

ST. SOME CROATIA

and Slovenia

V 2 0 2



KUG
MOLIVE - 2015



Traveling International Teachers

Yes, we all live on the little island in the desert. We all work for the same company. We all have the same time off. It seems, we all have the same taste in traveling on vacation. From left to right, meet the Croatian Crew.

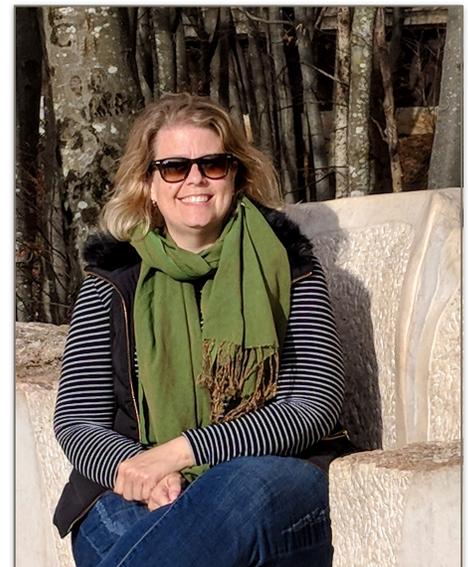
Greg. Yep mom, I made it into the “ussie” photo. Kari is next. If you read the newsletter from Ireland earlier this year, you know Kari. She’s a kindergarten teacher. Sarah, known as “Vaktaaaal” is an art teacher in elementary. Her sister, Laura is in the middle with the yellow bag. She flew all the way from San Francisco to travel with us. The animated person in the pink ski jacket is Jamie. She’s a fourth grade teacher at our school. Brian, her husband, is a middle school teacher at our middle school. Jamie, Brian, and their daughter were on our flight and met us in the streets of Dubrovnik but they were on their own trip. They flew into Zagreb, drove around Croatia south towards Dubrovnik, and flew back to Zagreb. This was their second time to Croatia. They had done all the driving before and decided the drive and fly method was better.



Sarah - Trip planner and human GPS



Laura - “God, I need some more vegetables!”



Kari - our credit card and other trip planner



Munich

Vienna

Bratislava

Salzburg

Budapest

Austria

Hungary

Graz

Lipica, Slovenia

Ljubljana, Slovenia

Zagreb, Croatia

Verona

Venice

Trieste

Rovinj, Croatia

Bologna

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Plitvice Lakes National Park

Zadar

Sarajevo

Sibenik, Croatia

Italy

Bosnia/Her border crossing

Adriatic Sea

Dubrovnik, Croatia

Montenegro Podgorica

Rome

Naples

Tiran Albania

Lecce

Tyrrhenian Sea



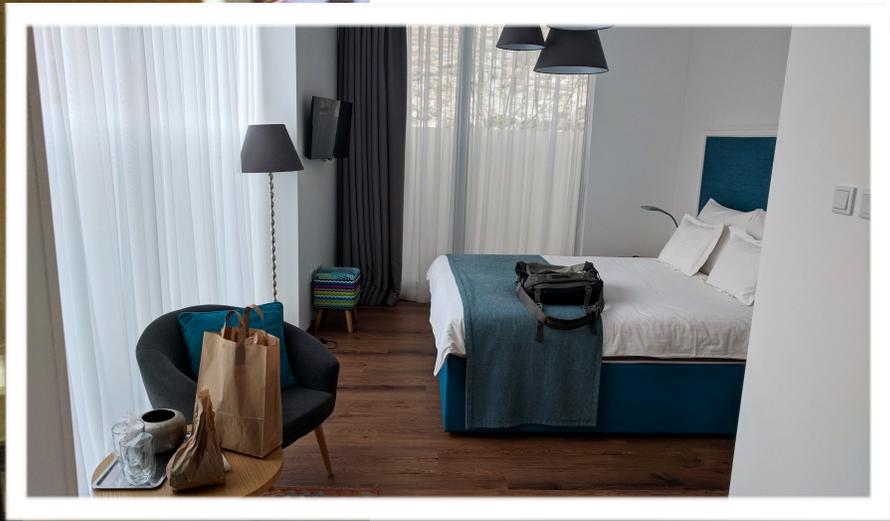


Zagreb, Pork, Beer

This trip was all about the food. Every step of the way included food and drinks that were awe inspiring.

