

## 2004 VENICE AND CROATIA

In 2003, Scotti and I took a cruise from Crete to Corfu and we had a shipwreck. It wasn't a bad one, nor was it scary. I thought it was sort of fun. It was certainly different. A & K flew us to Athens, put us up at the deluxe Grande Bretagne and found another ship. We did miss a couple of stops but we got the bonus of going through the Corinth Canal. The boat was not nearly as nice as our first one, but we did finish our cruise. However, to hear some of our fellow passengers, it had ruined their vacation. A & K offered a free cruise the following year for our inconvenience! This cruise is not exactly free. For one thing it is eight days long, instead of seven. We also had to provide our own transportation to Europe. However the overall cost makes it seem like a bargain.

Monday, September 13, 2004. Scotti and I met in Delta's Business Class Lounge in Atlanta and soon were air-borne for JFK airport. There, my wheelchair took us to another Business Class Lounge, just a short walk from our gate.

The flight from New York to Venice is much shorter than it would have been from Atlanta to Venice, but by eating an abbreviated meal, and swallowing 'No jet lag' pills, I did sleep most of the way and arrived in Italy feeling not too much the worse for wear.

Tuesday, September 14. We walked about five minutes from the airport to a water taxi, a launch that probably could have held 10 people, and were driven through the narrow dredged channel to the 117 islands that are Venice. It cost 80 euro. Two years ago the euro and dollar were almost equal. Now one euro equals \$1.22. We could have made the transfer for less by waterbus, but we had too much luggage to cope with a bus. Oh well, its only money!

I was last here 25 years ago when my first husband and I joined my mother on a comprehensive tour of Italy with Maupintour. Then we stayed at the Grande Luxe Gritti Palace. This year we will join the tour on Friday at the elegant Bauer Hotel. A & K had said the Bauer wanted \$400 per person per night! For our pre-cruise I turned to the Internet and found the Al Graspa de Ua Hotel for 180 euro per night for two. Al Graspa de Ua is only a block or two from the Rialto Bridge and we schlepped our bags from the dock without too much trouble. Of course our room was not ready until 2:00 (It was then about 10:30), so we left our bags and set off to explore. The first settlement of Venice was in 811, near the Rialto Bridge, so we are in the oldest part of the city.

After window-shopping a bit we had a break over a small ham sandwich (1.5 euro). Then as we were crossing a bridge (there are 400), an enterprising gondola driver approached us and we succumbed to a relaxing half hour in the canals. Gondolas have been the vehicles of choice for hundreds of years. Ours was highly decorated with gold trim and the bow was shaped like a metal hook to help weigh it down. Even so, because it was high tide, our gondolier still had to tip the craft to get it under some of the numerous bridges. At one point he even had Scotti move forward to weight the bow down further. He pointed out the house where Marco Polo (1254-1324) lived. We also saw Casanova's house. The cost: 80 euro.

Then we continued on to San Marco Square, with the imposing cathedral at one end and pigeons everywhere. This is the only place in the world where you are encouraged to feed these "flying rats." We were not feeding them but one hopeful one landed on Scotti's shoulder. There were crowds of tourists, many following a guide with a flag. We are promised a tour before we board our boat so we only took a couple of pictures of the Doge's palace and the Bridge of Sighs. We walked along the Grand Canal to the Bauer Hotel, where we made a tentative date for a massage tomorrow (but later cancelled). Then we set off for the Al Graspa de Ua. Our map was hard to read but we saw a bridge and assumed it was the Rialto. Near it, we circled block after block trying to find the hotel. All to no avail. Finally Scotti realized it was not the Rialto Bridge but the Pont Academia. No one spoke English or had heard of our hotel. We were exhausted when we finally got back to the Al Graspa.

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The lobby of our hotel is tiny and has a mural of the Grand Canal on the wall. It is completely filled with a reception counter and one chair. Someone was called to take us to our room, for the stairs from the lobby did not reach our part of the building. We were led to the alley next door, which could only be accessed through a locked gate. Then we entered the building through another locked door and got to the birdcage elevator, which only works when you close the interior wood doors. It holds two people! It creaked up to the first floor where, after another locked firewall door, and a treacherous step down we found our room. Despite the approach our small room is very nice, and decorated in traditional Venetian style. The walls are even padded so we hear no sounds at all. We have all the amenities from television to closet safe.

