

“It’s a Right Royale Flush, Montenegro or Bust”

Welcome to our 2019 trip to Montenegro, where Casino Royale was set, although it was not actually filmed there.

The trip was originally planned to end in Croatia but as we will have gone that far it seems a shame not to take a short trip over the border into Montenegro, it is supposed to be beautiful and we can add it to the list of places visited. If you have read any of our other trips you will know that our planning could be described as loose and this trip is no different in fact it may be a bit more flexible than usual, it’s a bit like this, head to Dover, ferry to France and then through France to Switzerland, into Italy, a quick trip through Slovenia into Croatia and at the end of our outbound journey a visit to Montenegro. The return trip is slightly different and will take us back into Slovenia, through Austria and Germany. We do have a rough plan of where we want to visit on route, but as for booking any sites to stay at, we will deal with that on our travels, this gives us the flexibility of being able to stay longer at places we like and move on from the ones that do not float our boat. I appreciate that this approach to travel may not be to everyone’s liking but trust us, after you have done it a couple of times you get the hang of it and it also adds a little bit of extra excitement to the trip. Gloria has been serviced ready for the trip and has also been emptied of the stuff that you take with you on various trips and then leave in the van because they will be useful one day, you know the stuff, enough dishes and cutlery for eight, a ton of tinned food, even though they do sell food in Europe, four chairs, 60 pegs for the awning which your not taking, and you only needed 20 anyway, I can’t believe that we, well probably me has put all this stuff in to Gloria. Next question is do we take bikes or do we take Sonic (our scooter), I think we will take bikes as they are lighter than lugging Sonic around for thousands of miles and when we took him to Italy we only used him once. There are some boring pre departure things that do need doing, I will list them but I am sure you know what they are, Insurance Green Card, European breakdown and recovery, dig out original V5c and Mot to take with us, check bulb kit, first aid kit, Hi Vis jackets, headlamp converters and breathalysers, update SAT NAV, check that we have up to date maps and apps for directions and site locations then we need to get some currency for the trip, load some cash onto the Monzo card and check PIN for Monzo and the Halifax Credit Card that we only use for travel as it has no conversion charges applied. We also need to check out things that will happen at home while we are are away, such as car insurance, mot, house insurance and any other items that may need dealing with while we are away.

Day 1 4th June 2019

As I mentioned at the beginning today is really day one of the trip, yesterday we made the trip from St Neots to Dover, well actually a Caravan and Motorhome club CL site called Newsole Cottage which is about 4 miles from the ferry port. When I say site it's more of a field with water, bins and a chemical point, but what do you want for £6 a night. Yes we know that you can park up on the quayside at Dover however this site is more secluded and therefore we feel a safer option which is only minutes away from the ferry port. We had an early start this morning as we were to catch the 4.20am P&O ferry so needed to be there at 3.20am, why catch the early ferry, well simple really it was the cheapest £53 for a 6.5mt Motorhome not bad at all, plus it is very quiet and very nearly empty, so no squeezing Gloria into tight spaces and also plenty of available seating wherever you fancy, in fact it's that empty we leave ten minutes early as everyone was on board.

It's a 370 mile trip from Calais to Dijon which is a good 6 to 7 hour drive and as we were up early we will need a few rest stops on the way just to be safe. There is not a lot to report about the drive other than we chose the toll road route as it is quicker and basically easier, the total toll costs were €63 which isn't bad for over 300 miles. Barb had used a new app she found called Search for Sites and cost a mere £5 a year to find a campsite near the centre of Dijon, we arrived in Dijon at around 3pm and Sylvia (satnav) found the campsite with ease, it is about a 2km walk into the town centre. We had emailed them earlier in the day to book a pitch, but I was not expecting a reply, as my previous experiences told me that the French aren't that good at responding quickly to emails. Anyway it didn't matter as they had space and even though the site has full amenities, well minus toilet seats, (what is it with the French and toilet seats or lack of them) it was only €16 per night including electricity which surprisingly used a proper blue connector. Gloria is set up, level (enough) and plugged in, in no time at all, then it's time for a walk into town.

The walk into town is by the side of the river which at the moment is more of a wide stream, it is evident that it has been much deeper and faster flowing as the concrete banks are a least 6 feet tall, there are disused sluice gates and also poles hanging from ropes which have been used at white water canoe gates, now however it is barely a foot deep and looking a bit sad for itself. The town itself had some beautiful architecture although this has been spoiled by the various glaring high street stall signs and Big M signs. It was hot when left Gloria and it felt like it got hotter although that may have been the 6 miles we had walked by the time we returned, I have to admit we did stop for a quick libation before returning to the site but honestly it was just the one.

We did have another one while we sat outside Gloria on a beautiful warm evening watching the setting sun, tomorrow we will head into Switzerland and across the Alps into Italy and yes we will be going over the Alps and not going through a tunnel. This should make for a more exciting blog and hopefully give us some photographic opportunities that tunnels just don't give, I haven't told Gloria yet and I hope it doesn't come as too much of a surprise for her, it's a fair old trek to Milan but we will see where we get to tomorrow. That's all folks more tomorrow, hopefully a bit more interesting.

Day 2 5th June

We awoke to a beautiful morning and after having our breakfast alfresco we readied ourselves for departure, however the planning for today went right out of the window as we did not leave Dijon until 12.30pm. Yesterday's plan was to get to Milan at some time, but due to our late departure time this was never going to happen. After filling Gloria's fuel tank at the Intermarche we set off, but before I continue with today's journey I just want to mention a couple of things that should have said yesterday, these are really travel tips, if you are heading on this route through France or I suspect any route that doesn't take you near Luxembourg, fill up with fuel before you leave Dover, as the fuel costs on the French motorways will make your eyes water, we saw it for €1.71 per litre for diesel and €1.89 for petrol, eek. Second tip get yourself a motorway payment tag, I procrastinated about getting one until it was too late to order one, with hindsight I should have got one, it just makes it easier, hindsight hey there's a lot of things that I would or would not have done with the benefit of that hindsight lark.

Anyway back to today we head out of Dijon which takes for ages and eventually join the motorway system and head for Switzerland, the motorway is nothing like our beloved M6, as there are no queues and very little traffic, there is not a great deal to report regarding the trip through France other than it was extremely hot and required Gloria's air con to be on permanently to keep us cool. Last time we traveled into Switzerland we just whizzed across the border, this time they filtered everyone off and checked if we had a Vignette which is a sticker that is placed on your windscreen and covers you to drive on their motorway system, well last time we were here which is only a couple of years ago we didn't have one in fact we didn't even know that they had them in Switzerland, we did know that Austria used them but as we aren't travelling through Austria that did not matter. Anyway €40 later we'll €40 and a 2 Swiss franc refund, Gloria is proudly displaying her vignette in the top left corner of her windscreen, it is valid for twelve months so if you are coming to Switzerland let me know.

The drive through Switzerland's scenery is stunning and you can see the snow covered Alps getting closer and closer as you rack up the kilometres, we had planned to travel over the St Bernard pass but it is closed, so we rerouted and the idea was to go over the St Gotthard pass and that plan was going great until some idiot was convinced that the turn off for the road to the pass was much further away, subsequently missing the turn off and

ending up in the St Gotthard tunnel instead, well the tunnel is an amazing piece of engineering, tunnelling it's way under the Alps for 17 kilometres. Did I hear you ask which idiot missed the turn off, oh that would have been me of course.

Barb had found a camper van stop over place which is actually on the pass itself, so after exiting the tunnel we turn left and head up the pass albeit in the wrong direction, it is steep and bendy and as we get further up the pass there is a warning sign flashing at us in German, we stop to translate it but it does not google translate into anything meaningful, obviously it's there for a reason but we decide to see how far we can get and if we can get to the stopover location. The road as you can imagine is very steep with lots of U turns as it climbs it's way up the mountain, it's a great road and nothing like the "pass of the cattle" the road to Applecross in Scotland which compared to this is just a track. As we climb the sides of the road are still covered with snow drifts and the weather is closing in, the mist is getting lower and it's starting to rain. We approach the summit at 2100 meters above sea level and the road is closed and so is the camper stopover point. It is now absolutely throwing it down and we are in the middle of an approaching thunder and lightening storm, there is no way we are going back down and we find a suitable parking spot for the night just below the summit at 2090 meters. The storm worsens with flashes of lightening lighting up the sky and the surrounding mountains with crashes of thunder shaking the ground and Gloria followed by a hailstorm that seems to go on for ever. Eventually the storm passes and it's reasonably calm, there is still gusts of wind blowing through the mountains, I am glad we are warm and cosy inside Gloria not out in a tent open to all the elements that the mountain weather has to offer. Tomorrow will see us cross the border into Italy, we are heading to Venice and giving Milan a miss as we have decided that as we have been there before it's a shopping town and we don't want to go shopping, Venice however is simply stunning and it will not matter how many times we visit we would always return, it is just an amazing place, well that's it for today more tomorrow.

Day 3 6th June

It was an extremely windy night with gales blowing through the mountain pass and we are awoken early by what initially feels like a mini earthquake, when we look outside it is actually a line of heavy earth and snow moving equipment, we found out later that there had been an earthquake on the other side of the summit which had blocked the road and the road was closed for about 2km. My hopes of taking some snow capped mountain photographs have gone completely out of the window, as the weather although better than last night is poor to say the least, the mountains are still covered with mist and it's raining well it's actually more of a heavy drizzle but it's wet very wet.

After a coffee and a look around at few things that are up here, a shop that is not open and a couple of hotels we decide to start our decent of the

mountain, as I mentioned yesterday it is a fantastic road with some fantastic bends which would suit a Caterham 7, however we are in Gloria and we are unable to make the most of it. We stop at the cafe which is perched on the outside of a hairpin bend a couple of kilometres from the summit. The cafe as the road, is empty and this is when we found out about the earthquake which had blocked the road and that they were trying to clear it as quickly as possible. The cafe has some fantastic views which in better weather must be sublime and offer fantastic photographic opportunities, but today we did not have the opportunity to see it in all its glory, the owners of the cafe tell us that the road closure had basically stopped their business and were eager for it to be reopened, I imagine that it must get extremely busy when the road is open.

We continue our decent and then join the motorway system, now I did mention about purchasing the Vignette motorway pass when we crossed the border, and after doing some research, well I googled it, I found that the police set up random cameras to catch peeps that have not purchased and displayed the said Vignette. It would appear that our purchase was not a complete waste of time as the next minute there are more flashes going off than in David Bailey's studio. We continue on and cross the border into Italy not far from the southern end of Lake Como. We have decided to give Milan a miss as we have been before and well it's another town with shops, great shops but still shops that we actually wouldn't and couldn't buy anything in. So next stop Venice a few hours further on than Milan, we arrive at the Motorhome stopover site at San Giuliano just outside Venice that we have stayed at on a previous visit at about 4.30pm, it not somewhere that you would want to stay for a fortnight but it is ideal for a couple of days while visiting Venice.

After setting up Gloria and plugging her into the electricity supply, we have a quick freshen up and walk up to catch the bus or tram into Venice it's only one stop on either of them but as the bus comes first so the bus wins and it only costs a couple of Euro. It is a beautiful evening and now that it has cooled down it is a nice temperature to walk around checking out the sites of which there are many. After checking out the hotspots, Rialto Bridge, The Grand Canal, St Marks Square and a couple of others, it's food time, as you can imagine eating in St Marks square is not a cheap affair so it's of the beaten track for us and we find a suitable eatery and plump for sharing a pasta and pizza. Then it's time for a bit more sight seeing, due to the make up of the city with very narrow streets and tall buildings it is very easy to get lost and lost we got. On our way back to the bus / tram terminal we ventured down streets that we didn't know existed and I don't think would have been safe to go down in olden times. We eventually get to the tram station where a chariot tram is waiting we climb aboard and in no time we are at our stop and then after a short walk we are back at the site, but is after 11pm so no time for blog creation and when I check our little stroll had clocked up to be a 6 mile hike. Our plan is to be up and at it early tomorrow before it gets too hot to enjoy Venice during the day.

Day 4 7th June

Barb had been talking to the lady in the reception and has found that we can buy a €20 ticket that will cover us for as many journeys on the public transport system as we can make and this includes the ferries to all of the islands, sounds like good value to me. However before we go anywhere we have a little bit of a problem, one of Gloria's rear tyres is going flat, only at the bottom but flat it is, so it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that it has a puncture. On closer inspection the news is marginally better as the air is leaking out from the tyre valve. After some investigation work I find that there is a major tyre depot less than a kilometre away in fact it is just by the tram stop that we use to get to Venice. As they are open on a Saturday we decide not to go today to get it repaired as it will eat into our sight seeing day, I must be getting into full manana mode, after putting some air into the tyre (we have pump with us), we set off with ticket in hand, when we get to the tram stop I call in at the tyre depot just to make sure that they are open tomorrow and yes they are so it's safe to leave the tyre issue until then.

We catch the next tram and are in the centre by 10am. We catch our first ferry over to the Lido it does stop at other places on the way but we have not been there before, the last bit of the journey is out on the open water not down a canal, as Barb has always fancied going on a cruise this ticked another box for me, if not so with Barb. It is lovely over at the Lido with lots of small restaurants, wide open streets and it is nowhere near as busy as the centre of Venice. After a stroll around we head back to the landing stage to catch our next cruise ship, sorry ferry over to Murano where the famous glass comes from. On the crossing we managed to get seats at the front of the boat, the views are magnificent and the breeze and a little sea spray are most welcome as the sun is shining brightly and it is hot out there. We stroll around the streets at the sides of the canals crossing bridges as we zig zag our way around, obviously there are lots of shops selling Murano glass, some of it costing thousands of Euro but lots of it for as little as 1 Euro, I do wonder in the €1 items are made here in in Murano China or is that just me being sceptical, there are some expensive chandeliers which I have to say do not float my boat but some of the smaller items such as funny shaped sausage dogs do make me smile.

It's time for lunch and after looking at the restaurants in Murano a decision is made that the restaurants at the Lido look more inviting, so yet another cruise ship is boarded for the crossing back there. A suitable eatery is located the pizzas are ordered and very good they are too, after a long leisurely lunch it is time to catch our next cruise ship over to the hustle and

bustle of St Marks square. Busy, you bet it is, there are three real cruise ships in and the streets surrounding the square are rammed packed with people as is the square itself, we head away from this throng of people into the less popular areas of Venice, never the less the architecture of this famous city is still stunning and amazing down these back streets albeit in different ways to the opulence of St Marks. What does amaze me is how some of the buildings are still standing, they lean to the left and right to such degrees it surprises me that the glass in the windows does not crack, some of the buildings look like they are only still standing due to the close proximity to the buildings next to them, they certainly rammed in as many dwellings as possible into a small space.

As is extremely hot and there is very little breeze down these narrow streets we head back towards St Marks to stop off at the Hard Rock Cafe for a sit down and a cooling libation. We do have a bit of a result while we are there as Barb has ordered a Margarita and they serve two different types, the waiter brings over our drinks and as he places them on the table he realises that he has the wrong Margarita, he apologises and moments later returns with the correct one at no charge, two for one, right result. We finish our drinks and after purchasing a pin badge to add to Mr O's collection we head off back into the streets surrounding the square and into the heaving masses. As evening approaches it seems to be getting busier and that means it is time to go and after one last look around the lesser crowded areas we head back to the Grand Canal for one more cruise to the tram station. It is a fair way back to the station from where we are and the ferry is very busy with lots of people getting off and on at each stop along the way, so progress is a tad slow. After a short wait at the station we catch the tram and after a short walk we are back in Gloria, my plan of covering all our travelling distance by boat today has not quite worked out as when I check we have walked over 6 miles.

It is fairly late when we return but we ready Gloria as much as we can for an early departure as we don't know how long or what the outcome will be when we get to the tyre depot tomorrow, so that's it for today and fingers crossed for the morning.

Day 5 8th June

We are up and at the tyre depot by 9am, now it is time to try and explain the problem, I say try as I am afraid to admit that my Italian is very poor to say the least. I have done some preparation using google translate but that

won't help me with the correct pronunciation, I could use google to say it for me but I do think that it is a little rude and should only be used as a last resort, ok here we go. Luckily the gentleman's English is better than my Italian, not much better but better, between us we manage to converse and understand each other. Gloria is driven off, but not before the gentleman gets into Gloria's passenger seat and then realises that there is no steering wheel on that side. I have to admit that I have done the same thing at the garage in my previous life and it does take a second for your brain to react to the lack of a steering wheel, if you have done it you will know what I mean.