We started our trip at this little bed & breakfast called the Regal Residence. After we got the rental car, we drove close to the pedestrian area the hotel sits in and I guarded the car. We had cell phones, but I didn't have any Kunas (Croatian currency) to pay for parking. I didn't have any Kunas for a beer either, and I was certainly craving a beer!

Kari and Sarah went for a walk and found the B&B to connect with Laura. The sisters came back to find me and together we found the public car park. Minutes later, I had stashed my small suitcase in my room and was having a beer with Kari in the little restaurant below the B&B.



My little B&B room was awesome. Laura ended up staying here one night at the end of the trip while we flew back

The downstairs restaurant offered a simple breakfast for guests only.

The pedestrian area around our B&B was awesome. Each of us split up for a little bit. I simply sat outside of the B&B sipping on a beer while the ladies went for a walk, took naps, and did a bit of shopping.

Later that evening, we agreed on a little Italian restaurant just across from our hotel. Yummy! This was my introduction to **štruklji** (shtr úk lē)- a Slovenian and Croatian dish similar to German **strudel**. Amazing. Instead of fruits like apple, the štruklji is a pastry similar to a

sweet lasagna smothered in a white sauce rather than tomato. Yummy!

Strukli quickly became my favorite food - besides anything pork - throughout the trip. Yes, the entire trip turned out to be about food.

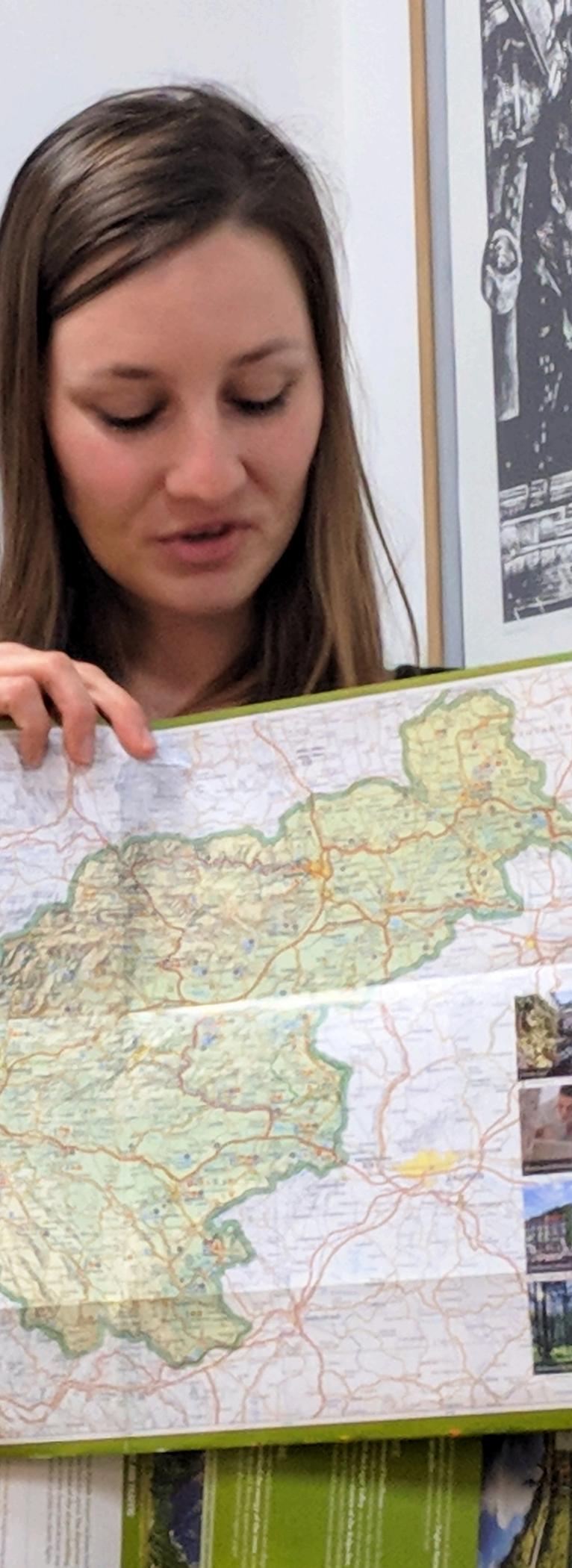
We didn't stay very long in Zagreb. Our plan was to return a day early before we flew out, so it could wait.