My first order of business was to shower and wash my hair, which did a lot to restore me. Then we downloaded pictures. We have some duplication (and Scotti's are a lot better than mine), but the joy of a digital is that you erase the hundred you do not want and are ready to go again at no cost. We have some good ones despite the jet lag. Then I faded and slept for two hours.

One of the hotel's amenities is the restaurant next door. I had a delicious traditional Venetian dish of cuttlefish (a squid relative) cooked in its own ink with polenta. The waiter had warned me that it would look black and unappetizing, and it did, but it was delicious. Scotti had swordfish. Everything in the restaurant is bought the day it is served so, while the menu is reasonably long, some dishes are not available every night. A delicious Crème Brulee capped off the dinner and we went back through all our locked doors to our room. We certainly have a lot of atmosphere! Started this journal and then slept almost eleven hours.

Wednesday, September 15. To reach the breakfast room you climb stairs leading up from the lobby. Here were ten small tables, complete with tablecloths and a buffet breakfast of cereal, various breads, orange juice and coffee or hot chocolate. The room was somewhat full with the people staying in the hotel's sixteen rooms.

We then took off for the Rialto Bridge and took photographs of the Grand Canal. This bridge is like the Ponte Vecchio in Florence: lined with small shops selling everything from jewelry to vegetables. I found some lovely glass Murano grapes: We understand a lot of Chinese imitations are sold and you have to look for the Murano Glass shops, which are certified. I also found a cameo ring for me. It is a blue agate with a cat carved into it.

Off the bridge we stopped and had a pizza for lunch. It wasn't as good as the ones we buy in the US, and had a hard crust. However, the location of the pizzeria was great and we sat at a table close to the railing, which overlooked the canal. We had intended to explore the waterbus, but the drivers were on strike. "They wanted a day off," we were told. The only buses running were to take you to the railroad station.

We went back to the hotel and found that massages were not to be had. Also the tour we hoped to take into the wine country would not run because of yesterday's rain.

So we went to plan B and headed back to San Marcos Square. We bought a small packet of corn and were immediately surrounded by begging birds. They would sit on your head and arms. The young birds are white and have not developed such aggressive begging habits but we snuck a few kernels to them. It was fun.

In one of the museums they had an exhibit of paintings that had been the personal collection of Matthew Turner, and many were being exhibited for the first time. He had made three or four visits to Venice. It was a Mecca for many painters and writers. We rented the audio guides, which enhance a museum visit. I was intrigued that they described some of Turner's techniques such as painting brown paper with gesso and then scratching the gesso for effects. Liz Jeneid, the artist on my recent Arctic trip, had showed these techniques to us.

We bought some gelato, this time pistachio, my favorite and it was lovely and smooth. European ice cream tastes different from ours; perhaps it isn't so laced with

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preservatives. I hope it isn't as fattening!

Then we walked out to the promenade by the canal and headed past a view of the Bridge of Sighs and found the Danielli Hotel, one of the famous hotels of Venice. Its lobby was elegant.

I was getting tired so Scotti took me back to the hotel. It is only a five-minute walk when you know the way. She then headed back to the bridge to do some more shopping.

For dinner we crossed over the Rialto Bridge and ate at one of the canal side restaurants, The Terrazza Sommariva. They actually had a Maine lobster, which our waiter held up to show its tail flapping, but the cost was about \$50. I settled for the spaghetti frutti de mare and Scotti had some giant grilled shrimp. We had strawberry shortcake for desert. The "cake" was cookie-sized but the strawberries and whipped cream were delicious. Our waiter brought us a full bottle of Pinot Grigio, although we thought we had ordered only two glasses. Of course, we drank it all and the two of us reeled home.

Thursday, September 16. We slept until almost eleven! I packed my big bag and we towed it over to the Bauer to make the transfer easier tomorrow. Then we had tortellini at a cafe on the San Marco Square.