I wind Barb up and tell her that is the last we have seen of Gloria and all our possessions and that she will be on a boat to some far off country. While Gloria is in the workshop no one came out to see us with the sharp intake of breath conversation, just the offer of a free coffee, after about an hour Gloria returns and all is well they have replaced both rear tyre valves as the other one had a very slight leak. After a very reasonable €20 we say our thanks and goodbyes and we are on our way, next stop fuel and then onto the supermarket before we get on the motorway. It's Saturday morning and the supermarket is rammed packed with people, usually shopping is not one of my favourite things to do on a Saturday morning or at any time for that matter, but I absolutely love it in Italy the variety and vibrancy of the fruit and vegetables is awesome, it's just so much more interesting than Tesco's (other supermarkets are available), then you move onto the meat and fish counters and they too have wonderful things to purchase, including Scottish Angus tomahawk steaks, wonderful. Then you move to the deli counter again the choice is amazing, no pork pies here, instead there is octopus salads, and things that look amazing even if you don't know what they are, they are that tempting you want to try them. There is one problem however, the queue is massive with a capital M, they operate a ticket system and Barb has a ticket the problem is we have ticket 91 and they are only up to number 41, we wait for a while but everyone in front of us wants to buy a number of items so service is very slow, with regret we pass our ticket to the next person at the machine, they are very grateful as while we have been waiting the queue has grown and the ticket machine has worked its way back round to number 20, we make our way to the tills, pay up and load our provisions into Gloria.

Sylvia is set and we are on our way, it's a 4 hour drive to our destination and includes 3 countries and crossing 2 international borders, I won't bore you with the majority of the drive other than the road is fairly quiet until we get to Trieste where it does get busy. Just before we cross the border into Slovenia we stop and purchase another Vignette as they also use this system of payment to use the motorway system at a cost of €15 for a week, we

could have with one for an hour as it's not long before we are off the motorway. We have travelled over 1300 miles and have joined our first real traffic jam, after about an hour to travel 11 kilometres it transpires that it wasn't a traffic jam, it was a queue for the border crossing into Croatia, passports checked and we are on our way to Pula for our first stop in Croatia. Sylvia (satnav) directs us to the campsite without any fuss as it is an ACSI site and they are all listed in her memory, clever hey, and if you join ACSI you get 10% discount at a lot of the sites. We book in and are told to find an empty pitch and then return to let them know where we have chosen, the site is massive and is on the side of a hill going down to the sea. We drive round looking for a suitable pitch, it is absolutely packed down by the sea so unfortunately although the view is fantastic this is not for us, we travel back up and find a suitable pitch which is surrounded by trees that give some cover from the sun. It's not the most level pitch in the world but it's near enough for two nights, Gloria is plugged to the mains and we are good to go, bit of a travel tip if you plan to come this way in a Motorhome, caravan or camping then bring your longest power lead, in fact bring two as the power points can be a mission away from where you pitch up, oh and some of them use a European two pin plug while others use the standard blue connector, so it is advisable to bring a two pin patch lead which also helps if you get a reversed polarity warning, and if you are planning in stopping in Switzerland they use a different type again, although they do supply them on a deposit basis at the sites we have visited, so much for standardised Europe, top tips over and out.

It is now time to sit out and relax in the evening sun and watch the sunset over the hills while having a little relaxing sundowner, while planning what we are going to do for the next couple of days, this planning did not take long as after the of Venice the plan is to do actually Nowt, Nothing, Nada apart from relax and chill for a day or so. It has been a long day and an early night is beckoning, more tomorrow.

Day 6 9th June

Now I did warn you that our plan for today was to do nothing and that's exactly what we did, well nearly nothing, so today's blog is not going to be that long. Before I start on our days activities I just want to share a top travel tip with you, if you are heading to a country that has mosquitoes, this

is the stuff to buy, AVON Skin so Soft dry oil spray, it's actually not supposed to be a mosquito repellent but it works a treat, just google it and see. When I say it works a treat it does provided that you actually apply it which I didn't last night while we were sitting outside and I have been bitten all over, well nearly all over and unfortunately only by mosquitoes, Doh!

We have a late leisurely alfresco breakfast served on our terrace, sometimes I do get a bit carried away, it was actually on the grass, what there is of it outside Gloria. It's then time to catch up with the blog accompanied by a cafetière of coffee thanks to Andrea, while sitting outside Gloria in the shade. Don't think that I mentioned it but the weather is glorious and we are pleased to be parked under the trees for some shade as the sun blazes down. The rest of the day is spent chatting, relaxing and reading, it's not until about 6pm until we actually decide to get off our bottoms and go for a walk, we stroll down to the sea, with its inviting crystal clear water then we walk into the local town about a mile away but all uphill, there are a few shops and bars and we choose a suitable bar for an aperitif before heading back for our evening meal.

We dine alfresco again, it's the only way to dine don't you know, after ensuring to apply the Avon stuff, then it's time to write up the blog and then relax a bit more, it's very tiring this doing nowt lark you know. We are moving on tomorrow and it should be a two or three hour drive to a spot further down the coast, we will try to do a bit more tomorrow and make things a bit more interesting for you, until then goodnight.

Day 7 10th June

We are awake early this morning and I have strolled to the bakery which just outside the campground with the expectation of getting some pastries, pan au chocolate or even a couple of croissants, well no such luck the majority of options were savoury and then there were two doughnut type thingies with marmalade or vanilla filling, ok let's try them. A cafetière and an Earl grey are taken on to our terrace to accompany the doughnutty type thingies, Barb is not too keen about the thingy within the marmalade type filling but hey when in Rome, well Croatia actually.

Gloria is made ready for departure and before long we head for the reception to pay our dues and collect our Passports after handing over some Croatian donk we retrieve our passports and are on our way to Krk which is about 2 to 3 hours away, we stop at the first petrol station to purchase some oil for Gloria, not sure if you know but these later engines that run at high pressure, and use oil that has the viscosity that is close to water, can use up to a litre per thousand miles, yes I did bring some with me and have topped up Glo's power unit but we need some in reserve if it is required, ok so next time bring more with us. While I am doing this Barb pops into the attached supermarket for some fresh milk and stuff. Then we are on our way the road travels through the countryside side and the route offers us some spectacular views, unfortunately there are no stopping places to make the

most of these photographic opportunities. I will see if I can get some video footage from Gloria's dash cam. Krk is an island and we arrive at the toll bridge hand over some donk and before long we are on the island. We arrive at our chosen campsite to find a queue of approximately 10 vans waiting to enter, Barb strolls down to the reception and is told that they are fully booked all week and so are the other two sites are also fully booked. We try a couple of others and there is no room at the inn. We do find a campervan stop over in the middle of the town and although the facilities are good, it is not the ideal place to spend a couple of days. We head into the supermarket cafe to regroup and check out our options, after a little investigation I find a site which is only a couple of minutes away, a quick phone call to them confirms that they have space and we are booked in, relax and breath easy.

We are there within twenty minutes, well we had to drink our coffee, Barb is shown around the site on a buggy and chooses a spot with views over the town, obviously the pitches overlooking the sea are well booked up. It is a great site with fantastic facilities, swimming pool, restaurant and all the other usual stuff which are also immaculate. Our pitch is brand new so it does lack the benefit of the ageing olive trees for shade that the older parts of the site have, but is level well apart from a minor ramp requirement on one of Gloria's front wheels so it's not long before Glo is plumbed in, connected to the electricity supply and her awning is wound out to give us protection from the blazing sun, did I mention that it's hot, I think I might have done and it has reached 34° today. We sit out under Gloria's awning and take pleasure in what there is of a cooling breeze. Its not long before it's time for some more alfresco dining and our meal is accompanied by a cheeky little Chardonnay that I purchased just outside Venice. When. Say cheeky that may be doing this bottle a large favour, mind you what can you expect from a 1.5lt bottle that cost €3.19 so not three quid, well you get what you expect, it is a tad rough to say the least. We sit and watch the setting sun and after some blog creation it's time to say goodnight, we may go mad and even do something tomorrow but until then that's it.

Day 8 11th June

We have decided to walk into town this morning and head off at about 9.30, we stop at reception and Barb pops in to ask for directions, to be fair we didn't really need then as you just follow the road down the hill to the bottom and there is the town and the harbour. What Barb does find out is

that there is a bus that comes to the site and goes into town, slight problem though it only runs every hour and we have just missed it, walk it is then we head off down the hill and it's not long before we are at the harbour. There is a market so we have a look unfortunately it is full of the usual Chinese tat with I heart Croatia on it. We continue on into the narrow streets of the old town, there are some interesting medieval buildings but these are numbered by more shops selling Chinese tat. We stop off for a coffee and have obviously chosen the preferred destination for ladies that lunch, luckily the price of the coffee did not match their designer outfits. We continue around the town but to be honest it is just too hot to walk around in the mid day sun, mad dogs and Englishmen lark. So we retreat to the shade of a locals bar for a cooling libation, now it is our plan to catch the bus back to the site rather than climbing the hill which is like the north face of the Eiger, ok that's a bit of an exaggeration but it is steep. Now our planning had not actually got past 2pm other than we knew that the bus leaves the harbour at 15 minutes past the hour, I know you can sense that there is a but coming on. You really are far too astute as there is indeed a but and the but is that the bus stops running from 1.15pm to 5.15pm now that's some lunch hour for the driver, what the heck is that all about. Guess what that means, yes correct we get the ropes out and head for the summit. We made slower process going back up the hill than we did coming down due to gravity and also the heat, did I mention that it's hot.

We arrive back at Gloria, amazingly without the need for oxygen but we do need to go to the pool for a swim, we get to the pool and we are the only ones there, but at 3.30 it's like the flood gates have been opened and it ends up being standing room only as albeit that there are two pools they could hardly be described as Olympic sized in that they about as long as an Olympic pool is wide, however it is very refreshing. The senior citizens that now occupy the pool must be very hard of hearing as every conversation is made at the top of their voices, time to leave well that is if we can move in the pool to get out. It is also time to retrieve our clothes that we put into the washing machine about an hour earlier at the cost of just over three quid, pretty good value, when we get back to Gloria with our washing I erect a washing line on the awning on which to allow the clothes to dry, it a good job we are not on a Caravan club site as this is not allowed, I must admit I have forgotten which page of the rule book that this is mentioned on, but it is in there somewhere.

I head down to the shop to get some milk to replace the bottle of yogurt we purchased yesterday instead of milk by mistake, the bottles are very similar and my Croatian is not good, mind you my English isn't up to much either. On route I stop for a chat with another British couple, it turns out that they have been in Croatia for just over 5 weeks, have been down to Dubrovnik and are now making their way back to the UK. The conversation goes on and decide that we will continue it later as Barb will think or hope that I have been abducted by aliens and if I don't get the milk into a fridge soon it will go off in the heat. After a bit of a sit and a read, it is time for a shower and change as we are going to try the restaurant on the campsite oh and we

also have a free glass of wine to sample. When we get to the restaurant my new found friends are already there and are sampling a glass of white wine, the owners of the site have a vineyard and produce the wine themselves. We sit and join them and after introductions the conversation starts with reviews of each other's trips, it is interesting talking to other people and gleaming tips and information from each other. This couple came a different route to us and came through Austria here is a must know travel trip if you are driving through Austria, dash cams are a big big no no, and if you have one you should remove it from your windscreen. In fact they are illegal in a number of European countries, if you Google it you can get a list of them, so if you are travelling to Europe check it out before you leave the UK. Another couple have joined us and as you are a bright bunch I am sure you know what is coming next, and yes you would be correct the conversation continues and the wine continues to flow and flow a bit more, hence no blog this evening, no more to be said, other than the owners of the site have arranged a wine tasting at 4pm tomorrow, I have feeling that could be dangerous if we decide to stay another night.

Day 9 12th June

We are awakened early by trucks and diggers making their way past Gloria, now this is not ideal as my head is a little muzzy this morning, coffee is required while we find out what all the noise is about. It turns out they are making repairs to some of the shale roadways on the site where cars or Le Camping Cars have dug up the road. We do some planning checking out the various routes towards Dubrovnik which is still a fair way away, our first decision is that we are going to leave today and get down the road a bit, much as it heaves us not to be able to make tonight's wine tasting. We have two options the shorter option is the coast road and the second is to head inland and use the main road which is longer in distance but about the same in time. As we haven't done much of the coast roads yet, the coast road it is, now it is under 140k to our sort of planned destination, however Sylvia is telling us that it is going to take nearly 4 hours and that gives us an estimated average speed of 35kph, which is slow even by Gloria's average speed. We ready Gloria for travel and head off for reception just prior to the 12 o'clock check out time, on the way to the reception we stop and say farewell to your new travel friends, we wish them safe travels and after a hug and a kiss we are off to pay for our stay, arb goes to settle up and the bill is a very reasonable 336 Croatian donk, sorry Kuna. As we are not going the fastest but longest route Sylvia gets her knickers in a bit of a twist and wants us to go some daft route off the island, after checking on iPhones and a good old proper map we decide that she must have been at the wine at the site and we duly take no notice of her, until we cross the bridge to the mainland at which time she gets herself sorted out and has us going in the correct direction.

The coast road clings to the mountain on our left with the Adriatic Sea on our right, good job as otherwise we would be going in the wrong direction, the sun shimmers on the Adriatic and the sea shows us some of its beautiful

emerald green and deep blues as the level of the sea changes. The views are stunning with steep rocky mountainside leading down to the sea separated by the coast road that has been inserted by man and interrupts the natural flow of the land. At places where the mountains were not passable the road has been built out over the sea to make a bend around the mountains, at others tunnels have been built through the mountains, but mainly the road follows the path of the mountains left and right, up and down. For the first hour or probably less it is interesting, however after that it becomes a tad tedious lugging Gloria's 3.5 ton around bends, up and down steep hills with not a straight bit of road in sight, it is also playing havoc with Gloria's average fuel consumption which up to now had been a fairly presentable 29.8mpg, I fear that today's drive will destroy this. After over four hours we reach an Autocamp stopover site which is situated next to the Adriatic. Barb gets out to check that they have room for Gloria and yes they do at 120 donk a night, which is not that expensive however it is basic to say the least a basic is being kind. This makes the site we were at previously extremely good value at 166 donk sorry Kuna per night.

After our alfresco evening meal we stroll hand in hand along the shore of the Adriatic Sea watching the setting sun, after a paddle in the cooling sea we head back to Gloria to relax and recover from a tiring day on the road, I start to catch up with the blog, but due to it being a tiring day blog creation is being postponed and it's time for sleeps.

Day 10 13th June

Today's planned route is a much shorter one in fact it is under 50 kilometres as we are heading to a site just past Zadar, we do intend to call into Zadar for a look around as the city before we head to a campsite. The city is the oldest continuously inhabited Croatian City and the fifth largest city in Croatia, thanks Wikipedia. I mentioned that this site is fairly basic and the shower arrangements are putting Barb off slightly, let me explain the washrooms although being separate have no main entrance door which does seem to be the norm for the country and possibly a lot of Europe, however the shower cubicle is only separated from the rest of the washroom area by a shower curtain and has no proper door. As for me I head off for a shower and think to hell with it, when I return I persuade Barb that it is safe to use the shower and even offer to stand guard outside the curtain if that is what is required. Barb heads off for the showers without her body guard and returns in no time without any problems.

After coffee, I have to say that now that I have my own individual cafetière my morning coffee is much more enjoyable, especially when you can sit outside Gloria taking in the sun before it becomes too hot to sit in. It is not long before Gloria is ready for departure and we are off to Zadar, this time the coast road can swivel and we head for the main toll road, blow the expense, the drive is much easier than yesterday though you don't benefit from the views that you get on the coast road. Oh and you do have to pay

the toll at a massive 16 Kuna (€2.40) it is not long before we are in Zadar but before we enter the centre of the City we need to replenish Gloria's go go tank with diesel and we also need to do a bit of food shopping. These tasks are completed in quick succession and then we are off into the centre to find a suitable parking place for Gloria and this is found overlooking some beautiful boats, there's that boat envy again, at the marina. I eventually figure out how to pay at the 12 donk for two hours, which is considerably more reasonable than Liverpool One, and then we are on our way into the old part of the city, we stroll around taking in the sights and the architecture as well as the Roman ruins, oh and the shops. We obviously stop on route for a coffee and then it's time to walk back to Gloria to continue our journey.

There are a number of Autocamp stopovers within a close proximity and we arrive at the first one in about three quarters of an hour as getting out of the city was a bit of a chore, although there appears to be spaces available at the site there is no one at the reception and after waiting for a while we give up and move on to the next one. Again the reception although open is completely devoid of people, eventually a guys arrives and says that he has the choice of two pitches, both of which had two sorry three distinct problems, they were small, had low overhanging branches and they are both on a 45° incline, after a couple of attempts at getting Gloria into both of the spaces with the guidance of a person that could not thread a needle and also realising that there would be now way of getting Gloria level even if I could navigate under the branches I tell Barb to get in and I tell the guy that we are not staying and off we go. A couple of hundred metres down the road we arrive at Autocamp Rio overlooking the Adriatic, we are shown to a great pitch by very friendly staff, and in no time at all Gloria is levelled, plugged into the mains supply, awning is rolled out and that's it job done.

I know that I keep going on about it but it's hot and we follow the shade from Gloria as the sun heads over to the west, when it starts to cool down we head off down to the sea for a swim, there is a jetty and the water is not really deep enough to jump into safely, so we use the ladder provided however progress down the ladder is slow as the sea is a tad cold, eventually we are in and after a brief swim we are out again, it is a bit chilly in there. We return to Gloria and then to the showers, I have to say that the amenities at this site are first class and immaculate, even if Barb does find the gents rather than the ladies.