After a lazy breakfast in the B&B basement restaurant

and shopping for pork sausages in the market, we jumped in the car and headed for Slovenia.

The roads are amazing. It's like driving in Switzerland.





Food Tour

The Chicken

A true highlight of our entire trip was the food tour in Ljubljana, Slovenia. Sarah signed us up for a four hour food tour through LjubljanaNjam Food Tours.

Our local guide took us throughout the rainy streets of Ljubljana from the market with the fresh milk vending machine to the fish market. Then we followed her like puppies to more restaurants, a wine bar, and ended up in a hippy **make - your - own - damn - coffee - pay - for - the - time - you - stay - there - living - room - place.** (that last one was weird). We only ate a little bit at each place, but that was plenty.

Our guide introduced each dish with a glimpse at the “Chicken”. Obviously, somebody had a real sense of humor when they chose the borders for Slovenia! It really does look like a chicken.

We stayed overnight in Ljubljana two nights. The first was on the outskirts of the old town in a place called Hotel Nox. I recommend it. The second night we stayed at a hotel named Vander Urbani Resort. It was right along the riverwalk, near the famous 3 Bridges and all the nightlife. I recommend the former but not the latter. Vander’s location is awesome and so was the restaurant. Not so much the hotel.

Fun fact: Slovenians take their Easter baskets to church with them in order to have the Easter baskets blessed.

Go to Ljubljana some time!



TAKE A LOOK AT THESE-FOOD DISHES!





Wonders!

Waterfalls and Horses

Two fantastic stops along our trip. Forget the caves. Read about these.

Our trip wasn't just about food, great hotels, and driving all over the place. We included two fantastic stops along the way - waterfalls and horses that I had never heard of prior to the trip.

Officially, we had planned on stopping at the Postojna Cave and Predjama Castle, but there were just too many people (especially kids) at the cave. Uggh. We took a picture of the sign and simply got back in the car. Instead, we stopped in Lipica (near the Italian border) to see the horse stables known for the Lipizzan horses. The Lip-

pizzans are the European version of our famous Clydesdale horse breed. The white stallions are known as the war stallions and back kicks while they are raised on their back haunches. Brilliant! We spent an hour or two at the stables.

Easter weekend is certainly not the time to visit the stables if you are trying to get away from throngs of kids. As teachers, our goal was to avoid family areas and lots of kids. The stables area was packed with picnicking families! The weather was beautiful but once again,

our timing was off. We weren't able to stay for the late afternoon horse show. That would have been pretty sweet! The trainers put on a presentation with the Lipizzaners doing all of their tricks. I had to settle for watching the videos in their little museum.

The second stop was in the forests of Croatia. The famous Plitvice Lakes National Parks is a trip worth planning. We stopped along the way to see if we could get a glimpse of the green lakes and picturesque waterfalls.



The Lippizanner horse breed is born black. As the horse ages, it grows into the famous white stallion or mare known for its training for dancing on its hind legs.

But we hadn't planned enough time.

To really experience the lakes, according to other visitors, you have to arrive for the morning tours. The whole trek appears to be six or seven hours. Why? It involves hiking, two boat rides below the falls, more hiking, and a bus ride back to the beginning. Search the web and you will see breath taking pictures. We just didn't have seven extra hours.