The strike was over so we bought 24-hour passes on the amoretto for 10.50 each. We hopped on a number five, an express bus to Murano Island. We didn't know which of the three stops to use but got off at the first one. There was a wonderful glass shop and the glass blower was in residence. He had some beautiful things. He told us we were only his second customers for the day and must have been unhappy when we walked out empty-handed. Stopped at a couple of other shops, but none so good as the first. There was a bridge over the canal to the cathedral, but when we asked where the glass museum was we were told to continue on along the canal. It soon was apparent this wasn't right and we backtracked to the Metro stop and went even further into the factory area. At last we met someone who helped us. We had to cross the bridge by the cathedral ... and the museum was right there.

It is very interesting with pieces from the first century and elaborate and beautiful pieces from later on. After a blueberry ice-cream cone we walked on to the next Vaporetto stop and caught the #72 bus back to Venice. It went all the way around the north side of the islands and had stops at the train station and airport. When we reached San Marco we changed to a number 1 and went right down the Grand Canal to the Rialto Bridge. Scotti took pictures so we now have shots of the Hotel Bauer from the water.

Back in the room we had a couple of hours of R & R before heading out to dinner. Again we crossed the Rialto Bridge to eat at the Cafe Sarocera. We had a fried calamari and vegetable dish but felt the servings were very small for the money.

Friday, September 17. And so we left our homey little Al Grasso and moved into the high rent district of the Bauer. Our tour manager, Andres Vukovic, was waiting to welcome us in the lobby.

What does an \$800-a-night hotel have that our 180 one did not? Well for one thing the room is bigger, but not enormous. I had hoped for a view of the Grande Canal but instead look out over tiled rooftops from our two large windows. Below us is a canal with the cries of gondoliers soliciting customers, an unaccustomed outside noise. At the Al Grasso the only thing we ever heard was the people next door who came home at 3:00 AM each morning and last night, we heard a dog barking forlornly, who had been left in the same room. We have the same minibar and safe as at the Al Grasso, and one change, we now have cable TV but CNN is only concerned with European news at the moment. We didn't have to go through any fire doors to get here and our elevator is large enough to hold five people. At the Al Grasso we had to take the bags down one at a time since they would not fit into the birdcage with us. Wonder of wonders, I also have a bathtub. I really don't care much for showers! Is it worth the difference? I don't think so.

Scotti and I still had time on our Metro pass, so we caught a #1 out to the Lido. There are

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cars on this island! We took the V bus to the beach. It is wide and long with 3 rows of cabanas between it and the road. There was hardly anyone there today, for the temperature was chilly and the wind was honking. Surf was pouring over a small dock and it reminded me of the surf on the reef in Belize last winter. Someone had said we wouldn't like it, but if I was a beach person, I think it would be lovely to stay at one of the many hotels.

We caught the #1 back to San Marco intending to switch to an 82 and visit San Giorgio and proceed to the Jewish Quarter for lunch, but for some reason the buses weren't running. They would come in and disembark passengers, but then leave without picking any others up! A large crowd gathered, including one man who wanted to catch a train "in 20 minutes". I finally got tired of waiting and we elected to go to the nearby Café Wildner and have our big meal of the day. The meal was the best we have had. I had grilled eel and a tomato, cheese and olive salad. Scotti had mussels and a sort of Bouillabaisse. We enjoyed talking with the Malaysian couple at the next table. The trouble came when we called for our bill. We waited and waited and complained, but there was some holdup. It took forever and really took the edge off of a good time.

We did some shopping. I found some glass cherries that a friend had requested. There were 2 apiece and he gave me twelve for 20. This was a good price as at other shops they were 3 apiece.

I left Scotti and went back to the hotel where I met Andreas our tour leader. Then I went to the room, washed out a few things, and fell asleep. Scotti and I went out this evening and had ice cream in a cafe near the hotel.

Saturday, September 18, 2004. The Bauer has a delightful cafe alongside the Grand Canal where we ate our breakfast.

Then we met our guide for a walking tour of the Cathedral and Doge's Palace. Guides have special gates so we did not have to wait in the long lines. In the Doge's Palace we toured the courts and waiting rooms and then crossed over the Bridge of Sighs to the new prison, which dates from 1600. The prison cells could hold four or five people according to the marks in the floor, which showed where the beds had been. They had no windows. The Bridge of Sighs is a two-way bridge and the prisoners who crossed it for their hearing never knew if they would be coming back or not.

Then we walked through San Marco's Church. Returning to the Plaza we were amazed to see that there were large ponds of water, which seep up through the stones. They say Venice is sinking and this was certainly visual proof.