Then it's time for some food a bit of a chill out, finally catch up with the blog, pay the window cleaner, while Barb has multiple WhatsApp conversations regarding her trip to Portugal next year with Sharon and crew. That's about it for today, hopefully more tomorrow.

Day 11 14th June

We have two options this morning which we discuss while having coffee and tea on our terrace, while Gloria's awning shades us from the morning sun, the choices up for discussion are do we stay here for a couple of days or do we move on further down the coast to Split. There are pros and cons for both options, we stay and have a chill out and a rest from travelling or we get to Split a couple of days earlier and closer to our end destination. Decisions decisions, the major contributing factor is that it is Friday and if we travel to Split today we will be there for the weekend, and as it is still the school holidays we imagine that the city will be packed. Ok decision made we are staying put at Autocamp Rio until Monday morning and Barb has found a site just south of Split, from which we can catch a bus into the city, that sounds like a plan.

Now what shall we do to today, we had talked about going for a bike ride, however and please forgive me if you are suffering from the cold and rain at home, but here it is just too hot for a bike ride, in fact it's too hot to walk anywhere in the heat of the mid day sun. The afternoon is spent reading, relaxing and chasing the shade as the sun moves across the sky and it is not until early evening that we ready ourselves for a walk to the local town to have a look around. Showered and refreshed we head off into the unknown, as when arrived we did not take much attention of our surroundings and have absolutely no idea how far away the town is or in fact if there is one. We did try to find the site owner, who every time we see him tells us in broken English that "you'll never walk alone" and Klopp, Klopp, Klopp, but he nowhere to be found. We set off along the road which has houses and holiday apartments on both sides after a short time we find a restaurant which is situated between the houses and then bizarrely a cash machine which is in someone's back garden, I will get a photograph tomorrow. After another 10 minutes we arrive in the town which is small and compact and overlooks the Adriatic, we stroll around there are a number of seaside type shops selling hats, swimming masks and such like. These intermingle with restaurants, bars and Gelato bars, they are well into their ice cream and the Gelato stalls outnumber most other things. The town centre s like the Autocamp as in, we are the only Brits in the village, we walk seafront and check out the boats bobbing around in the Adriatic, most of them are small crafts and there is no boat envy to be found here apart from one yacht which is ok but not in the wow sharp intake of breath category.

Surprisingly we do check out a couple of the bars, obviously just for the sake of reporting our findings, most of them are fairly quiet and it is nice to be able to sit with a refreshing drink and watch the sun set to our right, over the Adriatic. The prices are reasonable, with a large beer costing around 18 Kuna just over two of our British pounds, Coke is actually more expensive than the beer, to give you an idea after checking out a couple of menus a pizza is about 40 Kuna about a fiver so not expensive, cost wise the restaurants all charge around the same price, funny how that happens. After a bit more of a walk along the promenade we head off back to Gloria. After a snack and a chat it is time to get some sleep, after all its has been a tiring day.

Day 12 15th June

Today followed much the same path as yesterday although the sun is not able to fight its way through the clouds until the afternoon, but hey when Mr Sun finally wins the battle with the clouds, he comes out all guns blazing and spreads the intense heat from his fiery rays, time for shade me thinks. We do some route planning and check out the sites to see in Split, once you open Pandora's Box the internet, and start checking for things to do and places to visit you could be there all day as Google comes up with a million and one pages suggestions. We try and limit our searches to a couple of sites, first choice is the town, city, country's own website, Lonely Planet and Trip Advisor although trip advisor is trying to sell you various tours, it does give you an idea of the most popular attractions. As Split is one of the filming locations for "Game of Thrones" there are some must see places to have your photograph taken if you are a fan. With this information we should be able to find our way to the top tourist spots and hopefully we will find some that are not full of tourists, another good way that we have used to see the top spots is to join one of the walking tours, the guides are usually students earning some extra money and the one we have done we have found interesting, informative and a bit of a laugh as well, they are also usually reasonably priced.

We also want to want to visit Krka National Park which is about half way between our current location and Split, we are unsure whether to go there on the way to Split or on our return journey, just to keep you in suspense that decision will be made on Monday morning. Also I need to take some proper photographs to add to the holiday snapshots taken so far, that may give you a clue although not much of one. The rest of the afternoon is spent reading intermingled with a bit more planning relating to the National Park and how to get there, as there are three routes from our current location and two from Split, and include a toll route or a none toll route in both directions. After closer inspection of the roads available we will be using the toll road whichever direction we are travelling.

By late afternoon early evening we ready ourselves for a walk into town on route I take a picture of the randomly placed cash machine which I am afraid to say if it was in the UK I am sure it would be gone. We are both fairly hungry as we haven't really eaten much for 24hrs, after an aperitif overlooking the sea it is time to choose a restaurant, we have already established that the prices are very similar, as it is reasonably early there are not many diners in any of the restaurants as yet so we can not use the that's busy it must be good method, none of them have a queues outside unlike the Casa Italia in Liverpool, which has just won the best Best Restaurant in Liverpool Award for 2019, we wish the owners and all the staff our heartfelt Congratulations, it is a fantastic place that we have frequented since it's opening and we recommend for its great food and value for money. Sorry I got a bit carried away that was starting to be like an advertisement, we make our choice of restaurant and peruse the menu,

we decide on main courses but I fancy having Calamari as a starter however this is not an option but it is available as a main course. We place our order and I ask the waiter if we can have the Calamari as a starter, he looks a bit confused but after a minute says yes that's ok, to be honest we are not convinced. Our concerns were confirmed when a large plate of Calamari and Pom frites arrive, obviously my request had got lost in translation oh well never mind, it's a good job we are sharing and a tad hungry. The Calamari was excellent as was the main course that followed, after paying our bill we go for a stroll along the promenade, it's then time to sample the Croatian Gelato, the options are a choice of various massive knickerbocker glory's or a humble cone, the cone it is, but they turn out to be massive, a lot more reasonable than the ones in Italy and just as good, I hope that there are no Italians reading this.

It is then time to make the return journey to Gloria, even though the sun has set in spectacular style, it is still extremely warm, when we get back we sit outside on our terrace making the most of the breeze coming off the sea. Time marches on and it is soon time to retire and get some shut eye as obviously it has been an extremely tiring day. More tomorrow, if you are lucky.

Day 13 16th June

Ok it's Sunday so it's a day of rest, which means that today followed much the same route as the last couple of days, so I need to fill a bit of today's information with some information regarding the Autocamp Rio, Barb has been and paid our bill so that we don't have to mess around tomorrow morning before we leave. When Barb sees the head man he asks for our name, when Barb says Hawkins, he says he has no one with that name staying, he looks at Barb and says ahh you are not Hawkins you are now known as "you will never walk alone" this was probably to soften the shock of the bill which was more expensive than the Autocamp Bora we stayed at on KRK, after reviewing the costs it is not that Rio is expensive it is more that Bora was exceedingly cheap considering its facilities. That said the facilities at Rio were immaculate, the lady cleaned them that often I am surprised that there is any porcelain left on the tiles, but it does not have a restaurant or a swimming pool or stand up pool for that matter, it does however have the Adriatic Sea at the bottom of the site. Not sure if you saw my post on Facebook regarding Mr and Mrs Jibba Jabba, they were a toy that had a body with a long neck and when shaken made a jibba jabba sound, well this is what we have christened our neighbours as they never stop talking in fact they talk that much I think they are trying to wear their language out. Their caravan like many others we have seen on these smaller sites are static caravans but not like the large static caravans that we have, they are tourers with the biggest awning possible and then they have another awning fastened to the first one, then some like Mr & Mrs Jibba Jabba have a covered wooden structure fastened to the second awning that acts as patio area and this also can be closed off to make yet another room. It's massive and is like a small or not so small bungalow. After a day of doing

frankly not a lot we ready ourselves for a walk into town, after passing and checking that the cash machine was still intact we arrive in town, we head to the pizzeria and head for the upper floor external dining area which gives us a better view of the sea. We share a pizza, some fries and a salad, oh and a beer well we don't share a beer we each have our own, I don't mind sharing a pizza but let not take this sharing idea too far. After a walk along the promenade hand in hand watching the setting sun there is just time for a small ice cream before heading back to Gloria and to bed to catch up on some well deserved sleep and we do have an early ish start in the morning, so that the lot for today.

Day 14 17th June

Gloria is packed up and we are ready to depart by about 9.30 we'll you don't want to rush do you, we say farewell to Mr and Mrs Jibba Jabba and we are on our way to our first stop of the day Krka national park. Sylvia has been told to use the toll road and has said that we will be there in one hour and ten minutes, we obviously have a different idea because what we haven't not her is that we are stopping at Lidl on the way for some supplies. The first part of the route leading to the toll road is a tad winding and hilly but it's not long before we collect our ticket at the toll booth and we are on the main road this journey takes us over some bridges which in themselves are not that interesting but the views are spectacular, after 44k we arrive at the peage and pay what equates to just under 5 Euro which isn't much for 44k considering that the alternative option would have taken an extra hour and a half and probably used nearly an extra €5 of fuel.

We arrive at the park and there are a number of people wearing white T-shirt's the a P parking sign on trying to tempt us into "free" parking areas I look at Barb and make the comment that free may be how do I put this, well basically a load of crap and a con. We pull into one of these free car parks and ask is it free, well sort of, well is it or isn't it, well actually it's 100 donk for the day, we engage first gear and leave. We drive into the proper car park at the entrance to the Park itself and this costs 10 donk an hour, this is fine as we are only considering spending 2 to 3 hours here. Sensible shows on, suntan lotion applied, hats on and Gloria secured we head off for the entrance and join the queue, well I do Barb queue jumps half of it, realises says oops and returns to our actual place in the queue. That said they could with popping over to Disney and getting some hints on forming lines, as this one has no defined route and people are lined up across the road, oh and when there is a massive queue have more than two people taking the money and also a better explanation of what you get for your €20, we pay up and join the next queue for the boat, (yet another cruise, I don't half spoil my wife) that will take us along to the waterfalls. It's not long before the Captain shouts raise the anchor, he doesn't really they just cast off the ropes and we are off, it's not long before we are at the waterfalls which are interesting, but if you have seen a proper waterfall then these although good, are not jaw droppingly so. We walk to the top of the falls which isn't far taking some snap shots on the way, at the bottom of

the falls is a large natural pool in which lots of people are swimming and enjoying themselves, no time for a swim for us as we need to get on our way and oh we haven't brought any costumes with us. We catch the next boat back and ready Gloria to transport us to Split, well a campsite that is about 6k outside split, we pay our 28 donk car parking and we are on our way.

We arrive at the site at about 2.30 and Barb soon has us booked in and we are on our large secluded pitch in no time at all, it is fairly level so Gloria doesn't need to get to the top of the levelling ramps for the bubbles in the spirit level to be in between the lines, the electricity connection is not far away so only a short lead required, awning is wound out, chairs out, and that us set up in less than ten minutes.

The bus that runs into Split stops running between 4pm and 7.45pm, don't ask me, it must be for an afternoon nap, we decide to have one of three 7 minute showers you can have a day ffs, and then to catch the 4pm bus into the city for an initial look around. The bus stop is just outside the site and unsurprisingly it's late, one might ask if there is any rush and the actual answer is no but it is bloody hot standing in a glass bus shelter when the sun is still blazing down, blazing down. The bus arrives and I purchase our tickets 13 donk sorry Kuna each, so under 2 quid and pretty good value , it's also air conditioning which is very pleasant even if it is struggling to keep the heat down when the doors are opened at the various stops. Now when we were waiting at the bus stop we got talking to an Irish couple and they said that they had been into town this morning, that's good I thought they will know when to get off, my first mistake was to make this an assumption and not actually asking them. The second mistake was not getting off the bus with the majority of other people and staying on with our new found friends from Donegal, as the next stop was an age away and in the middle of nowhere, time to get off cut our losses and head back towards the town, well at least it was downhill obviously as the town is at sea level.

We stroll around the narrow ancient streets and admire the architecture of the Diocletian's Palace which was built at the end of the third century AD as a retirement home for the Roman Emperor Diocletian. It is also known today as a set used in The Game of Thrones as the former slave city Meereen and it was the setting for numerous scenes with Daenerys. Anyone would think that I know what I am talking about which is difficult as we have not seen a single episode, must watch it when we get home. The main difference when we visit is that it is full of tourist shops selling and sorts of tat ranging from thimbles, coral jewellery, fridge magnets to 4 foot high statues. All of which are locally sourced and none come from China, that's a bit like the free car parking, or do I have my cynical head on Doh! Ok that's enough excitement for one day after a quick refreshing beer well two actually, we head back towards the bus stop, the bus we require is the 25 but we would have to wait for 45 minutes for that, and in the timetable from the campsite it says we can also get the 60 which is due in a couple of minutes, so the 60 it is. We hand over our 26 donk and after about twenty minutes we approach the

right turn we need to take to get to the site, it is obvious due to the speed we are going we are not going to make any right turn any time soon, unless the driver thinks that he is Sandra Bullock. Time to press the bell me thinks. After about a kilometre we finally come to a stop, off we get and start the hike back to the site, well if nothing else we have learnt two things today, where to get off the bus at both ends of our journey, note to self for tomorrow.

We return to Gloria, hot and foot sore time to use another of our allowed showers, then it's time to prepare some food, do some planning for tomorrow and then for an early night, more game of thrones stuff tomorrow.

Day 15 18th June

Our plans to catch the 9am bus have been scuppered slightly as I didn't wake up until 8.30, I had been awake a number of times due to the heat during the night but must have got back off to sleep and stayed asleep. We change our plans slightly and catch the 10.20 bus and now that we know where to get off we are in the centre of things immediately. First things to get a ticket for the hop on hop off bus as we have these are usually good value to show you round places and you can choose where to get off and then just hop on the next one. Now there are three routes that you can go on but unfortunately due to our late arrival we are not going to be able to do them all as two of them take five and a half hours each, also we do not fancy being on a bus for that amount of time in this heat, we choose the trip that takes an hour and a quarter and then when we get back we can join an hour or so walking tour included in the price. We go for a stroll and a coffee and then it's departure time the young lady who is our tour guide is very knowledgeable and gives us lots of information about the city during the tour, everyone on this tour has opted to stay on board for the complete round trip and then get the next bus if they see anywhere they particularly fancy seeing more of.

We return to the harbour and as soon as we get off the bus the walking tour is due to commence, it's 1.30pm and the sun is at its peak, possibly not the best time of day to go on a walking tour but in no time at all we are off, we have the same guide as we had on the bus. And as we navigate our way through the Diocletian Palace her knowledge is confirmed and we are given more facts regarding the palace and the retired Emperor himself, while the tourist tat sellers carry on offering their wares around us. We continue with our walk and as well as the palace we meander down the narrow streets of the old town and we are provided with lots of information which at the time proved very interesting. Our walking tour last just over an hour which in the heat is quite long enough, we thank our guide and head off on our own to find a watering hole at which to get a refreshing drink, Barb chooses an establishment next to the fruit and veg market which much be the cheapest place in the city to get a beer, fair to say it's a bit tired in the decoration stakes but it is a locals bar and as such it is half the price of the more upmarket gaffs located around the city walls. We had walked through the

fruit, veg and flower market earlier this morning before taking our bus ride, there was an interesting mix of sellers ranging from large stalls selling different varieties of fruit and vegetables to older people selling just two varieties of runner beans which had been picked earlier this morning.

It's then time to head back to the bus stop to catch whichever bus comes first, it's the 60 so we need to remember where to get off so that we don't have a hike back to the site, in about 20 minutes we are off the bus at the stop just before the traffic lights and then it's just a short walk back to Gloria. We chill out under the shade of Gloria's awning, we are going to share another pizza at the campsites restaurant this evening and after a quick shower and change and a stroll down to the restaurant which overlooks the Adriatic. We enjoy our pizza while watching the sunset and then a bright orange moon appears from behind the mountains in the distance, there are a couple of photographs in the snap shot album. We sit chatting about the next part of the trip while watching the moon ascend higher in the sky, after a walk down to the waters edge we head back to Gloria and that's about it for today, more tomorrow hopefully if I can catch up.

Day 16 19th June

We get up early well reasonably early and after breakfast we ready Gloria for departure, we wander down to the beach on a cooling swim in the sea and cooling it is, getting no in is the problem but once you're it's lovely. A visit to the showers on the way back to Gloria sees us refreshed and ready to get on our way, that is after we stop to pay our dues. We got a membership for the ACSI or CSI as we call it which is a European Motorhome, Caravanning and camping club and you get a discount from their affiliated sites, this morning we get 60 Kuna discount which isn't bad. One thing to be aware of if you are camping in Croatia is that the Croatians are a tad crafty in the way that they charge you, they have the usual charging arrangement of, a pitch fee that varies depending on the pitch location, number of peeps, dog, local taxes, tourist tax etc. Then they get even craftier, as they price it all in Euro but only take payment in Croatian Kuna and surprisingly they use a lower exchange rate than you would normally get, oh and they not tell you what it is, they also don't tell you when you arrive what it's going to cost they just total it up when you are leaving, oh and before you get your passports back. This appears to be the norm as it has been the same at all the sites we have visited, in reality it makes a couple of quid difference but obviously in their favour but there is no way around it, we have tried to pay in Euro and they won't accept them and when you query it they just shrug their shoulders and say that's the way it is. This only happens at campsites and not at restaurants or anywhere else.

