

Dear Family and Friends,

After visiting Gosport we headed for Oxford to visit Simon and family. On the way we stayed at a lovely B & B in Headley. We had a lovely day in Oxford visiting. We went for a long walk and enjoyed the town. After spending the day with Simon and Liz we headed south to Jonathan and Wendy's. We spent a couple of nights with them and enjoyed the grandkids. We left them for Gatwick Airport where we spent a few hours to sleep. We had to meet the NATO group (there were 14 of us) that we travel with at 3:00 AM to fly to Croatia for a tour. The plane left at 5:00 AM. We arrived in Dubrovnik where the tour company met us with a bus and we visited our first tour stop, Cavetat which was an old walled city right on the point of Croatia. We were walking down the street and met a couple from Suffolk. It was a pleasant surprise. After walking around the town we then were taken to the harbor of Dubrovnik to board the ship. This Ship is a small vessel carrying 42 passengers and about 10 crew. We unpacked and were able to walk around the harbor and went back on board for dinner. We had a large breakfast and the ship sailed. The coastline is beautiful. The Dalmatian coastline dramatic, extending for hundreds of miles, here steep limestone cliffs plunge down to sapphire blue water and the towns are built on the mountainside. Most of the roofs are orange and the houses are cream colored so it looks lovely. Croatia has around 1000 islands, some are very tiny while some are quite large, our ship headed for Mijet, one of the islands which is beautiful. The ship moored in a lovely bay and many of the passengers went swimming from the ship. The ship then moored at the dock. We had a guided tour of the city and then a miles walk through a national park to catch a boat to take us across a beautiful inland lake to a tiny islet with a 12th century Benedictine monastery. The church was lovely. At one point through the different people who ruled Croatia it was closed and made into a hotel. The hotel finally gave the building back to the church. There is a legend that the Greek hero Ulysses went there to contemplate. The ship sailed the next morning to head for another island Hvar. There was another swimming stop at a beautiful area. After docking at the lovely town of Hvar we had a tour of the town. A lot of lavender is grown here and is sold in the shops. Hvar has been inhabited since Neolithic times. The Greeks founded a colony there and during the 14th century the Venetians turned it into a naval base. There were many fortified 16th century buildings to repel pirates and assaults by the Ottoman Army. The ship went to Stari Grad while we had a tour and we were taken to Stari Grad by bus. That was quite a ride. The roads are built on the side of the mountains and it is a scary ride but the views are fantastic. We arrived at the harbor where the boat was moored. We walked around the town and had dinner in a restaurant on the waterfront.

We left Stari Grad the next morning headed for Split. On the way the boat made a swim stop at Brac a remote and unspoiled island. We then headed for Split, capital of Dalmatia. Split is a fairly large city and is famous for a single building, the Emperor Diocletian's huge palace, one of the greatest structures of the Roman Empire. No expense was spared. It had Italian marble and sphinxes from Egypt. It was integrated

into the town with buildings added to it. It was recently used for scenes in the game of thrones. We ate dinner at a local restaurant. Thursday morning we left for Omis which was a stronghold of the formidable Corsairs of Almissa. There is a beautiful church there and it is a lovely walk along the waterfront enjoying the buildings, stopping at restaurants for a drink and just relaxing. Our next stop was the island of Korcula. This island was ruled by the Venetians for 800 years. It is a fortress and inside the fort there is a host of tangled lanes. The harbor was a major shelter for the Venetian fleet. It is famous for its artistic and musical traditions as well as its architectural gems. It has a beautiful church and a very old small church. It is the birthplace of Marco Polo. His house can still be visited. Our last tour was Dubrovnik, the largest city and capital of Croatia. The old part is another fortress. It is quite large and very interesting. You can climb up a long flight of stairs and walk around the wall of the fort.. The main avenue is paved with marble. There are monasteries, beautifully decorated churches and civic buildings dating from the 14th century. The fort is built up the side of the mountain. People still live inside and the little lanes go up the side of the hill. I would not like to live there as it is quite a walk for those that live there. There were a couple of weddings while we were there.

When the ships moored in the harbor, they moored side by side and when you go off the ship and board you walk across their ships to get to you own. One time we had to walk across 7 ships to get to ours. One time there were 3 and one time we were the 1st ship. Our ship was named the MV Corona.

Sunday morning we had to get to get on the bus to go to the airport. I wish the trip had lasted longer. It is such a beautiful place. I would not want to live there as the houses are built on the side of the mountain and you have to walk up and down to your house unless you are lucky enough to find one low down. The houses built high up near the road going along the mountain side have parking places built just off the road and the owners can park and walk down to their houses.

Love to all

Shirley