Andreas led us into a maze of streets to a restaurant in a garden where we had lunch. In our two hours of leisure time, Shirley Unwin, an Englishwoman who lives in Switzerland, Scotti and I set out for the Peggy Guggenheim Museum. We bought a 90-minute pass for 5 and crossed the canal. We found the other side of the canal a delightful change. Gone were the crowds. Gone were the souvenir stands. The quiet streets were lined with art galleries. The Museum was Peggy Guggenheim's home. A sculpture garden leads to it. The delightful house is one-story and there is a dock onto the canal. In the house is Peggy Guggenheim's art collection. Modern art is not my thing but I did appreciate a couple of Picassos among others.

Then we crossed back over the canal and got to the Bauer by 4:00. We were loaded into water taxis for a quick ride down to near the train station, and here we found the Pantheon.

She holds forty passengers and we are twenty. Our stateroom is on the lower deck and I do not like it. My bunk is tapered at the foot so it is only about 2 feet wide. There are only two small drawers and one hanging locker. We fit everything in but it was a squeeze. She is a far cry from the Callisto and only a step up from the Aegean Princess. They claim she is only 44 days old, but I suspect she is an older ship that has been modified. She was supposed to have 3 masts but they could only engineer two. We will survive but are not thrilled.

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Lifeboat drill was announced and everyone grabbed their life jacket and hurried to the lounge. Then we were told we should wait for the whistles! Everyone I have met knows his way around a ship; many have boats of their own.

The young Captain introduced his crew and we had a welcome drink.

We had dinner in the dining room with Panos, the hotel manager plying us with food and spent the night tied up to the dock.

Sunday, September 19. Woke to find us overwhelmed with huge cruise ships ... at least three. I hate to think what the crowds must be at San Marcos. We had to delay our departure while one was backed into her wharf. Then we went down the island and passed San Marcos Plaza and headed on out of the lagoon.

Once in the Adriatic the Captain even tried to put some sails up but Scotti reports that the main is not only loose footed, it is also loose from the mast. The crew could not figure it out.

The sea was calm and we did not seem to be making very good time. Our ETA at Pula was 2:00 PM, we did not arrive until after four and the ship had to clear immigration for Croatia.

Pula is at the end of the Istrian peninsula and because of its strategic position it has been occupied time and again by Romans, Venetians, and Hapsburgs, even Napoleon. It is home to a large ship building industry, first introduced to the town at the time of the Austro-Hungarian occupation. Pula means stream of water. A wall surrounded the original city on a hill. Today Pula covers seven hills. A couple of the town gates remain. Outside the walls, the Romans built a huge amphitheater, one of the five largest in Europe. In the basement they had a display of an old olive press and many amphorae. We walked around the outside of the old city where there was an old Roman Temple and also a neo-classical cathedral. The Roman theater was torn down and the stones used in the wall.

After the tour, Scotti, Fran Busby, Andres and I set out to find a cafe and have some beer and wine. Alas, all the bars were closed. We did find a place where they were selling beer near the dock. We were back on board for supper.

Monday, September 20. Croatia's Dalmatian coast has more than a thousand islands but only 66 are inhabited. They say the Dalmatian dog's spots represent the islands. No building is allowed along the shore. How lovely it is to cruise along the pristine wooded shores. The azure colored water is very clear and pure.

We docked at Zadar, which was not too interesting. It was heavily bombed in WW 2 as it was a Nazi submarine base. Then we drove south along the beautiful Dalmatian coast. Some of the small villages had old fortresses. These forts kept the area from being occupied by the Turks.

Our guide is very proud of Croatia and tells us that Croatia is the inventor of cravats; from the bandannas the early soldiers wore. Also the ballpoint pen was invented here. Fingerprinting was first developed here, as were torpedoes and parachutes. A Croat named Nicholai Tessie [sp?] was the hydro engineer who developed the waterpower of Niagara Falls.

