



### Apologies

Sorry for the delay in updating everyone this time around, and a correspondingly longer entry, however hopefully the reasons will become clear below.

Following Slovenia we headed into Croatia, first stop Zadar, about 2 hours North of Split. The highlight of Zadar for us was the sea organ: Some clever architect and musician has installed a number of organ pipes in the sea wall, mounted to respond to the bellows effect of the waves. The sound is mesmerising and quite calming, echoing the sea at the time, however the change in pitch during stormy seas must have quite a different effect.

We spent the remainder of our time just South of Zadar: time spent by me learning to dive so I might be a better companion for Ruth who is already an accomplished diver. There we also met a number of diving characters from Croatia and across Europe. Although we have had a lot of friendly encounters on our trip so far these were the first friends we have made and we were sorry to head off again. Many thanks to all for your company and hospitality.

While at Zadar we found time to make side trips to Nin, a stunning coastal town and roman settlement which we did rough justice to in a short walk after dinner, and Plitvic lakes, which are a phenomenal natural wonder of lakes and waterfalls as well as a managed tourist resource on a large scale.

Here we also bumped into our first convoy of fellow overlanders. We have met many more since, and still don't quite know what to make of them, and probably them us. Where we consider ourselves reasonably well prepared for the extent of our adventure, they are usually hardly stepping outside the EU and are doing it with monster vehicles kitted out with roof tents (there is no longer room inside the vehicle to sleep), auxiliary roll bars, countless aerals and usually a substantial winch or snatch rope mounted somewhere near the second spare wheel. I hope this paragraph is not inviting disaster.

Following Zadar we headed to Mostar, which, apart from being our first flavour of The East, has provided both the highlight and the lowlight of our trip so far.

The old town and rebuilt old bridge is both astonishingly beautiful and uplifting as well as agonisingly sad. At every corner there is an entrancing view set against bullet and mortar damage from the war. We were wary of becoming war tourists, in particular when we were already in love with the town and its people, however we were constantly struck by small reminders such as churchyards clogged with gravestones marked with the same year. Particularly affecting was a short, grainy and poorly focused video of the bridge before and during its destruction and subsequent rebuilding. The poor quality of the camerawork heightened our intimacy with the act.

As for the lowlight - we also had our Landyvan home broken into and our office and bathroom ransacked. The thieves made off with Ruth's mobile phone, most bizarrely her toiletries and most unfortunately all of our documentation, which has subsequently cost us a real headache to

get replaced.

This act merited a late night trip to a Bosnian police station - a threatening concrete building on the outskirts of the town centre. We were led upstairs in silence and told to sit on a wooden bench while our police officer was found. He was no more talkative, in particular after Ruth, in her usual way, tried to lighten the mood by accusing him of being the thief: In her defense, he did have an identical mobile phone. Eventually we got off lightly with a smile, a handshake and a letter explaining our loss should any Bosnian-speaking border guard question our lack of documentation.

We spent the following few days driving to and staying in Dubrovnik, an astonishingly beautiful town polished to a white, pearlescent glow by millions of tourist sandals. We appreciated its charms, museums and beaches as well as the opportunity to get our laptop (or rather Windows) fixed, find out why our mobile phone is no longer giving or receiving, as well as a chance to get some missing documentation sent out from the UK.

After a few days we realised that Dubrovnik would bankrupt us no more than a month into our journey so we headed to Korcula.

Korcula is an island a half hour Ferry ride off the Croatian coast just north of Dubrovnik. It is also the name of a town on the island that claims, along with Venice, to be the birthplace of Marco Polo, another famous Silk Road adventurer. As our only experience of Venice on this trip was a mosquito-ridden campsite at the end of an airport runway we are with the people of Korcula on their claim.

I spent much of my time on Korcula enjoying the sun and the snorkeling while Ruth caught a cold. This, along with delayed post, has held us up longer than we expected in Croatia. It has been fun; however we are now in a hurry to get to Turkey if we are to meet the other milestones of the trip. Milestones that were partially set when we applied for our visas months ago and partially by the expected arrival of snow at the Torugart pass from Kyrgyzstan to XinXian in China.

However, before we get to Turkey we have a stop in Macedonia for some hiking and then in Greece, where we are getting new front and rear shocks and springs fitted. The rear springs

## **Ljubljana to Korcula - Croatia**

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and the contacts to make this possible have been provided with immense kindness by Pantelis, of the Landrover Club of Greece, our friend and guardian of Landrover drivers' continuing reputation for assistance in a sticky situation.

So a complicated start to our trip, however, I expect that even Mr Polo had to deal with political hurdles, illness, equipment failure and villains on his travels.

We have realised in updating our web site that we have not explained who we are and what we are up to. An easy oversight when we were only giving the address to friends, however we are now passing it to more people that show only a passing interest. So we have put a short explanation at the top of the page.

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