you don't see what you are looking for here, please ask.

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