Sibonik has the largest cathedral in the world constructed entirely of stone. A statue of the architect stands in front of it. His name was Uri Dalmatia. A unique frieze of carved heads decorates the church each portraying a different emotion. Obviously these are portraits of the citizens. Dalmatia made stone carvings of leaves to make the acoustics very good. There is a small beautifully carved baptismery

We stopped for a panoramic view of Primosten, a picturesque island, and arrived in Trogir in time for lunch. It was a fairly long walk into the quaint little town and Mac Thompson, who has bad knees, had a hard time making the walk. However he is a good sport and does not complain. Lunch was in a waterside cafe and it was good, but interminably long! We walked around the town for a while admiring the Romanesque

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and Renaissance architecture. No wonder this is a UNESCO World Heritage site. At last we came to Split. At the end of the third century, the Roman emperor, Diocletian, built a large palace here. He abdicated in May 305 and spent the last of his life here. He was a cruel emperor who was so against the Christians that he murdered his own wife and child who had converted! The Palace is the heart of modern day Split and people have lived in and around its old walls ever since it was built. We walked to the Golden Gate (the most important one) presided over by a huge statue of a tenth century bishop. I particularly liked his long pointing finger. Then we entered the palace along the Cordo or Main Street. In the center of the palace was the peristyle. Here there were the remains of a roman temple. I was getting very tired. It was now five o'clock and I decided (along with much of the group) to go back to the ship, which was supposed to be alongside the quay. I didn't find the Pantheon but I did find Mac, Henry Chapman and Harry Klanian, who were sitting forlornly on a bench trying to decide how they were to get to the ship, whose masts could be seen in the distance in back of some large cruise ships. I set off on foot and soon Andres pulled up in a car and offered a lift. We picked up the men and were driven around to the pier, only to find the ship was tied up at the international dock and we had no way to get there without going through customs! Without a passport! Andres managed to circumvent the authority and I gratefully got back on the ship. Then Andres managed to get her moved to a more convenient location. It seems we had not made a reservation for a dock!

Only four stalwarts stuck with the tour to the end and they saw some archeological excavations, which "were the best part of the tour." I just didn't have the energy to do any more. Fran Busby, an investment banker from the Washington, DC area, stopped to admire some jewelry and got separated from the group. She thought she was all alone until she found Carlos Romo-Leroux (who is from Ecuador), also lost. Everyone had an adventure to tell of getting back to the ship.

We had supper on the open deck instead of the dining room, which was a nice change.

Tuesday, September 21. Woke to find us already underway. About 10:30 we got to the sweet little island of Tvar. Here we had a wait for a dock because there was no space for us. It is obvious that we are on a shakedown cruise and that the captain does not know about making reservations in the ports.

Andres led us to the small Franciscan monastery (no longer active) overlooking the harbor. Its most important work of art is a mural of the Last Supper, which Rossini painted on the wall of the dining hall. He had been ill and was brought here because of the healing herbs that the monks used, and the painting was his gift to them. Back in the town we were given time to wander. I looked in a few shops but soon headed back to the ship. Nearby was an Internet cafe. For about \$2.50 I got access and checked my mail and the news. I sent a few emails, but it was difficult. To do @, you had to use the option key and the v key. I'm sure another option would have done a z or a y, which the Croatian keyboard lacked!

We motored a short way to a sheltered bay and the ship anchored so we could have a swim. The water was a refreshing 73 degrees and it was very buoyant. We were warned that the other bathers in the bay might be nude, but we were too far from them to tell.

Korcula is a treasure of an island. Its original wall and most of its towers make it look like a sort of toy town, with the cathedral at its highest point. Andrea, our guide, was very good. She pointed out the sea gate with its carved stone stairs and then took us to the land gate. There is now a causeway, connecting the town to the mainland, but the original access was by a wooden bridge. The grand gate, which we view today, was not the one used in medieval times, but there was a small secret gate, through which we entered the town. An enemy trying to enter through this gate would find himself trapped in a small indefensible entry.

There are three brotherhoods, or guilds, in town. Membership is hereditary and male (the women have auxiliary membership). We entered the All Saints brotherhood, which was

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dedicated to sailors and shipbuilders. Their ceremonial robes are on display, and also the huge candles, which they carry around the town on one of the holidays. The largest weighs 40 kilos and is carried by the president of the group. We crossed over the street by way of a small bridge into the church. There were some great paintings around the walls, but to my eye, the large wood carved Pieta, which stood behind the altar, dwarfed them all.