Instead of the tour, the four of us meandered into the second gate - the end falls -

and walked a little way down the footpaths. Even what little we saw of the waterfalls was breathtaking! There was no stopping Laura. She walked all the way down (20min) to the falls to take pictures. The rest of us stayed at the lookout half-way down and avoided the busloads of high school students that had arrived just after us.

Some day, I will return to Croatia and bring a picnic lunch, proper hiking clothes, and a few nature-minded friends.

There must be more wonders around Slovenia and Croatia. These two countries are so beautiful with their mountains, coasts, lakes and forests. The four of us enjoyed how green and clean both countries are.

The Lakes: book in advance. Stay at the hotel nearby for the evening or stay in Trieste, Italy and drive there for the day. Plan for the early tour. What little we saw was AMAZING. Go!



Every once in a while, we would stop the car for a nature break. This was a rest stop in Slovenia.



View of King's Landing!

Have you ever heard of Dubrovnik? Not me! At least I hadn't until this trip. Dubrovnik is one of the few walled cities I have ever visited. It's also where Game of Thrones is filmed. You might recognize Kings Landing as you walk through the streets. (Don't worry Jeff, I got you a T-shirt.)

We stayed overnight at a small hotel called Hotel Stari Grad. The bottom floor has a reception and a small bar with a fantastic bartender from Budapest. This guy can make virtually any drink.

The first through fourth floors each has one room on the right and one on the left. Therefore, this boutique hotel only has eight rooms for full occupancy. The top floor is a restaurant named **Above5** with about four 4-top tables and six 2-tops served by one waiter and one chef - top of the world in every sense of service and tastes.

I never knew sunny side up eggs could taste so amazing. Think of it. Eggs, bread, and a bit of bacon. Cooked to perfection! It's amazing. I could have stayed there all day long.

The Wall

Since the entire city is enclosed by a wall, there are no vehicles allowed. Perhaps there are a few service vehicles, but it's predominantly pedestrian. The ladies walked along the entire wall while I slept in and had my amazing breakfast. (The picture above is from our lunch the day we arrived.)

According to our waiter, don't ever visit during the summer. He lives about 10 minutes outside of the wall. It takes him about 5 minutes to walk from the entrance of the wall to the hotel during the off season. During summer, there are so many people, it takes him a half hour to walk through the throngs of people from the entrance to the hotel. Wow.

We didn't give Dubrovnik enough time. We shopped, wandered, and visited several eateries, but it left me wanting more. Unfortunately, we had to fly back out of Zagreb. Zagreb is 6^{1/2} hours away by highway.

Put Dubrovnik (in the off season) on your bucket list. It's impressive and memorable.

Cathedral of the Assumption of the Virgin, The Dubrovnik Cathedral dates back to the 7th century.





Driving through Croatia and Slovenia is similar to...Switzerland!

Tunnels and Bridges

The trip boasted a lot of beautiful scenery and clean highways. The highways were well marked, spacious, fast (130Km/hr) and filled with tunnels and bridges. Each bridge and each tunnel has its own name!

I drove the trip in 6 hrs at 150Km/hr because the 130km/hr signs seemed more like suggestions to the traffic zooming past us. We only stopped once or twice at a convenient gas station.

If you look at the map on page 2, you will see a green arrow. Look closely. There is perhaps 15 miles of coastline and a small town within the borders of Bosnia Herzegovina.

There must have been an agreement between the countries when they drew up the border lines. Bosnia Herzegovina isn't quite land-locked. We had to go through two border crossings to get from Dubrovnik into northern Croatia. Bizarre! I don't count Bosnia Herzegovina in the countries I've been to. Usually, I have to spend overnight or gamble in the jungle (Myanmar) before I count a country in my list.

We spent 300 Euros to rent our car for six days. Thank you National Emerald Club for that! We had a little wagon that fit four adults comfortably with our luggage. What a pleasant trip. The best part of the trip was the people I was with. Thank you Sarah, Laura, and Kari!



In Croatia, churchgoers bring their Easter baskets to the service in order to have their Easter baskets blessed.



Yes, dad, the **garage door opener** is **still traveling** around the world with me.