Right we are off, first stop is to the Klis Fortress which will be of particular interest to Game of Thrones fans and there are plenty of snapshots that I will try and load onto the Web when I can get a fast enough connection. There is only a small car park but luckily we are here early and there is a

space available, just the one in which Gloria will fit, sun tan lotion on, water in bag, camera, walking shoes or flip flops in Barbs case, mistake big mistake, we head off up to the fortress. Why is it that all fortresses are at the top of a darn big hill, that is a rhetorical question, we get to the top of the first hill just before the entrance and the view that greets you is stunning it actually does take your breath away, or was that getting to the top of the hill, no it's the view, looking out over the hills and valleys, with Split in the distance and the Adriatic beyond, it really is stunning, photographic evidence will be provided. We pay an entrance fee and start a further ascent up into the Fortress, it's a great place with a mixture of ancient and brand new sections that blend together. We table or scramble through the ancient parts of the fortress, if our HSE popped in here for a visit it would be closed immediately and it would take a group of them the rest of their lives to complete their report. This makes the place even more interesting and as you climb higher you get views heading inland with the Dalmatian mountains in the distance, well not that distant actually. Considering the fortresses involvement with The Game of Thrones it has not been commercialised in any way at all, there is not a gift shop insight even at the exit route, where if we were in the good old USA, you would not be able to get out without passing through a shop. Actually during our tour of Split we were not bombarded with G of T, not g&t stuff and only saw two small shops selling G of T stuff, it may be more prominent in Dubrovnik we will have to wait and see. We have spent about an hour or so at the Fortress and it looks like we have chosen a good time to leave as the tourist trips are starting to arrive, we head back down the steep rough slippery track out of the fortress, I said flip flops weren't a good choice of footwear. The car park is now rammed and it is slightly chaotic, some fine examples for the parking like a "T" Facebook page are available here, after a bit of manoeuvring we are out and onto the open road. Again we have two options coast road or toll road, toll road wins hands down, one thing has been worrying us slightly about this leg of the journey is the trip through Bosnia, well not actually going through Bosnia but more like the matter of insurance. Now I know that our planning is a bit loose at best, but I did contact our insurance company before we left and was told it was ok and that we did not need any additional cover to get to Dubrovnik, however after talking to fellow travellers on route, I am slightly suspicious that the information I was given was correct, I think a confirmation phone call is required. We stop at a service area and make the phone call, initially I am told yes it's ok, but after I explain the route fully the young lady changes her mind and says that we are not covered and that they can not add it to our cover. After taking some further advice from I suspect a senior colleague, I am told that we can buy insurance cover at the Bosnian border control but they had no idea what it would cost, now that's a great help. Google here we come, after searching the interweb we can not find any confirmed price to purchase the required cover at the border crossing, there are plenty of so called experts, you know the ones that know something about everything but actually have not got a clue but just feel the need to add a completely useless comment, bloody idiots. We check the Bosnian tourist board website and this just says that you can buy temporary cover at the border but does not give a cost, so

we have three options, first option turn up at the border control and pay for the insurance at what ever they say the cost is, in cash as they don't accept cards, turn up at the border tell them we have cover and risk it or we can get a ferry from Ploce over to an island which is linked to the mainland at the other side of the border, hence we do not leave Croatia. After due thought and consideration and checking the cost of the ferry, we choose the sensible option and head for the ferry and after all it classes as yet another cruise. The crossing only takes just over an hour and while on board Barb finds a campsite on the island for us to stop at tonight rather than making a dash for Dubrovnik and not getting there until late. Although we weren't the first in the queue to get on the ferry, we end up at the front of the role on role off ferry due to the way the crew load the vehicles. It's a pleasant crossing and after a bit of looking out to sea, we do some planning with Barb phoning the chosen campsite to check that they have space, yes they have so that's good news.

We are off the boat minutes after docking and we head off along the mountain road towards the site, this mountain road is not much different to others in so much as it climbs and falls, twists and turns following the side of the mountain. We stop for some provisions and then arrive at the site, Barb goes in to the reception and is given a choice of pitches which range in price from 16 to 20 Euro, the owner suggests that we walk down to have a look at the pitches closer to the sea. I am not surprised that he suggested that we walk rather than drive as the site is built on the side of the mountain and the pitches are built in tiers down to the sea, linked by steep, make that very steep narrow lanes. There are a couple of good pitches nearing the sea but I wonder how many clutches have expired getting back up to the top. We end up choosing one of the pitches closer to the top which will protect Gloria's clutch and it's also the cheaper end of the pricing, the only issue with this that we have to descend and ascend the mountain to get to the sea, the beach bar and restaurant. Gloria is levelled with minimum effort, plugged in and awning out, within a couple of minutes, well that is after I have turned her around so that the awning is facing the sea, Doh! We do have a fantastic view from our elevated position.

Kettle on and it's time for a cup of tea while following the shade that Gloria's awning provides, in the early evening we head down to the sea which is beautifully clear and inviting, it will be getting a visit tomorrow me thinks. After a sundowner at the beach bar we attack the north face and return to Gloria to get some well deserved rest, it's been a hectic day don't you know, more tomorrow.

Day 17 20th June

This should not take too long to read as well we ain't done a great deal today, so I need to pad this out a bit. Let's start with the site Camp Lavanda, the site looks as if it has not been open that long as everything is brand new from the reception area to the stone walls that create the tiers going down to the sea. The facilities are immaculate, no shower curtains

here each cubicle is a shower room with large shower base and a glass sliding door, the tiles that cover the walls throughout the facilities would put some posh hotels to shame, they are also spotlessly clean. There are also free washing machines and dryers, which will be getting used during our stay. It's only downfall is that it is built on the side of a mountain so everything is either up or down depending on which level you park, but hey you can not move mountains.

Barb goes for a swim, while I attend to some techy stuff that needs doing, saving photographs and dash cam footage to a hard drive, uploading photographs to Dropbox, which due to an abysmal internet connection took forever. After an afternoon of just chilling out, when actually I should have been catching up on the, obviously that didn't happen, we ready ourselves for a trip down the mountain to the restaurant.

Vegetarians may want to skip this bit and head to the next chapter, for the none veggies we have booked a table tonight as they are having a suckling pig banquet, well when I say banquet it wasn't like one of those medieval banquets that you went to back in the day at Ruthin Castle and it wasn't like Burns night when the Haggis is ceremoniously paraded out to the sound of the pipes and stabbed with a dagger. It was actually more like some pork, spuds and a slice of carrot served on a sharing platter, it sounds like I am doing it down, but it was actually pretty good.

Veggies it is safe to return, after our meal we go for a walk along the beach and then ascend the north face back to Gloria where we sit on our terrace and talk about our plans for tomorrow, then it's time to retire and catch up with some Zzzzzs it's been a tiring day you know.

Day 18 21st June

Barb has a bit of a lay in and I stroll up to local shop for some fresh bread, milk and some fresh croissants for breakfast, while having breakfast we chase the shade that Gloria offers and do a bit of planning for our departure from Camp Lavanda tomorrow morning. Then it's time to make the trip down to the sea for a cooling swim, and cooling it was, ok so the options are jump in off the jetty or climb down the ladder. We both opt for the cowards route and head for the ladder, now I am not sure that this was the correct route as if you just go for it and jump in, then there is the initial shock but then it's over and done with. The ladder option however is a slower process and as you descend rung by rung the cold water rises and eventually after some oohs and ahh's you have to let go and fully enter the chilling waters of the Adriatic. Once in it's great and we are like kids splashing around, swimming around the small boats that are anchored nearby, we stay in the sea until our finger tips start to wrinkle, a sign that it's time to head for dry land. After a quick sunbathe we head for the showers and then back up to Gloria. We have taken the opportunity to use the free washing machine facilities and this involves and number of trips down to the next terrace and

then back up again, there is a bit of a queue so we take it in turns to go and see where we are up to in the queue, exciting nail biting stuff this.

After a relax in the afternoon heat we pack away the none essential items away to ready ourselves for departure tomorrow morning, by the looks of it we will not be alone, as there are a number of others getting themselves ready for departure, in fact it's a right hive of activity with people loading bikes onto bike racks, scooters onto trailers and awnings being taken down and folded up. Whereas we have taken down the washing line, don't tell the caravan club, undone the awning straps and wound the awning in, job done.

Veggies it's ok it safe we are having vegetarian tonight, onions, peppers and mushrooms in a honey and ho sin sauce with egg fried rice all prepared by my own fair hands, well it was, I chopped up the veggies tossed them in a pan added the sauce while the microwave sorted the egg fried rice, hey presto done. After dinner there is a bit more packing up to do, set our destination into Sylvia and that's about it until tomorrow, look out Dubrovnik here we come.

Day 19 22nd June

There is a lot of early morning activity this morning, stop it, I am talking about people departing early, we suspect they are heading for the ferry as a few of the peeps we spoke to yesterday had said that they were heading home to various places in Europe, none to the UK as we are the only Brits in the village. It is interesting watching the peeps with bigger vans with trailers attached try and negotiate their way out of the narrow turns and up the steep hills up from the lower terraces. One French guy cant get round with his 8 meter van and bike trailer, so he ends up backing it up the hill with a fair bit of wheel spin, tyre smoke and a lot of French expletives to his wife who is guiding him out, all the makings for a great day ahead. We as usual have opted for the more laid back approach, ready Gloria for departure we'll remove the one ramp from the front wheel, breakfast, pay up, quick shower and we are off up the small incline and away on our supposed 2 hour drive, like that's going to happen, to Dubrovnik.

The mountain road is as bendy and steep in this direction as it was on our way here and Barb who is sitting in the seat nearest the centre white line is none too impressed by the coaches and wagons as they come thundering around the bends towards us on the wrong side of the white line. Eventually the road widens slightly and things are not quite as exciting, after just over an hour we arrive at Ston which has some pretty spectacular defence walls and a fortress, the original length of the walls was 7 kilometres and they are still the sixth longest building in the world at 5500 meters. Unfortunately as we need to get to Dubrovnik we don't have time to climb the walls so we lot for a coffee instead. Then it's back to Gloria and on towards our chosen site for tonight, Sylvia has got the full details of the campsites location but when she tells us to turn right we look at each other and ignore her thinking that she can not be seriously expecting up to go down the track she has

suggested considering that she is in Motorhome mode. We stop a bit further up the road and check if there are any alternative routes to the site and we'll there isn't. We head back to Sylvia's chosen route and head down the track with trepidation, it turns out not to be too bad and we are soon travelling along the harbour wall, eventually we spot the campsite, well it's a field actually. We have gone from staying at one of the most impressive sites we have ever been to, to a field with uncut grass and facilities that haven't changed much since Roman times, there is electricity which is supplied by throwing your longest lead over an eight foot wall with a two pin converter attached so that it can be plugged into the adjoining house, and the real rub is that it is actually more expensive per night than the amazing Camp Lavanda, but hey it's the closest site, field, to Dubrovnik.

Anyway Gloria is soon level headed and plugged in with no reversed polarity warnings showing, it must have just been good luck which way the two pin connector was inserted. Set up and awning out we head for the bus stop to catch a bus into Dubrovnik we hope, as the reception has closed for its afternoon nap which will probably last until after 6pm, we have no idea where to get the bus from, which bus to get, what time to expect one or if one does arrive how much it will cost. Now there's a good start for our trip into town. We head for the main road and find a bus stop heading towards Dubrovnik, ok so first part of mission completed however there is no timetable so we still don't know which bus or what time, now it's fair to assume that as we are about 6k out of town any bus that stops here goes into the city, now it's just a matter of what time to expect one. Looks like our luck is in, as after about 5 minutes other peeps start arriving, these are local peeps so it's fair to expect a bus to be arriving shortly and this is confirmed by one of fellow awaiting passengers. Soon the number 35 arrives and we pay the 13 Kuna fare and we are off, not knowing where to get off, Sandra Bullock is at the wheel so it's a bit of a white knuckle ride and it's also not long before we have covered the 6k into town, we are at sea level at a marina and there is a sign for the centre, must be time to get off and so we do.

After figuring out we'll sort of where we are, we follow the signs for the Old Town, now being at sea level wasn't a bad idea however we are at the wrong sea level for the old town which is at the same sea level but the other side of a bloody great big hill in the peak of the afternoon heat. It is fair to say that Barb is far from happy with this uphill hike especially as we near the summit a bus goes past heading for the old town. We arrive at the old town a little hot under the collar, and it is absolutely rammed packed with sweaty peeps. There is an advertisement for the "Original Dubrovnik Bus Tour" and as this seems like a good idea rather than walking around with the thronging masses, I go to make enquiries into timings and costs, now it may be the "Original" but it's also finished for the day and it's only 3.30pm what's all that about, the lady in the hut says that one of their lesser competitors down the road may still be open, "lesser competitors" cheeky cow. About 10 yards down the road there is another bus tour company and they are still running a service that takes about one and a half hours and

leaves in 10 minutes, ok that will do for us. Now the tour may not have been as polished as the other guys made out they were, but it did the job taking us around the sights of the city and beyond, also giving us some views of some fantastic multi multi million pound boats, when does a boat become a yacht or visa versa.

When we get off the tour bus we head into the old town which is still a thronging mass of people, the architecture is amazing but the streets are full of restaurants, snack bars, bars and shops that are selling the same tourist tat as in other cities only these fridge magnets say I heart Dubrovnik. Also as expected the prices are sky high and twice what they are outside of the city, but it's hot, we are hot and we need a refresher, we take a seat at a harbour bar and order a beer and a glass of white wine, they are obviously concerned about their customers alcohol intake as Barbs Chardonnay comes in the smallest wine glass known to man, in fact I have seen bigger shot glasses. After Barb has sipped her wine it's time to set off on the journey home, Barb has made it clear that there is no way she is hiking up the hill and down the other side, so we purchase some bus tickets that will do the trip for us and all we have to do is sit there. To the sound of What's that coming over the hill, we arrive at the other side and head off to find the bus stop for the rest of our journey back to Gloria. This time the bus stop includes a timetable that says we will have to wait 30 minutes for the next bus. Good enough 30 minutes later we are on our way, this must be Sandra's brother behind the wheel as it takes no time to get to our destination, although if we were cats although we as cool as them we would have used up a couple of our 9 lives.

As it's getting late we head off to one of the local restaurants to share a pizza, now as we are in a cove not far from the city, the cove is used by the yachting types to anchor their expensive toys overnight and as such the prices in the restaurants reflect their expected clientele, not two scousers in a Motorhome called Gloria, but as we are only sharing a pizza it's not that bad. We return to Gloria hot, tired and footsore, and that's about it as it is not long before we are both in the land of nod.

Day 20 23rd June

I am playing a bit of catch up as I haven't written anything for a couple of days, as I write it is the afternoon of the 26th June so this next couple of entries could go really go anywhere. Ok let's make a start, our original plan was to head back into Dubrovnik today for more of a look around, but guess what plans have changed we have decided that we saw enough of the old city yesterday and if we revisit today all we will see is more shops selling yet more tat and we had enough of that thank you, ok we may be missing out on some more of the game of thrones locations but as we haven't watched a single episode we won't be missing anything. Barb has a little lie in and I go for a walk along the harbour in search of a bakery, I walk round to the next bay and beyond but no bakery in sight, there is a mini market not far from the campsite and I pay them a visit rather than returning with

no provisions, milk, bread and pan o chocolate in hand I head back to Gloria but not before noticing that the mini market sells a red wine from one of the islands that we sample last night, note to self pop in there before we leave. There is a bar / restaurant/ hotel next to the market, so I pop in for a quick coffee before I head back to Barb and Glo, I do get the I thought you had got lost response on my return, but that is forgotten when the pan o chocolate emerge from my bag, hunter provider wins again.

The rest of the day is spent relaxing and planning for our trip into Montenegro tomorrow oh and trying to pay for our stay, it's a bit nuts that this site which as I have said is just a field of uncut grass and extremely basic amenities is more expensive than the superb Autocamp Lavanda, but as Kirstie and Phil say, its Location, Location, Location and obviously Locations near Dubrovnik carry a higher price tag. Depts finally settled and with the disconnection time of the electricity supply arranged we are good to go tomorrow morning. A fair bit more of doing nowt continues into the early evening, after our home made mushroom risotto, we walk along the harbour as the sun sets behind the mountains, then we return to Gloria t ge an early night to ready ourselves for our trip across the border.

Day 21 24th June

Gloria is readied for transport to a different country and after a tea and coffee we are off, first stop is the mini market to get a couple of bottles of the vin rouge previously mentioned and a couple of croissants for the journey. The trip takes us back towards Dubrovnik and then along the coast road and past the airport which is only about two foot from the main road, it must have been the only flat bit of land they could find.