We climbed further up the hill to the cathedral square. Here there was a museum, which contained among other things a di Vinci sketch and a 16th century ivory triptych of Mary Queen of Scots and Lord Darnley. It is very like my own triptych, which Mother bought in England back in the thirties! There was one room of incredible embroidered vestments that dated back to the 16th century. It was an amazing collection and it is miraculous it has survived. Korcula was not bombed during the war and there has not been a fire. We were told that money was short for preservation and that what money had been available had been spent on security cameras, which are seldom watched! Andrea tells us that the 300 inhabitants of the island all know each other and that there is no crime since someone is always watching in the street!

We walked by the house of Marco Polo who is thought to have been born on the island, rather than in Venice. There was no Polo family in Venice but there was in Korkula. The house only retains its facade but the tower and garden still exist. Marco Polo fought on the Venetian side in the war with Genoa in 1298. He was taken prisoner and wrote about his fantastic travels during the confinement.

The tour ended and we walked the rest of the circumference of the tiny island back to the ship. We looked for some interesting shops. Everyone is buying coral jewelry, but we have yet to find anything that calls to us. We did find a dozen or so cats in one square. They were a collection of colors and two males were having words with each other. Obviously they were strays but there was evidence that they were being fed at a nearby house.

We had dinner ashore at the hotel right by where we were docked. The hotel is the oldest one on the island. I was not too impressed with my fish dinner. The shrimp cocktail was drenched in Thousand Island dressing and the grilled pieces of fish were dry. They say that Dalmatian fish is much better than Italian fish for the water here has a rocky clear bottom while Italy's bottom is mud. We did have some great fish in Venice and have been eating great food dishes on the ship so I guess one disappointing meal is okay.

Wednesday, September 22, 2004. Was I stiff and sore this morning! So many miles of walking and so many steps to climb. My mind is willing but my body shrieks out protests!

We were underway when I got up, headed for Dubrovnik. The scenery is beautiful. Undeveloped rocky wooded shores in every direction. I was working on my computer and missed it, but the ship almost hit a low hanging electrical wire, which was not marked with a ball. Luckily we stop on a dime. As Scotti said, "My guardian angel was at work this morning." It would not be a trip without my usual close call of something.

The ship anchored in a small cove and some went swimming. By 11 we had tied up in the main harbor of Dubrovnik. We were bused to the main gate and had a walking tour of this medieval city.

The earliest settlement was in the first part of the seventh century when refugees came from nearby Epidaurum. They built a town on the island of Laus. Slavs built a town nearby calling it Dubrovnik whose name implies there were oak trees here. Originally a small canal separated the two towns. This was filled in during the 12th century and the space is now the main street called Strada. The town was then fortified by the massive stonewalls which protected them from the invasions of the Arabs, Macedonians, Serbs, Venetians etc. The Republic of Dubrovnik stood unconquered until 1809, when Napoleon finally conquered the town and abolished the Republic. Renaissance architecture is seen in the palaces and churches within the city. The houses are

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interesting for the ground floor was shops, the second floor was the living quarters and the kitchen was on the third floor. Food was hoisted up from the street. Having the kitchen on top was partly because of the threat of fire and also because of the heat it generated.

We toured an interesting monastery dedicated to St Blaise, the patron saint of the city, who is the Saint of Sore Throats, because he was able to remove a bone from the throat of a child who was choking. Off its beautiful cloister was an ancient pharmacy, one of the three oldest in Europe. Here the monks made healing potions from herbs. You can still buy some of these today. We toured the museum and then viewed the old fountain, which used to be covered by a roof of marble, now brick. People were filling their water bottles and drinking from the spouts.

At the end of the Strada, by the ancient harbor, was the palace of government. In one room we saw the ancient keys, which locked the gates each night. No one except the residents was allowed to stay overnight in the town. More than that, people were quarantined for 40 days before they could enter. The quarantine kept Dubrovnik free of the plague and other diseases.

We returned to the man gate, outside of which we had a delicious lunch on the terrace of the Nautilus restaurant. A breeze kept us cool under the awning, which had a view of the walls of the city.

Then we were free to explore on our own. We found a beautiful necklace of coral and filigreed gold beads for Scotti. The gold beads are a symbol of Dubrovnik. I bought some matching earrings for myself for her to inherit! I could not make the ATM machine give me enough money to pay for them and had to pay a premium to use my Visa card.

We window shopped along one of the parallel roads to the Strada and walked out to admire the old harbor and lighthouse. Then Scotti left me to walk the ramparts and I slowly made my way back to the city gate. Sat and people-watched for a while. Scotti caught up with me and we bought ice-cream cones and caught the bus back to the ship at 6:30.

Panos had prepared a Greek buffet for us with everything from octopus to olives. It was delicious. Andres had a movie to show in the evening but I went to bed. My foot was cramping most of the night.

I am glad I saw this city 35 years ago for in 1991, the Serbs under Milosevic, bombarded Dubrovnik, almost destroying it. 94 percent of the buildings lost their roofs. Five or six wonderful old buildings were burned completely. There was damage everywhere. Almost everything has been repaired, but the feel of the city is different. Perhaps it is the red tile roofs (the old ones are more reddish brown). The concrete repairs don't exactly match the original stones. However, the people look forward, not backward, and are carrying on.

Thursday, September 24. Got up early to see us leave Dubrovnik. Its massive walls look formidable to approaching ships! Anchored nearby was "The World". This is a ship where you can buy an apartment and spend your life going around the world. It is all very probably elegant and expensive.

Andres briefed us on Montenegro. It is hard for him to go to Serbian lands. In the 1970s an earthquake caused much damage in Montenegro. The people of Dubrovnik raised money and sent relief to Montenegro. Andres himself gave 1/2 of his salary. It is hard for him to understand how they could come back less than 20 years later and destroy the beautiful city he loves so much. A truce now exists but the people still worry about the Serbs.

The approach to Kotor starts with a beautiful bay with high mountains all around. Montenegro means black mountains. There are two interesting islands: Our Lady of the Rocks and St George. Both are man made. Our Lady has a perky church on it. St George was built on a base of the wrecks of the Turkish fleet when they lost their battle. The island is now a cemetery and is covered with cypress trees.



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At one point chains used to be strung across the water to stop ships from invading. The bay narrows into a beautiful fjord. Unlike the glacial fjords of the north, Tectonic plate movement formed this fjord. Way at the head of the fjord lies Kotor. Kotor's walls snake up the mountain behind it to a fort at the top. Only a low wall faces the water, which originally came right up to the gate. We were taken on a walk through the small town, which seems to have an open square every two blocks. In the main square one side along the wall is where the old armory was. There is an old clock tower and in front of it is an unusual pillory. The cathedral is interesting since it was destroyed in the earthquake. It has been rebuilt to a modern plan, incorporating parts of the original church. We also saw an old orthodox church but did not enter it.

The walk only took an hour and Scotti and I then went in search of pistachio ice cream. Just as in Dubrovnik, the only place with pistachio was closed! I settled for chocolate chip.

Back on board, Panos treated us to a wonderful Greek dinner. As usual he inveigled us into eating desert. I must have gained five pounds on this trip!

Friday, September 24. We left Kotor in the middle of the night and at 3:30 AM as we got back into the Adriatic we found gale force winds. The ship rocked and rolled. Some people didn't appear at breakfast. The boat was pitching so much it was almost dangerous to walk about. Our speed was slowed to 7 knots. At last they announced that we would have to cancel the Albanian stop. So it is like the Cape Verde Islands: I have seen Albania twice, but never been there! The coast is high mountains that drop right into the sea. A lot of the shore has modern military fortifications. Andres found a cove to anchor if we wanted to swim. Along came a coast guard boat and there was discussion. All the time we swam, a boat patrolled watching us. Ewen swam to shore and actually climbed up on one of the military structures while we all held our breath. He reported the door led to a tunnel but he didn't go in!

And so we continued down the fortified coast. By dinner the wind had dropped so we had our farewell dinner on deck. Panos outdid himself with hors d'oeuvres and much wine. We said our farewells and went to bed about 10, which was just as we were docking at Corfu.

Saturday, September 25, 2004. We got up at 6:00 AM and caught a cab to the airport. Scotti rode 1st class, while I was back in coach! In Athens I was part of the wheelchair brigade so we waved farewell. They brought a platform up to the door where they normally load the food. We were seated in wheelchairs, lowered to ground level, and then driven into the airport. There a man pushed me a long way until I finally was loaded into yet a moveable wheelchair carrier. I was the last person on the plane to Rome! It was so complicated I would never have made it on my own.