There is a long queue at the border, and when we get to the control I am not sure why, as the border control person took our passports while playing a game on his or her phone, didn't open the passports and then returned them, is that it are we ok to go, there is a bit of a grunt which I take as a yes, now there may have been a queue getting into Montenegro but the is a bigger one waiting to get out, which in my mind does not bode well. After about 300 yards the road surface disappears and we are travelling on a broken up road surface a couple of blokes standing in the road and some heavy plant equipment digging up more of the road, if you sold traffic cones, hi vis jackets or hard hats here, you would go bust as there is no sign of any of them and no sign of traffic management anywhere, we manoeuvre round the digger as it spins round in gay abandon with no consideration for the passing traffic, while taking avoiding action so as to miss the oncoming traffic. We then arrive at a second checkpoint hand in our passports and vehicle documents to Mr Happy (not) who says that our documentation is not in order and that we need to buy insurance cover from them, I question his decision and say that our insurance company has said that it is fine for this country, he grunts and points at a sign, which basically says buy the insurance or bugged off, oh and by the way I have got your passports and you don't get them back until you produce the purchased insurance.

Begrudgingly I park up, go into an office, join a queue of unhappy peeps, hand over Gloria's documents, pay 18 Euro which is supplied in the wrong name, in so much it used my middle name not surname, I return to Mr Happy and show him the document, he smiles with the face of a bulldog chewing a wasp and returns our passports. This added to the fact that it is raining which is the first rain we have seen since Switzerland, the fact that the road is as slippery as a slippery thing can be, has not enamoured us to our arrival in Montenegro, but hey we are here let's get on with it. Sylvia starts issuing instructions to get us to our chosen Autocamp, the weather starts to brighten up and the road surface dries, the driving standards are similar to Italy, well basically dangerous, everyone is on the phone and it appears that driving on the wrong side of the road while taking a bend is obligatory no matter how narrow the road may be, Barb has a few sharp intake of breath moments, as she is sitting in the seat nearest the middle of the road. On route there are two more sets of road works where basically the top surface of the road has been removed and then just left with no cones or any warning signs in sight and the traffic is just left to sort itself out and drive around the various bits of equipment that have been left lying around, interesting. We arrive at the Autocamp and are offered a choice of pitches, on none of which Gloria is going to be level with the ramps we have with us, but hey it's only for one night. Parked up, plugged in and levelish we have a walk to the local village, well I say village, it consists of a shop, one posh restaurant and one shall we say less posh establishment, we try the posh one first, now I can never understand why if you sell beer on draft you choose only to sell it in half's not pints, especially when there are only two restaurants in the village and you have the best view in town. Barb says that this is the view over the sea to the mountains in the distance is the best view she has seen on our trip, well apart from the one at Klis Fort and the one of Dubrovnik old town from above, and anyway what did the Romans do for us, we choose the less posh one for our second drink and a bite to eat. If you think that the Spanish invented manana think again, these guys are the Grand masters, if you come here do not expect to eat in a rush I would recommend you bring a pillow, that said the food was very good and very cheap.

We return to Gloria and the site which was virtually empty when we arrived is now ram packed with Motorhomes, caravans and tents it's the full no room at the inn, good job we stopped when we did. Earlier before we walked into the village, the owner had called by to get our passports and said that we must call at the reception this evening to collect a map of Kotor a must see town about an hour away. When we arrived I had seen a massive truck which had been converted to a camper truck a bloody big camper, on our way to the reception I stop to talk to the owners tell them how impressed I am with their truck and ask some questions about it. They are Austrian and the truck is an ex Austrian Army vehicle weighing 8.5 ton that they had converted themselves, when you get close to it you realise how big it is and that is massive with a capital M and awesome. I thank them for their time, congratulate them on their truck and we walk up to the reception area, where the owner insists that we join him in having a glass of

his home made grappa while he shows us the map of Kotor and explains the places we should go to see while we are there. We return to Gloria and after a chat in the cooler air of the evening it is time to retire and get some shut eye ready for an early start in the morning.

Day 22 25th June

Up early and Gloria is made ready to transport us to Kotor which is supposed to be about an hour away, our departure is delayed for a while as there is no one available to pay, yes I know, however we wait for the reception to open and pay up a fairly heavy €25 charge, at least the one near Dubrovnik had Kirsty & Phil location lark. The road to Kotor is not much of an improvement on the previous section and the driving standards have not improved overnight, with Barb having a few more sharp intake of breath moments. We arrive at the town and parking Gloria is an easy task, well when you can get back to the car park that you have driven past, because you are following the directions given by the guy at the Autocamp. We are in the town before 10am which is good as there are two large cruise ships in the harbour but the passengers must still be on boards having breakfast. We walk along the harbour wall and into the newer part of town then we head back to the older section, Kotor is another fortified town with walls going from sea level up the side of the mountain, Ross has told us that the view from the top is well worth the effort, and as the heat is building fast, we are going to take his word for it. We walk around the old section of the town and again marvel at the manpower, craftsmanship and effort it must have taken to build these fortresses without the equipment we have today. However modern day man has arrived along with the cruise ships and this has brought with it more tat shops and yet more fridge magnets. After a couple of hours looking around and fending off vary polite peeps trying to sell us boats trips, it is obvious that the cruise ships have opened the doors and flooded the town with their passengers. Time to leave me thinks, we manage to get back to Gloria without buying yet another boat trip or some I do you good price dodgy Ray-bans. Now we have two options, carry on further into Montenegro or return to Croatia, we have reached our destination and have been to Montenegro but Croatia has our hearts and the decision is made to return to Croatia. Maybe one day we will return to Montenegro and visit more of the treasures it has to offer, but if we do it will be in a car that is more suited to the roads and lowering Barbs blood pressure.

As there is only one road in and out we retrace our steps stopping at Barbs favourite view spot for a camera not phone picture, unfortunately the midday light is not ideal and is not showing the full magnificence of the mountains, but hey we are not waiting around for the golden hour so the shot will have to do. As we zigzag our way up down and around the mountain road, the traffic coming towards us are flashing their lights and as we turn the bend our concerns about the driving standards are confirmed, there has been a serious head on collision between a car and a motorcycle on a fast sweeping bend. The ambulance's have taken the injured to hospital but the wreckage of the car and the bike are still in the position in

which then ended up after the impact, which is never a good sign. We weave are way through the carnage and see that both the car and the bike have received serious unreparable damage, we wish the motorcyclist and the occupants of the car well but we fear the worst. We arrive at the border control in silence, we are both wondering what the outcome of the accident was but do not want to talk about it, Barb hands in our passports to a very cheerful border guard, who says ahh Liverpool, very good team as he returns our passports. The road in no mans land between the two checkpoints is still the same as it was yesterday and it does not look like there is any rush to resurface it anytime soon, after a bit of a wait at the Croatian border control we are back in Croatia with no more of that £2 a minute call charge lark and back to the Croatian donk sorry Kuna.

We are going to retrace our route and catch the ferry back to Ploce rather than going through Bosnia, the route takes us past Dubrovnik and the costal road gives us the magnificent views of Dubrovnik old town then we head over to the island and towards the fortified town of Ston. The campsite is just outside of the town and we arrive there in the late afternoon, when we were reading the description of the site which is set in a mature olive grove we did not realise that it also only yards from the sea. We approach down a narrow lane which opens up to reveal a beautiful bay with golden sands, with the campsite behind, this will do nicely thank you. Barb checks us in and we find a pitch which benefits from the shade of one or two of the mature therefore big olive trees, in no time at all Gloria is level, plugged in and the awning is out to offer some extra shade. The sea is beckoning us and it is not long before we succumb and enjoying its cooling water, that is after the usual initial ooh and aaah while getting accustomed to the drop in temperature.

It is wrinkly finger time before we get out of the crystal clear water and head back to Gloria via the showers, after dinner prepare in kitchen at la Glo, we chat and read for a while before it is time to get some sleep and ready ourselves for the next days proceedings, more tomorrow guys.

Day 23 26th June

As this is such an idyllic place we are staying put, although idyllic there is not a great deal to do so we will have to see how long today's instalment is, Mr Sun is up and at it bright and early and as there is not a single cloud in the beautiful blue sky to stop his rays, the temperature rises quickly and is up in the thirties not long after 9am. We have breakfast under the shade of the olive trees but very soon it is too hot to just sit, so we head off to the sea for our first swim of the day. The sea is obviously the coolest place to be and we stay in for as long as possible before we head for the beach bar for a coffee, now the beach bar is not a particularly pleasant building as it is more of a grey pod with some windows, that just does drinks without the offer of any form of snacks. In fact when you peruse the menu and get to the bit that says food all that is under the title is ice cream. We fantasise about what we would do if we could buy the beach bar, firstly get rid of the

depressing pod type thing and replace it with something more rustic and inviting. Offer a tapas like menu with interesting items from the sea and the surrounding countryside, what else, oh I know play some music to liven things up a bit, the transformation would be amazing. We return to Gloria for a spot of lunch and a cup of tea, well we would have if the milk hadn't gone off again, it is no wonder that long life milk is far more prominent than fresh milk, as the fridges struggle keeping the temperature down when the ambient temperature is so high. We sit and follow the shade afforded by the olive trees as the sun is too fierce to sit out in for too long.

It's not long before it's time to visit the sea again for another oooh aaah moment and then once in stay in for as long as possible, while we are swimming around, a cruise ship arrives and drops anchor in the bay, this isn't a massive cruise ship but a smaller more refined version that island hops around the many many islands of Croatia. Again we stay in the sea until we are like dried prunes and then we head for the beach hut for a cooling drink, and while sitting there we check out the prices of the cruises available on these smaller vessels, these are expensive even for the cheaper cabin options but I will tell you more about this tomorrow or possibly Friday. We return to Gloria with the thoughts of having a little siesta, however the snide Gloria was as hot as a hot place could be even with all the vents open and blinds closed. We shade hunt again for an hour or so before have to head back to the sea for the last dip of the day, it is early evening but it is still exceedingly hot, but the sea is cooling and again we stay in for as long as possible, none of this get in get wet and get out again, this is the full hour or very nearly an hour before we return to Gloria via the showers.

We pop to the restaurant bar for a quick aperitif before dinner, while there we meet an English couple that we met a week or so ago at a different site, we discuss are various journeys, after chatting for a while, we say farewell and safe travels and head off to have a snack and a little glass of vin rouge which has to be put in the fridge to cool down as it was more like mulled wine out of the bottle. Then it's time to try and get some sleep, it has cooled down a bit but not a lot, more tomorrow folks.

Day 24 27th June

We have made an executive decision this morning and decided that as the beach and the sea here are so beautiful we are staying put for another night, we are also waiting for an email or a phone call that may change the trip completely but more about that if it happens. Unfortunately that means

today is not going to be great reading for you guys as we won't be doing a great deal other than swimming and chilling out. After breakfast we make our way to the beach and the cooling waters of the Adriatic Sea which is looking magnificent in the morning sun with its Emerald green colours in the shallows turning into deep sapphire blues as the water deepens. The entrance into the cooling water has the usual ooohs and aaahs followed by a deep breath and then your in and staying in for as long as possible, none of this quick dip and out lark happening here.

After our swim we head for the beach bar to watch the world go by, while we are there a couple of yachts arrive and drop anchor, none of which motivate any real boat envy thoughts. Then a bit later a beautiful twin masted schooner with sparkling deep blue hull arrives, not sure if they are called schooner's but it suits the name it really is a lovely thing and it's big as well, as you can imagine this has started the boat envy juices flowing. It's that pretty it even has Barb excited and she says that it would be her boat of choice, heaven knows what it cost but it will have been a large chunk of cash. If I had been in one of the smaller yachts or even the big catamaran that had arrived, I would have picked up the anchor and gone to another bay in a sulk. We return to Gloria and ask me how hot is it in there, the answer is extremely, every window is opened fully in an attempt to get some of the breeze flowing through to cool her down. While we sit outside in the shade of the olive trees and enjoy what breeze there is, even though whatever breeze there is, is hot as well, if you did this trip on a regular basis or for a longer period of time you would have to have full A/C in the van.

Ok so this afternoon our plans for our trip change and change fairly dramatically, to explain this we need to retrace our movements to Wednesday afternoon when we had been sitting at the beach bar watching the world go by. Along with the various fat wallet yachts that arrived, a beautiful looking smallish cruise ship also dropped its anchor in the bay. Now Barb has always fancied going on a cruise but has not been able to persuade me into the cruising lark. We talk and fantasise about going cruising around the Adriatic and obviously Google comes into play and we start looking at the various Adriatic cruises available. While Barb is oohing and ahing at the cruise ships that adorned these waters, I spot one that may have availability for this weekend, so I pick up the phone and call them, the lady I talk to says as it is such a late requests another company will contact me. About 5 minutes later I get a call from the company and Mark explains that they have one cabin left and surprisingly they have lots of interested parties from whom they are just waiting to receive a call from to book the cabin. What a load of rubbish, so I am up front with him and ask for his best price, I laugh a little at his response but not as much as he does when I make my offer. He explains that there is no way that the company could possibly accept such an offer and that they would sooner let the ship sail with an empty cabin than accept my offer, oh right, I explain that I didn't wish to upset them but a deal is better than no deal, a bit like Brexit, oh no I mentioned the Brexit word, sorry it won't happen again. I leave my offer on the table and

explain that we could be ready to accept an deal anytime prior to sailing on Saturday and they should phone me if they were willing to accept my offer, we say goodbye and hang up. This is now starting to be like a bit of a poker game. Ok so back to today, I send them an email asking for them to inform me if they sell the cabin, this was just a bit of a nudge to remind them that I am still here and interested. By mid afternoon I have had no response, so I phone them for an update and they say that they are still waiting for a response from the other interested party, ok I say I will phone them just prior to closing and see where they are up to. I phone at 5.20pm, ten minutes before they close and ask if their offer had been met by the other prospective buyer, surprisingly no it hadn't, ok can we have a deal, again I am told that there is no way they could accept my offer, ok I was being a tad if not a lot cheeky and after a bit of a discussion we agree on a figure a little bit higher than my original offer but a considerably less than theirs.

I come off the phone and tell Barb the outcome, so hey guys that's it we are going cruising on Saturday on the MS President, eek that's exciting, and I think that it is more than enough excitement for you for one day, I will give you some more information tomorrow.

Day 25 28th June Operation Cruising



We awake feeling excited at the outcome of yesterday's phone conversations and the thought of a 8 day cruise on the MS President, I am not sure wether it is the thought of the cruise or the prospects of an air conditioned cabin, with a real bed, clean linen every day and our own on suite bathroom oh and dinner with the Captain, I actually think that it's all of the above. Off on a slight tangent time, no surprise there then, last week or was it the week before I am not 100% sure, we met an English couple at another site who are from down south and they are actually now staying at our current site, we had been chatting about the possibility of our cruise and he was very interested when I mentioned the price, in fact he was that interested he had been making enquires himself but could not secure a deal at the price I had mentioned. So it was probably him that the cruise company thought they had a better deal from, Barb meets them in the morning while going through the checking out process, you know the one, paying yes that's it, anyway Barb says that he is not at all happy that we secured the cruise deal, obviously the little green eyed monster was out to play, Barb takes the opportunity to rub it in a bit. I should have known better than to mention it to him in the first place but hey there's that hindsight fellow popping up again, so note to self keep ones gob shut.

Going to be a bit of a busy day today, so we are packed up and away by 8.30am first stop is supposed to be the ferry terminal to get back over to the mainland, I say supposed to be as for some reason I have been allowed to set the destination into Sylvia and this turns out to be above my pay grade. We have been driving for a while and as I don't think we are going in the correct direction I ask Barb to check on her phone, as I thought were not, and we are actually heading for the Bosnian border oops. We have two options, turn around and go back or continue on into Bosnia, the second option is much much quicker and we see us back in Split by 10.30am but it is also the unknown option. I make the decision to go the Bosnia route and see what happens, Barb goes a bit quiet, we arrive at the border control where our passports are checked and no vehicle documentation is requested, we are in Bosnia for less than 10 miles before we are at the Croatian border control much to Barb's relief, once back in Croatia Barb breaths a sigh and is able to talk again, I am not sure what all the fuss on the internet was about, it was painless and hey we have now been to Bosnia. It's also saved us a whole chunk of time which is great as we have got to sort out a couple of things before the cruise, firstly we need to go shopping to buy each of us a bag as we don't have any with us and and it won't look too good if we turn up on the gangplank with a couple of bin bags containing our belongings, secondly we need to find somewhere secure to park Gloria for the week and lastly we need to find somewhere to stay tonight.

Shopping first stop, when we here last week we had seen signs advertising the largest shopping Mall in Dalmatia, must be able to get a good deal there so off we trot hoping to find a sports direct or similar, we don't want to spend a great deal as the last thing we need is another piece of luggage, we could probably open our own shop. Cheap and cheerful here we come and all of the shops selling expensive luggage are given a wide berth as we are looking for something one step up from and Ikea blue bag. Mission accomplished and we both have a bag that fits the brief, next stop campsite we return to the site we stayed at last week and after booking in for one night we make enquires about leaving Gloria here for a week, yes they can arrange this but the charge is fairly steep we say we will have a think about it. After choosing our pitch we head off to check out a car park which has been suggested to us it sounds great covered, cctv, 24 hour security and all for €10 per night, we eventually find the place and there is one slight problem it's underground so covered all right but it has a height limit of 2.1 meters and as Gloria is 2.8 meters and we don't fancy a convertible Motorhome it's a no no. We find another one on the www and head off to investigate this is another no no as it's in the middle of nowhere next to an abandoned stadium and some other disused buildings, I do enquire about the security and I am told that there is a camera, Barb asks if it has any film in it. This is not the place to leave our Gloria all on her own for a week, only option is to stump up the extra and leave Gloria at the campsite where she will be safe and we can leave her plugged into the electricity supply.

That's us done exploring the seeder side of Split time to head back to the campsite, back at our pitch Gloria is level enough and plugged into the

mains supply, time for a walk along the waters edge to find somewhere to sit, relax and discuss our time on the MS President, on our return route to Gloria I spot a hairdressers and as I am in much need of a haircut even though I had one the day before we left home, I pop in to see if they can fit me in, a very pretty Croatian mademoiselle says that they are full today but she can fit me in at 8.30 tomorrow morning, that will do for me appointment made. Then it's back to Gloria to empty the contents of the fridge and see what happens, what happened was a delicious even if I say so myself, bacon, Parma ham, tomato and cheese frittata.

It's been a busy excitement day at chez Gloria and it's now time to try and get some sleep in an extremely warm, well hot Gloria, not that Gloria is hot but it's hot inside Gloria, but hey tomorrow we will have an air conditioned cabin, mind you for what we have paid it will probably be in the engine room, that's all you can stand for today more tomorrow.

Day 26 29th June

Obviously the bags we purchased yesterday are not big enough to take what we we are trying to fit into them and the zip on my bag is stretched to the max and will probably let go at any time, but hey we haven't got far to go in the Uber (apologies to my taxi driver readers but it's nearly as cheap as the bus) that we will order later. I ready myself for my appointment with the mademoiselle at the hairdressers, when I get there she is busily cutting another gentleman's hair, she says hello and mentions that I am early, after about 10 minute an older lady who I think is the receptionist ushers me to a chair places a towel around my neck and adorns me with a gown and then buggers off, but not very far as it is a very small salon. So I assume that the mademoiselle is the hairdresser and will be with me in a minute, just then there is the throbbing of a motorcycle engine outside and moments later a big muscles type guy in shorts, a bandana and a vest which shows off his ink, walks in. Immediately he stands behind me and in Croatian asks what I want, well I think that's what he said, now his English is marginally better than my Croatian and that's not good by any standards, this could be an interesting haircut, well the difference between a good one and a bad one is only about two weeks. Ok here we go, he gestures with the electric clippers that he could take the lot off but luckily he is only joking, few that was funny, I am going on a cruise don't you know, ok it's a bit shorter than usual but that has its advantages in so much that I will not need to carry as much shampoo, I might not even need to take a brush with me, and at less than five quid it was a cheap as chips, Marc I did not mention your scissors as at a fiver a go I did not think they would be able to afford them.

We go to the reception and pay for our one night stand sorry stay and with a little difficulty as we have moved her to a different pitch closer to the reception and with more shade, arrange for Gloria's safe keeping for the next week, now they would like to keep our camping card or Gloria's registration document in case we do not return to collect her, as if, anyway I plump for the camping card option for obvious reasons. After giving Gloria

a hug we kill time while we wait for the ideal time to order our Uber, pressed the button on the Uber app and 4 minutes later our chariot well a Peugeot arrives and we are off, 20 minutes later we are piped aboard the MS President, well we are not actually as the boat is more like the Mary Celeste with no one anywhere in sight. Obviously they were not expecting anyone to arrive this early as they are still getting the ship ready for departure, the cruise manager arrives, welcomes us on board and shows us to our cabin after unpacking we have a look around to familiarise ourselves with what will be our lodgings for the next week, then we stroll into Split for another look around. Not sure if I have mentioned it but just in case I haven't, it's hot and the thoughts of our air conditioned cabin and a real bed beckon, we head back to the MS President for a little siesta.

There is a welcome meeting planned for 7pm and we make our way to the sun deck just before seven, we are expecting the boat to be full but when all of our fellow passengers are gathered together it is obvious that it isn't, which is good as there will be more space and less names to remember. Our cruise manager gives his introduction speech and we listen intently as he explains the weeks itinerary, all of which we have forgotten 5 minutes later. As I said the boat is not full and there are actually only 27 peeps on board including us, introductions are made and names exchanged, we could do with badges for a day or so to help us remember, but then we would look like proper twits. A brief summary of the passenger list is, a family of 15 which includes brothers, cousins and grand mother who is Croatian by birth and who has paid for all of her wide spread family from various parts of America, a couple from New Zealand, a family of 4 from Switzerland father Russian mother German, a family of 4 from America who live in Malta and the dad is originally from Liverpool, big planet small world, oh and us, more about our fellow passengers later when we get to know each other a bit better.

It is then time for dinner, there is none of that dressing for dinner lark going here which is a good job as I haven't brought a dress, the actual dress code is shorts and bare feet basically as long as your bits are covered that's about it. We chat over dinner and get to know each other a bit better, seem like a good bunch of peeps and as the number of passengers is small the boat has plenty of room for us all to have our own space should we require it. After dinner and a few get to know each other better drinks it is time to head to our cabin and the luxury of air con for some shut eye, we will set sail at 7am tomorrow so more for you then.

Day 27 30th June

After breakfast it is meeting time to discuss the days agenda which is roughly, park up for a swim stop, lunch on board and sail to the island of Korcula with an eta of around 2.30pm. We do not have our proper captain on board as yet as he was required to stay in Split to sort something out, our

stand in captains forte is obviously not revers parking as it takes him three attempts to back up the bus sorry boat into a suitable position for our swim stop, eventually he drops the anchor and the ships tender is dispatched to tie a rope to a tree on the island to secure the back of the boat, hey technical stuff this. Once parked up everyone is in the water and having a great time, we remain anchored for about 30 minutes and then we set of for Korcula, just time for quick shower before lunch. We dock at the harbour and this time we are the first boat, as the harbour is not massive the other ships park up along side in rows of four and the passengers from the other boats cross from one boat to the other to get to dry land.

There is a planned walking tour around the city and we have all been issued with listening devices so that we can hear the commentary as we walk around, neither Barb or I or even Jules & Verne for that matter are great fans of being part of a group following a person waving a flag, umbrella or other such object, but we think we will give it a go. After about 5 minutes of the tour our fears are confirmed as unfortunately the lady giving the tour is, how do I put this, well a tad annoying. We take the opportunity to head off on our own to explore the town which doesn't take long as it is only small however it is the birthplace of Marco Polo. As today is the 30th June there will be a festival and street procession to celebrate the half year which they call Half News Years Eve and the everywhere is busy setting up for the nights forthcoming events. As we have some free time we find somewhere to have a quick snack and then we take the opportunity to do some contraband shopping prior to returning to the ship, smuggle our contraband on board and after a freshen up it is time for lunch on board. Then its some more free time during which we take time to relax on the upper deck and then its time for little siesta to ready ourselves for the evenings entertainment.

Showered and changed we head of into town just before 8pm, in usual Croatian form the parade does not start on time but when it does it is great fun and it takes a while for everyone involved to travel around the town. Then the party begins, the bars have all set up street bars and there are two stages with live music playing at both, we wander down the side streets and we find a bar with and band playing outside, they are really good so we wait and find a vacant seat order a couple of drinks and join in with everyone to enjoy ourselves and soak up the atmosphere listening to a great band with a fantastic saxophonist. We are enjoying the music so much that we stay until just before midnight and ten we head back to the ship to watch the fireworks display, unusually the display starts on time and we watch the display from the harbour wall. When we get back to the MS president we head for the top deck and find the Kiwi couple and the English, Maltese Scouse couple enjoying a little libation, we join them and the little libation turns into a bit of a party and we do not return to our cabin until just before 3am, hence no blog getting written and now I am in full catch up mode, which i need to do quickly before my brain cells forget what we have been up to.

Day 28 1st July

We are rudely awoken just before 7am by the anchor being raised which as we have only been asleep for 4 hours this is not great, the shower is turned up to full pressure and then its time for breakfast and coffee lots of coffee. We are on route to Ston and we are going Oyster tasting, fortunately we are stopping for a swim stop on route which will hopefully shock us all into feeling a tad more human, this captain is definitely a better reverse parker than our first guy and we are soon tied off and in position, Barb is first in and says that the water is lovely, I jump in and as my toes hit the water I realise that Barb was stretching the truth slightly, but once you are in its ok and we swim around for a while prior to returning to our cabin for a shower and change.

We then arrive at Ston we disembark and get on a coach to take us to the Oyster tasting its then on to yet another smaller boat that takes us over to a platform at the oyster farm. Now oysters are not on the top of my favourite list but hey as they are going to drag the little rascals straight out of the sea I don't think that I am ever going to get the opportunity to have fresher ones, luckily we are given a glass of wine so at least I have something to wash them down with. Let me say that my opinion of oysters hasn't changed even if they have just been dragged from the sea in front of me, they will still not appear anywhere on my fav food list or in fact on any food list. Then it's boat, coach and back to the President but not before a quick contraband stop at a little supermarket at the quayside.

The rest of the afternoon is spent relaxing while we cruise towards Dubrovnik, when we get there the Captain cruises around the bay to give us a view of the city from the sea before taking the ship to its mooring at the Port, now there are two ports in Dubrovnik and we along with 14 other boats are moored at the second port which is under the Franco Tudman bridge which to be honest is not the most beautiful place we have dropped our anchor, but hey if you look the other way you have views out to sea and the islands, the ships are parallel parked in three rows of five and you can walk from the dock across each boat to the next, mmmmmm. We have dinner and then we have the opportunity to go into Dubrovnik but as we will be spending the full day there tomorrow we decide to sit and chat to our fellow passengers. We sit on the top deck sipping drinks and as the sun goes down the contraband makes an appearance, which initially seemed like a good idea. We are looking at the other boats and one of them is in full party mode with lots of the younger generation on board, as we chat it is suggested that we should gate crash the party but there is a little bit of resistance to this idea. However the next time we look Barb is making her way across to the party boat, she waves to us her way and we are in pleats of laughter while we watch her gate crash with wine glass in hand, when she returns I suggest that we should have a little competition to see who can get to the top deck of the other 14 boats. It turns out that Barb and I are the only willing contenders and Barb wins with 8 ships visited, while I follow

closely behind with 6, but hey we will be docked here tomorrow evening as well so it's game on, until then my bed is calling me.

Day 29 2nd July

Another early start as although we are staying attached to the dock, some of the other boats that moored along side us have left early for other destinations and they were not that quiet about leaving us. We could not have had a lie in anyway this morning as immediately after breakfast we are going on a walking tour around Dubrovnik. The coach is waiting for us when we disembark which took all of a minute as we are the first ship to the harbour wall, it is only a short ride into the city and our cruise manager introduces us to our tour guide who will show us around the city, while giving us lots and lots of information, which we will have forgotten in about 2 minutes flat. Now I am not sure if I have mentioned it before but it is hot and today it is expected to reach 38 degrees C, it will be even hotter in the old city as the sun reflects off the white stonework and there is also very little breeze, oh this should be fun.

We set off into the city like proper tourists with our intercoms hanging around our necks and earphones on which we will be able to hear the guides commentary. I have said before that this lark is not really our bag but today we will have to stick with it as immediately after the walking tour we will be taking a cable car ride up to the top of the mountain, well its more like a big hill but no one fancies walking up there in this heat. My god this woman can talk and is also fairly repetitive in so much as as we are walking towards a point of interest she gives us the information about it and when we arrive at said point we get it all again, there is one advantage to this intercom system, it does have an off switch. Finally the tour is over and in a lather of perspiration, as on a cruise you don't sweat you perspire, we have arrived at the cable car station and we stand in line waiting for our car to come and collect the 26 of us. When we get to the lower station we set off on our own to explore and find somewhere to get some lunch, we stroll around for a while, then while walking past a restaurant we meet the American group from our boat and join them for lunch. After lunch we set off on our own for a further look around before we order an Uber to get us back to the President for a little relax prior to dinner.

As today is all free time there is no dinner served on the boat as usually most peeps would stay in town for the evening, tonight it is a bit different as the majority of us want to watch the England V USA ladies football, so for dinner we have ordered pizza to be delivered to the President.

Unfortunately England were robbed by what the majority of us thought was a bad offside decision, anyway we all had a good time and enjoyed each other's company. Then it was time to go up to the other deck and resume the sporting challenge of boat visiting. As usual with this type of sport the challenge has grown and now the mission should you choose to accept it, is not only to visit the other boats but like true pirates return with a trophy from each boat we visit, which will obviously be returned later. We end up

with another mat, a selection of plants, goggles, ashtrays and a number of other items. The party boat is not with us tonight so our plans of a mass gate crash have been thwarted, after we have returned our pirates booty is returned to its rightful boats, it is time for bed for some much needed shut eye, more tomorrow folks.

Day 30 3rd July

After a few late nights I am up early as I need to catch up with blog, before the brain cells forget what we have been doing, today we are visiting the island of Mljet, we along with the other boats that had been surrounding us set sail at 7am it's like the fleet leaving port. After the now usual routine of breakfast followed by our team meeting we head to the Sun deck to relax for a while before lunch. We are having lunch and dinner on board today and this evening it is the captains dinner, luckily this is a relaxed affair and there is no dressing up or at least that's what I think. We have lunch while the Captain does his job up at the front as we continue our voyage towards yet another one of the 1,000 islands of Croatia. We dock at about 2pm and then we have a 2km walk which includes 110 steps up and down, to catch yet another boat to take us to the top end of the bigger of the two salt water lakes, that are not really lakes as they are linked to the sea and are tidal.

The four course lunch seemed like a good idea until about step 99 of the 110 that take us up to the top of the hill before we can descend back down to sea level, the combination of food, hiking up hill and heat are really not a great companions and one is perspiring slightly, this is an anagram of sweating like a pig, however as we are on a cruise we men only perspire and the ladies glow. When we get to our destination our cruise manager is going to give us a tour, which we join but leave after about 10 minutes, as the cooling waters of the lake are calling to us. The water is lovely and we swim around for a while we head back to dry land, now getting out is interesting as the floor of the lake is covered in sharp stones and not nice soft sand, Barb is ok as she has her swimming shoes on, me on the other hand are bare footed, there are a couple of ooh, aaaah and ouch moments before I am back on Terra firma.

We then join the Kiwi's who have beaten us to a bar, after a quick libation we head back to the ferry and then retrace our way up and down the 110 steps back towards the MS President. After a shower and change we head down to the quayside with Reece & Clare to watch the boats and the world go by, oh and for a beer, for a while before returning to the ship for the Captains dinner and party time, to be fair so far it's been a bit of a party every night of the cruise. Barb and Brownie who is the male of the kiwi party have been hatching a plan and pop out of the restaurant area of the ship, when they return they have swapped clothes much to the amusement of everyone on board, this causes a fair bit of banter between us all and a few of the other passengers including the cruise manager follow suit and swap clothes with each other, I wasn't aware that it was this type of cruise

when we booked. It is suggested that the Captain swaps with one of the female members of the crew but he is having none of it, the party continues through to the early hours and obviously there is no blog writing happening tonight or early tomorrow morning for that matter.

Day 31 4th July

Hey it's wedding anniversary day, American Independence Day and also one of the Americans birthdays so it looks like it's going to be yet another party day. We do not set sail until 8am as the Captain on one of the other boats parallel parked next to us, must have been out a bit too late last night and was late getting to the bridge. At breakfast the anniversary, birthday and Independence Day good wishes are passed around with plans made to celebrate later.

Ok I have to come clean and let you know that this section of the blog isn't being written until the 7th July, as the celebrations and fun continued on and there was no time available for blog writing, well that would have been in anyway coherent, mind you not that the rest of it is. You do need to know that the next couple of days blog may not be in the exact chronological order of events, as I have managed to loose even more brain cells over the last couple of days and the events of which are slightly hazy.

Right lets give it ago, we have a day of sailing in front of us today, we have departed Mljet and the captain has set a course to Hvar, which apparently is the sunniest island in Europe with 2724 sunny hours each year, it also has more UNESCO heritage than any other island in the world, whatever that means, but it must be good as it was advertised in the itinerary. After a swim stop followed by a bit of relaxing, which is an anagram of going back to bed, not a good anagram I admit but that's what happened. It is then time to join the rest of our cruising companion for a pair of teeth sorry aperitif before lunch. Now for those of you who are not with us I need to give you a quick resume update of our fellow cruisers. Let's start with the Russian guy and his family consisting of him, his wife, daughter and two sons, it appears that he does not speak much English and neither does his wife or the boys, the daughter however does speak the lingo and probably better than me, that said they do not mingle with the rest of us much. We meaning the rest of us have been having a bit of a daily sweep as to what the Russian guy does for a living and also what shirt he will wear, as it looks like he only has two shirts with him, a striped one and a spotty one, or he likes the pattern so much he has a wardrobe full of the same shirts. As American contingent are with Mary the grandmother of the family they try to stay together, but I get the impression that they are getting to the stage when they have had enough of each other's company. There are a few that have mixed with us more than the others and that is Stacey and Gene and also Kevin who since being on this cruise is now known as Eric, this was due to a mix up at the first introductions when your brain cannot remember 26 names all at once. Now when ever Kevin/Eric is seen there is a chant of Eric, Eric, Eric and this can happen anywhere even in crowded bars and

restaurants, it is most amusing, childish yes but very funny and hey lets never grow up. Then there is the A team which consists of 8 peeps, Reece (Brownie) & Clare with no i, well she has two but not in her name, then we have Neil & Kirsten and their fantastic children Jamie and Jessica, oh and then there is us. We have even getting a bit of a name for ourselves as we seem to be the last ones to go to bed, well leave the bar, we get up to a fair bit of devilment and we are also a bit like the borrowers, in so much as our trips to the other boats and returning with booty is growing and is now a proper competition, obviously everything will be returned as it is only done for a bit of a laugh, Jamie and Jessica have taken to it like ducks to water and also insist that everything goes back to the correct boat as it should, originally there was going to be a competition between Reece and myself as to who could get up to the most devilment but I gave up days ago as there was obviously only going to be one winner and that was not going to be me.

As we are all having lunch on the ship today, which is a good job as its not stopping anywhere until we get to Hvar later in the day, during lunch the celebrations commence with Reece and Clare treating the A team to a couple of bottles of Prosecco to celebrate our anniversary and then a cake for the birthday boy and also one for us with two candles on it as the health and safety committee of the ship would not allow the full 38 to be ignited in case of fire. After lunch the anniversary celebrations continue with a few more drinks before we arrived at Hvar, the docking procedure at Hvar is to be different than at other stops we have made, as no ships are allowed to stay docked until 8pm, it will dock a 4pm and any passengers wishing to get off can do and any then the President will anchor out in the bay until 8pm anyone wishing to stay on board can do so and then get a water taxi over later. The A team is split slightly as Kirsten, Jamie & Jessica leave the boat to go for a swim while the rest of us stay on board, we are all going for a meal out in the countryside this evening and the plan is as follows. Kirsten, Jamie and Jessica will catch a water taxi back to the boat and after a shower and change we will all get another taxi back to Hvar. Well that was the plan but we hadn't allowed for Croatian time keeping and efficiency, one is always late and the second does not exist. Kirsten's taxi was never going to get back to the boat in time for us to catch another one to get us to dry land to catch the minibus out to the farm. With some difficulty (and this was supposed to be easy) Neil arranges a water taxi to pick the 5 of us up from the President, eventually it arrives next job is to get aboard the rib as it's a bit choppy and a bit of a drop from the rear deck of the President down to the rib in high heels, not me Barb and Clare. The ride over to the harbour was great fun with the rib on full throttle and Reece telling the guy steering to go faster, getting off was just as interesting, we get there a little late but we get there. The Russian is also going and Neil wins the bet with stripes, we head off in the minibus to the farm, it is a beautiful setting with lavender fields and a little baby donkey running around the fields, all the produce prepared and served at the restaurant is grown and reared there. We have salami, cheese and olives to start, served with a glass of their own wine. We are then shown to the wood fired ovens where our main course has been slow roasted in a cooking pot called a Peka, which I found amusing

and made a comment about touching hot peka's, to the amusement to some of our gang but was totally lost on the young lady giving us the cookery lesson. The peka is brought to the table and contains lamb and roast potatoes, it is served with a different and better wine. In between courses we manage to get some sunset shots out in the lavender fields, after desert we are hurried through the lavender and olive oil shop as the minibus is waiting to take us back to the President. When we get to the harbour the President is the second ship parallel parked against the harbour wall, usually when the ships are moored this way, both ships have a step fastened to the side of the boat to enable passengers to cross the gap safely, however tonight the fenders between to boats have not been positioned correctly and only one step would fit, thus leaving a larger gap than normal. The majority of us have made it across the gap safely, but when I turn around Reece has lost his footing and is dangling between the two boats, Khalifa the cruise manager grabs him around the chest and I grab his arm, together we pull Reece on board, he has a handled pint glass in one hand and not only hasn't dropped it he hasn't spilt any beer either. Seriously though, he his hurt and in a bit of shock, he has hurt his leg and also hit his face on the handrail cutting his left cheek. Khalifa has him checked over and luckily there is no serious damage but he will be badly bruised and sore and it could have been a lot worse, imagine if he had fallen between the boats.

The bar on board is closed but the party continues on the top deck with some communal contraband but hey the bar is shut so it doesn't count, the ship visiting and some more booty is gathered, including another mat which says "Welcome to the Infinity" which is a little bit of a give away, so Khalifa returns it prior to us casting off in the morning, right that's more than sufficient excitement for you and me for one day more tomorrow.

Day 32 5th July

The saloon is a tad empty for breakfast this morning as some of the A team didn't get to bed until 3.20am but we were well and truly beaten by the young Americans as they didn't return to the President until 6am. Neil and I push some food around our plates and I partake in numerous cups of coffee while standing in front of the A/C unit. No one else turns up for the morning meeting so it is postponed until lunch time, anyways it's not that difficult, we will sail towards Split, go to a place called Bol for a swim stop and a look around have lunch on board, dock at Split and then go for a walking tour around split, come back and then do our own thing for the evening meal, simples.

We have made two decisions well one actually as the first was made for us as the President could not dock at Bol due to changes made by the harbour or that's what we are told and secondly we ain't going on another walking tour around Split as it's extremely hot and I already know about Diocletian and his palace, well when I say I know, I did when I went on the tour but forgot it all about ten minutes later. So what does that mean well it means

we are going to relax all day and ready ourselves for our evening out, Neil has been doing some research and has found a restaurant overlooking the harbour at the pretty side that is supposed to be worth a visit and all of the A team members will be attending, we have invited Eric and his wife but he has said that he would love to join us but unfortunately as it's the last night they will have to spend it with the family.

We have lunch on board is sea bream which is served in a paper bag, what's all that about surely they have a pan and plates, it's then time for the walk or relax and as previously stated relax won't hands down. We have arranged to meet at 7pm in the bar for a small pair of teeth prior to heading to the restaurant. We have all scrubbed up pretty well and while having our aperitif I share some information about the Russian firstly I won the sweep as I saw him in earlier going out in stripes, secondly I have found out what his profession is, everyone takes turns in guessing but no one guesses that he is a professional Clown. Neil asked me how I found out and I let my secret out, Khalifa had put everyone's pick up times on the notice board along with their surnames and after touching a couple of keys google did the rest.

We head off to the restaurant and have a very enjoyable meal, I even photograph my main course which is something I never do, during the meal Kevin and some of the family walk past to shouts of Eric, Eric, Eric much to his and our amusement and the total bemusement of the other diners and passers by. It's then time to return to the MS President for the last evening aboard and a final nightcap, we have all put a strict midnight curfew on the evening as we all have to travel tomorrow, mind you our travel consists of a 10 minute drive in an Uber. We have set curfews before during the week, none of which have been kept but tonight we manage it and say one last cheers and jiggle jiggle, for know at least, time for an early night.

Day 33 6th

It is with a heavy heart that we go to the saloon for breakfast, as it is the last one we will have together on board the MS President, things are moving a bit slow this morning, probably because we are all worn out and a bit deflated. Some of us still have to pack and some, Eric being one of them have already left for the airport at 5.30am. Our bags need to be out of our cabins by 9am so that the President can be made ready for the next group of passengers, I bet that they will not be as much fun as our group.

We get our bags and leave them by the gangplank ready for our disembarkation crikey that sounds painful, we return to the saloon and chat to the rest of the A team and the remaining Americans, who are eager to know what and how I found out the Russians profession as you can imagine no one guessed correctly however Gene was very close with comedian. At 10am it's time for us to get the Uber App fired up and hail a cab, we say farewell to the Americans then we have to say farewell to the A team, our

new found friends, I have to say that it is difficult to say goodbye as they really are a great group of peeps and I would like to thank all 6 of them for making what would have been a great week into a truly truly Fantastic week it would not have been the same without you and for making our anniversary a special day that we will remember for ever. I hope that we have the opportunity to meet again and until then we can keep in contact through all the various forms of communication now available to us, I thank you one and all.

Got to go before the tears aflow, Uber button pressed and it says 2 minutes to arrival however the traffic is abysmal and it's more like ten, once the bags are in and the doors are closed we are off, no actual communication but we are off and it's a bit like Sandra's behind the wheel of a taxi not a bus, must be a different film. At this speed it's not long before we are reunited with Gloria, I go to reception to book in again as we have decided to do a bit of regrouping by staying here tonight and setting off tomorrow, we will also be able to do some washing. Booked in and washing machine credits added to the yellow wristband we head off and fill two of the three machines, while they are tumbling around doing their thing, I put up a washing line, now this thing would have us immediately thrown off a Caravan Club site and as it is over half a mile long it would probably lead to a life time ban, but here what the hell no one is bothered.

With the washing drying, I should be blog creating but hey that ain't happening as I can not stay awake, but I am also having difficulty have a snooze as the site is mad busy, while we were away it has changed from low season to high season and they have got their change dates bang on the button. The empty beach that we were swimming from last week is now completely rammed with bodies waiting for the sun to do its stuff, don't get me wrong there are some advantages to this but not if you want to go for a swim and chill out. Dinner is prepared in chateau Gloria by my own fair hands and its not long before the bed de la Gloria is calling, but it's hot very hot, we have seriously got to look at some A/C for the back of Gloria, but before we sort that out it's a hot goodnight from us.

Day 34 7th July

After breakfast I settle our bill, Gloria is made ready to transport us to a site in Croatia near to the Slovenian border, we want to stay in Croatia as we still have some Croatian donk left so we may as well use it rather than taking it home and getting a pants exchange rate, as I already have a 2 Swiss frank coin, change from the Swiss vignette purchase, that is about as much use as a hole in the head, never though I should have sold it to the Russian.

It's not long before we are on the A1 and Sylvia issues the command of turn right after 292 kilometres so we will not be hearing much from her for about three hours, Gloria's intergalactic switch is set, well it's the cruise control button actually and that's about it for three hours other than moving the

steering wheel a bit in different directions. The A1 is a great road with not a great deal of traffic unlike our wonderful M6, we can see the mountains in the distance and as they closer the road starts to climb and climb some more, we eventually get to the top of the climb at 670 meters above sea level. Then the descent starts which is not as severe as the climb, we are about 40km from our destination and the sky's are turning black all around us, the forecasted storm is on its way and is pushing the wind in front of it, which is blowing and bending the trees at the side of the road as well as blowing Gloria from left to right. As we approach the longest tunnel on the route a stone or what we think is a stone hits the windscreen, as Barb is inspecting the screen for damage there is another bang and another, they are actually hailstones and big big hailstones, luckily the sanctuary of the tunnel is only meters away and we enter it before the massive hailstones can do any damage.

We arrive at the Kamper stop which is located in a rural setting outside a small village, it is a beautiful spot surrounded by fields of sweet corn and with lush green forested hills in the distance, the facilities are immaculate and would put a number of hotels to shame. There are cooking facilities, a bbq, electricity, free Wi-fi and a pleasant seating area, I would recommend it to any one passing this way, just in case you do it is called Kamp Sablyak selo at Ogulin. While we are sitting enjoying the peace and quiet a van arrives towing a pretty large rib they turn into the site which is long but a tad narrow, it is fairly good sport watching him turn the rig around in a confined space which is obviously helped by the directions he is being given by his wife, well judging by the conversation that is going on. The rain has stopped and it has brightened up but there are more storms forecast and the forecasters were on this occasion not wrong at all. The storm starts and the lightening lights up the sky while the immediate thunder claps shake the ground, we are right in the middle of this display of nature, one of the lightning bolts hits the electricity pole about 10 meters away from Gloria and there is a massive flash of blue light accompanied by a seriously loud cracking noise.

The storm lasts for a couple of hours, during the storm a massive Morelo Palace Motorhome check this out its ridiculous <https://www.morelo-reisemobile.de/en/models/palace> towing an equally massive power boat, arrives and after making numerous attempts at getting the complete rig into the site which was obviously never going to happen, he gives up, unhitches the boat leaves it outside and then parks the massive expensive, make that very expensive van next to Gloria who is dwarfed by its size but is in no way intimidated. When the van with the rib arrived I was talking to Barb about the roof mounted air conditioning unit they have and how cool it must be inside, after the storm has finished lighting up the sky I take a trip to the bathroom and on route stop for a chat with the guy with the rib, he tells me that the van was hit by lightening during the storm and has blown the circuit board on the A/C unit, this is a bit of a blow or actually not a blow as they are on route to Split and beyond where it is extremely hotter than it is here.

It's then time for bed and it will be pleasant to get a night's sleep in the cool of the countryside, I have now caught up so more tomorrow.

Day 35 8th July

Last night's storm has cleared the air and it is a beautiful fresh morning with just a few white fluffy clouds floating over the hills in the distance, luckily the storm does not appear to have done any other damage apart from blowing the circuit board in the other British van, who has left early to get to their destination or at least closer to it and the heat without the benefit of his A/C unit. While we are having tea and coffee the big expensive rascal next to us starts up and starts to manoeuvre out of the site in reverse, now I suspect that it has more reversing cameras than you can shake a stick at, but they also have two way radio so that the person outside giving instructions to the driver does not have to shout, ffs. I shudder to think what that little lot cost, it would probably buy you a decent house, not in London obviously.

We head off and today we will be saying farewell to Croatia for this trip and heading across the border into Slovenia and back into the Euro zone, so before that happens we need to go shopping and get shut of some of the donk we have left. When we went to the supermarket not only were we relieved of some donk we also managed to leave Gloria's step behind in the car park, this was not apparent until we arrived at our stop for tonight in Slovenia very close to the Austrian border, so there was no way we were going back for it. That makes two we have lost in the last 12 months, the one Barb left behind today although as I was driving I suppose technically it was my fault and the second was definitely my fault although it wasn't lost I just drove over it in the pitch black at 4am one morning in the Lake District while Jennie and I were on a photography course and heading for a sunrise shot. That's two things we need to replace when we get back, the step and also the fresh water filler cap which some idiot took the key out of and left on a tree somewhere in Croatia, and oh the idiot was obviously me.

We are on the main A2 in a couple of minutes and in less than an hour we are at the border, no one on duty at the Croatian side and a very cheerful chap at the Slovenia side, once across is to buy a Vignette to cover us to use the motorways without getting a fine, this is the second one we have had as we got one on the trip out, basically it's a sticker that you put on your windscreen, after reading the instructions I stuck the vignette to the screen and it was only then that I realised that I had put the wrong half of the thing on the screen last time, oops. We are heading for Ljubljana and there is not a great deal of motorway between the border and the city, the first hour or so are spent on roads that are not really to Gloria's liking not only are the up and down and around some tight bends they are also narrow and the surface is poor to say the least and rattle Gloria unmercifully. Eventually we get to a sort of motorway and it's not long before we are turning off to go into Ljubljana, we drive into the city with plans to stop and have a look around but after driving around for a while we do not see anything that

floats our boat, so we head off for the countryside. We find our chosen Kamp and not only are we the only Brits in the village there is no English spoken here, as our Slovenian is none existent it's the point and shrug method of communication, it works pretty good and we are soon on our pitch, well even though we have a big piece of wood with a pitch number on it, there is no defined pitch that we can see. Hey it's one night and there is plenty of room but the 6 meter caravan club rule is being broken in many places.

Not much more to report for today as it is raining profusely and there is a bit of thunder and lightening but nowhere near last night's display, tomorrow we will be heading into Austria and we will have to purchase another vignette and also remove the dash cam from the windscreen as they are not allowed in Austria and there is a heavy fine if you have one. More from Austria tomorrow and we may even be able to get a decent slice of cake.

Day 36 9th July

After settling our bill we set off towards the A1 again, but before we join the motorway we stop to get some shopping and spend some of the donk we have left, rather than getting a stupid exchange rate back in the UK. Shopping done we are on our way and it is not long before we are at the border crossing, a very cheerful border control chap wishes us a safe trip after checking with us that we had no one else on board but doesn't bother checking our passports, after crossing the river we are at the Austrian control where we purchase a ticket for the tunnel that we will need to go through if we want to go any further and we also purchase a vignette so that we can travel on the motorway system. The vignette is stuck to Gloria's windscreen and joins the Slovenian one and the Swiss one, from which I still have 2 Swiss Franc change. After going through the 8km tunnel we head for Villach which is on the Drava river and is the seventh largest city in Austria. When we get there we have a drive around too see if there is anything that we would stop and look at, this initial search was not very forthcoming so we decide to continue on but not before we find a large Motorhome, caravan and camping store. After checking out the Motorhomes and a 5th wheel hitch caravan they have for sale we have a look around the shoppy bit and we make a couple of purchases, can you guess what, yes yet another step and a cap for Gloria's fresh water system Doh! Then we are on our way again and heading for the town of Werfen which is not far from Salzburg, on the way we travel through around and under the Alps and nature provides us with some beautiful scenery, the high peaks of the Alps still with pockets of snow and covered in white fluffy clouds, lush green forested hillsides and deep valleys below us with rivers filled with fast flowing glacial coloured water, it is beautiful it really is and we are very fortunate to witness nature's display, I imagine it must be equally as beautiful in the winter when everything is covered with the white stuff, snow I mean.

We arrive at Werfen and find the car park that we will be staying in tonight, after checking that it is ok, we head into the village which is extremely

quite, we guess that this place is busier in the winter than summer. I find a bank to get some Euro donk and then we manage to find a bar for a quick refreshment, I am still in shorts and a T-shirt but the temperature is nowhere near the 36° it was when we left Croatia, it is nearly time for grown up pants and tomorrow it definitely will be as well as a fleece, as we are going to visit the Worlds Largest Ice Caves, then on a cable car, which I suppose will be going up before coming down and then we will be visiting Hohenwerfen castle which is situated on a 623 meters precipice overlooking the town (thanks Wiki). It featured in the films, The Sound of Music and Where Eagles Dare. Hey busy day sightseeing don't you know oh and by the looks of it plenty of that walking lark.

After dinner served in che Gloria it's time for an early night to ready ourselves to catch the 8.18am bet it's late bus to the ice caves, so that's your lot, I need to prepare my Michael Cain voice for tomorrow.

Day 37 10th July

I am awake before the alarm which was set for 7am and it's another beautiful morning, even it is in a car park, plenty of time for coffee and breakfast before the bus is due to arrive at 8.22am to take us to our first drop off point, the bus costs €7 return per person which I did think is a bit steep for a 7k journey but after reading about the journey the road is not really suitable for Motorhomes, after handing over our 14 donk we take our seats on the minibus, it is only a 7k journey but during that 7k the road climbs and zig zags its way up the side of the mountain, steep is not the word and it looks like it was a good idea to fork out the 14 donk, as Gloria would not be at all happy getting up here. The first part of the trip sees us getting ff the bus at 800m above sea level. Then its a short up hill hike to the ticket station then its another hike up to around 900m to get to the cable car, this then takes you up to 1510m, then its another steep uphill hike to the entrance of the caves at 1641m, and this is before you start the tour of the ice cave. While we are waiting to enter the cave two of our party empty a number of extra items of clothing out of their rucksacks, they are already wearing a number of layers and then proceed to add the additional layers, they end up wearing more skins than an onion. All of these layers are accompanied by wooly hats and head torches, I am sure that they think that they are going on a full 43k exploration of the caves, myself on the other hand am the complete opposite as I am wearing a t shirt and carrying my coat. Our guide introduces himself and explains what will happen during the tour, he hands out paraffin lanterns with open wicks, which immediately get blown out when he opens the door to the cave, the air escaping from the cave is caused by the difference in air pressure inside and outside the cave, depending on the ambient temperature the wind speed can be up to 100kph in or out. We are the first group of the day and the group is only small in numbers, this turns out to be a great benefit in more ways than one. The ice caves goes into the mountain for 43k, luckily though we are only going 1k into it, included in the 1k hike in and out there is also 700 stairs up and on the way out 700 stairs down, who's idea was

this. Last night Barb really wanted to do this tour, however she has a few fears to conquer, number one she doesn't like caves and gets claustrophobic in confined small places, she doesn't like dark caves and as for 700 stairs up and 700 down well they are definitely not on her favourite list. After an initial I'm a Barbara get me out of her, we set off on the tour, unlike any other caves we have been in this one has no artificial light at all except from the light from the illuminated wicks we are carrying and not all of us by the way just the chosen few. The first stop is at the top of the first 300 steps and its not a stop to look at anything its a defibrillator stop, oh no its not it is to look at an amazing nature made ice sculpture, as we only have our wicks to illuminate things our guide lights an incandescent taper which gives off a bright light but does not last for long a few more of these tapers are ignited to give us more of a view of the sculpture, surely a torch or lights would do a better job but apparently it would not give the same effect. We then attack the other 400 steps of which 100 of them are more like a ladder than steps this is a defo defib required moment, on the way we stop at various points to look at the magnificent ice displays that nature has so graciously given us. After a bit more after a bit more of a hike we are 1k into the ice cave. As we are the first tour of the day, a small group and as yet no other groups have entered the cave our guide tells us that we can take some photographs which would not normally be possible. Then it is time to appreciate total darkness as we extinguish our lanterns, it is as dark as a dark thing can be and even after a few minutes our eyes can still not see anything, our wicks are lit again and now It is then time to start our descent of the 700 steps, which due to the lack of light inside the cave is not as easy as it sounds, eventually the door is opened and we are outside in the brilliant sunshine, it does take a few moments for our eyes to become accustomed to the daylight after being inside for over an hour. Apart from being allowed to take photographs, the other benefit of being the first group is that now there are queues of people waiting to enter and also the groups now consist of 40 or more peeps. We thanks our guide and hand over some donk to say thank you, it is then time to make our way down the mountain and on the way we stop on numerous occasions for photographic opportunities that nature has provided us with, it is difficult to put into words the views that nature have given us, they are simply stunning.

We do not get back to Gloria who has been waiting patiently for us in the car park until around 1pm, after a bite to eat we head up to the Castle. It was our intention to tour both the caves and the castle today, however the caves took longer than expected and when we get to the castle the car park is rammed packed and there are massive queues waiting to get into the castle. As we have to get some miles done today we unfortunately decide that we do not have time for the castle tour and that it we will have to revisit in the future. We have booked our ferry tickets for Friday at 2.20pm and we have got to cover over 720 miles to cover before we get to Calais, so we best be getting a move on.

It is not long before we cross the border into Germany and the checks are getting less and less, our passports are glanced at by the Austrians and are

not even looked at by the German border control, although a number of vehicles are being stopped and inspected. We are soon on the autobahn which has basically no speed limit and the big Audi's, BMW's and Mercedes are stretching their legs and passing us at twice as fast as Gloria's terminal speed, this makes overtaking interesting as they appear from nowhere behind us, a few including a Ford Focus RS pass us at what must be absolutely flat out at about 155mph. We are eating into the kilometres until we see flashing lights in front of us and the autobahn comes to a standstill, its a bit like being on the M6. We sit motionless for about one and half hours during which we chat with Claire and Brownie who are on their way from Gatwick to Heathrow on route to New Zealand they are in a similar boat, as they are stationary on the wonderful M25 and have been there for about hours. Eventually we are on the move again but the time spent at a standstill has done our schedule no good at all and we have to find a camper stop for the evening, Barb finds one not far off the autobahn and we are soon booked in and find a pitch that is reasonably level.

It has been a long day, after a bite to eat and a quick libation its time to get some sleep and ready ourselves for tomorrows journey which due to the time spent at a standstill is owing to be a longer journey than we ad planned, so that's all folks more tomorrow.

Day 38 11th July

Today may be a bit of a boring blog as we need to get a lot of miles or kilometres done today to close the gap between our current location and Calais. After a quick breakfast we are back on the autobahn, I forgot to mention yesterday that now that we are in Germany we are in the home of my favourite motorway sign, Ausfahrt which is German for exit, it makes me laugh every time I see it, childish I know, but I think its funny. We are on our way but after about 100k we come to a standstill again, this is not going according to plan which was to get to Ypres in Belgium which is one of our favourite places in Belgium and gives us the opportunity to go the Menin Gate and pay our respects to the people who bravely gave their lives for our freedom, if you haven't been there you need to go, it is a very moving experience.

The drive continues and we cross a seamless border into Luxembourg well we pass a sign at the side of the motorway, first stop as soon as we cross the border is for gogo juice as Gloria's low fuel light has been on for a while and started flashing about 20k ago, which means that Gloria is in desperate need for fuel. One good thing about arriving at a fuel station in Luxembourg on complete empty is that we are able to add more cheap diesel to Gloria's tank, and cheap it is at one euro nine cents a litre. With a full tank of fuel we set off with Ypres still our target for the evening, we are soon through Luxembourg and cross another none existent border control into Belgium. The next problem is that we have arrived at Brussels at rush hour and again we are at a standstill, this causes us two problems, firstly we were going to pop in see the European lot and have some scouser negotiations to sort out

this Brexit farce, but as we are late they will have one home, mind you they probably went home hours ago as I am sure that they never do a full days work. Secondly we are going to have to abandon the idea of getting to Ypres and find a stop closer to us but not too far from Calais, Barb has found a site that fits the bill and we arrive there at about 7.30pm.

We arrive at this rural site and while Barb checks us in, I get Gloria level and plugged in, we are both tired from the days travel and feel a little deflated as we been travelling all day and have covered less than 300 miles. Oh well chin up and get on with it, time for a bite to eat and another libation while we sit outside Gloria and appreciate the views that the countryside offers, then its time to get some sleep to ready us for the last dash to the ferry tomorrow.

Day 39 12th July

Gloria is prepared for travel while Barb gets breakfast sorted out for us, then we are on our way, Sylvia tells us that we ill be in Calais just after 11am which will give us time for a spot of shopping and to get some lunch prior to our booking in time of 1.30pm. This mornings journey goes without a hitch and we arrive at Sylvia's suggested time, time to visit the hyper market and see what is available, I know that I have said it before but I love the supermarkets in Europe the verity of fresh vegetables, meats and fish are fantastic and this one is no different, but we are not here for fresh produce, the majority of our purchases will be contained in glass. As we about to leave the hyper market it is invaded by hundreds of marauding kids making one hell of a noise.

When we depart Cite Europe Gloria feels a tad sluggish and unresponsive, this is probably due to the fact that our recent purchases added to the bottles that were already on board she is now carrying more than her own body weight in alcohol. We arrive at the ferry terminal and are immediately reminded why we usually travel at stupid o'clock in the morning, the place is rammed and the ferry is also running 20 minutes late. Eventually we board the ferry and guess what so do all one million marauding kids, it is complete bedlam, this is going to be a long one and half hours. We get through the crossing and are grateful to be back in the relative peace and quiet in Gloria. We are going to see Barb's cousin Ann in Braintree Essex on the way home, this is about a two and half hour drive from Dover, but is 4.30pm on a Friday afternoon and that is not a good time to travel on our great motorway system.

Things go better than I expected with just the usual hold up at the Dartford tunnel, we arrive at Ann's just before 7pm and after hugs and hellos its time for some food and a celebratory glass of vin blanc, we chat and catch up and then its time for bed, that's it for today.

Day 40 13th July

It's a bit of family time today so without me padding this out a bit, it is going to be a bit on the short side, so we are going to take a few steps back in time firstly to the cave, I am sure that you will have realised from me explanation of the trip that it was a fair old hike, firstly to get to the entrance and secondly up and down a large number of stairs once we were inside the cave. The actual data facts and figures that our iPhones recorded back up what my calf muscles and knees were thinking during the hike and even more so the next day. These clever iPhones had recorded that we had walked 5.1 miles, covered 14,427 steps and wait for it, climbed 79 floors. 79 floors crikey that's some height, the Empire State Building has 102 floors, I have been up there and that's high, so climbing 79 floors is like climbing over 75% of the floors in the Empire State Building, I know that peeps run a race up to the top of the ESB, but hey they are not me so I will happily settle for 79 floors. I really am starting to waffle now, but seriously if you are ever near the town of Werfen in Austria in the summer months then pay the Eisriesenwelt (World of the Giants) Ice caves a visit it is well worth the effort involved to get up there. Once inside you will be able to appreciate how amazing nature is and view something that was created in the Tertiary period which according to Wikipedia ranged from 66 million to 2.6 million years ago which is way beyond my comprehension, (Pete alias Dr Rock I need some help here) fair to say its a while ago. You also have to think back to the first explorers of the caves, it was originally discovered in 1827 but was not fully explored until 1912, try to imagine how these early explorers with their limited equipment managed to go 43 kilometres into the mountain they were very brave peeps.

Right that's enough padding, I need to save some more fascinating information in case i need to pad out tomorrows drivel, back to today, after a walk into town for a look around as it is market day after all. It's safe to say that no purchases were made at the market, after a bit more of a look around it is time for coffee and cake with a spot of people watching, then its time for some food shopping before retuning to Bradford street, to watch the women's tennis final in one room while I watch the F1 qualifying from Silverstone one of the fastest tracks on the calendar and one I have had the pleasure to visit on a few occasions and have also had the privilege of driving around. The drivers of today are still brave guys but when you think back to the early days of motorsport the drivers were gladiators and we lost far to many of them in their quest for speed. The tennis is over very quickly and apparently Serena was given a proper thrashing while at Silverstone Bottas pipped Hamilton to pole position, but being first across the start line does not necessarily mean being first across the finishing line, but we will have to wait until tomorrow to see what happens.

Hannah joins us later, its really great to see her, we chat about stuff during and after dinner and its not long before it is time to turn in for the night, so that's it for today, you only have two more days to endure oh and the epilogue bit where we will review what we have learnt over the last 42 days, that could be a long one or a short one depending on how good my memory is. Until then nighty night.

Day 41 & 42 14th & 15th July

As Sunday is really a family day and Monday is a travelling day, I am going to combine the two as there will not be a great deal to report and you may get a little bored, after breakfast and a good chat it is time to decide on what we will make of the rest of the day. A day that will mainly be spent watching two of the major sporting events of the the day, the men's finals at Wimbledon and the F1 Grand Prix at Silverstone, there are a couple of other sporting events going on today but they will not be on our watch list. The girls go for a walk while I watch the F1 preamble something that I do not usually watch but as it's Silverstone I thought I would give it ago. The F1 finished a bit quicker than the tennis that's probably due to the fact that they drive at 200+mph, although Bottas got away first, Lewis got the job done and became the only driver to win 6 British GP's. In the tennis Roger could not get the job done and after a long close fought battle Djokovic came out the winner. It's then time for dinner and we are joined by two of Ann and Hannah's friends, after a pleasant evening it's time to get some sleep, to ready ourselves for the final leg of the journey.

Day 42 we head off and Sylvia tells us we have a four and a half hour journey in front of us, we all know that's not true as we will have the wonders of the A14 and the M6 to deal with. Gloria does feel a bit sluggish especially going uphill, this is probably due to the extra stuff she is carrying, what stuff I hear you say, but obviously you know that by stuff I mean booze and Gloria has lugged her own weight of the stuff from mainland Europe, I would not like to put her on a weigh bridge. As suspected the journey took far longer than Sylvia expected due to the A14 & M6 being rammed and as slow as a slow thing could be, oh I do love the M6, and it wasn't until 3.30pm that we arrived back at number 53 and the end of our adventure to Montenegro. It's sort of nice to be home and to have a cup of tea with Liverpool water, emptying Gloria will wait until tomorrow so only the essentials and the washing are removed for the time being. We pop round to see mum, it's great to see her and there are hugs all round, we have been in contact with FaceTime and shown her the places we have visited but it's not the same as being together. Then it back home as Barb has 40 episodes of Emmerdale to catch up with, after dinner we watch something other than Emmerdale and then it's sleep time in our own bed which we haven't seen for a while, that is the end of the journey but we will have a little recap in the epilogue.

Epilogue

Right lets have a bit of a recap of the last 42 days, where have we been, what have we done, what have we seen. We have covered 3899 miles or 6274 kilometres, have visited and stayed in 12 countries, crossed lots of international borders some of which we didn't even know when we had actually crossed them. We now know that Croatians' especially the females

like talking at the top of their voices and once they have started talking they do not stop, also they would sooner use a million words when four would do, they are officially the Jibba Jabba's of Europe. We have travelled on toll roads and also used the Vignette system in three different countries and I still have the 2 Swiss Franc change from the Swiss vignette purchase, a lot of use that is, unless you are in Switzerland. The cheapest route through to Croatia is through Belgium, Germany and beyond as the French tolls are expensive however the roads are better than the ones in land of Hercule Poirot, you also benefit from popping into Luxembourg and getting a tank full of cheap full. We also learnt that if you had a traffic cone business, in Central and Southern Europe is not the place to expect to make any money, as they just don't use them. In fact they use very little in the way of defining road works, they just dig up the road and then let you drive over the rubble they have left behind, before they eventually return to resurface it, actually one thing they do have is a mechanical dummy dressed in Hi Vis waving a flag, which is pretty funny if nothing else. We have also had it confirmed that there is plenty of money around, with campsite full of very expensive Motorhome's and the Adriatic being full of even more expensive boats, yachts, ships or whatever they are called. We or I have also learnt that I need to get back to do doing a 360° walk around Gloria before we drive off, that way we might not leave things behind Doh!. To sum up we had a fantastic time during our trip and a great time on the cruise, which was made even better by the great people we met on board, we would like to thank them for their company and also making our wedding anniversary a really special day, we hope to see you again. Well that's about it for this trip, we do need to give Gloria a little bit of tlc before her next trip, well that's happening this weekend but we are only going to North Wales so that is not too much of a mission, if you have any ideas what I could do with the 2 Swiss Franc coin please let me know, until next time we set off on an adventure, this is the end of the "It's a Right Royal Flush" trip, until next time safe travels and take care of yourselves.