

Latitude 38

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WE GO WHERE THE WIND BLOWS

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# CHANGES

was our fault that we didn't get a spot. Another boat had entered the harbor and claimed the last of 50 spots while we were enjoying a refreshing swim just outside the harbor. Not getting a spot in a harbor is a common problem in the high season, so you always need to arrive with a backup plan. We had just enough time to reach an anchorage a few miles away before dark, enjoying a gorgeous sunset and moonrise on the way.

Crap weather hit us during the night, as had been forecast, robbing us of valuable sleep. But after all these seasons here, I've come to trust my anchor. It's no longer nerves that keep me awake, but rather the excessive swinging on the hook and the noise of the wind.

Once the cool morning rain had subsided, we sailed *Geja* into the Kornati National Park, a dense archipelago deforested by humans over many centuries. The landscape is very stark, but there is some great hiking. A National Park boat stopped by that evening to collect the usual visitor fee of \$45/boat/day. While Croatia recently was allowed entry into the European Union, government officials are not always as honest as most in the E.U. For example, the friendly rangers suggested that instead of paying \$45, we simply give them \$17 — which they immediately stuffed into their pockets.

We had another blustery night, but things settled down in the morning. We sailed off the anchor and eventually hoisted the spinnaker for a fast ride to the party town of Vodice. After two nights 'in the wild', it was time for some action, which, as usual, began with an onboard pre-party. Vodka and Red Bull anyone?

From midnight until 2 a.m., the place to be in Vodice is Makina, just a few steps from the marina docks. There we made the mistake of ordering bottle service — a vodka bottle, four Red Bulls, and a table for \$65. It's certainly not expensive like the South of France, but we certainly didn't need the extra libations — although it did lead to a fun little onboard after-party at sunrise.

More great wind allowed us to sail most of the way up the narrow Krka River to the town of Skradin, some 11 miles upstream of the Adriatic Sea. It's a most peaceful and romantic place nestled into a little bay along the river. It is also the gateway to the Krka National Park, home to a series of dramatic cascading waterfalls. By accident we discovered the restaurant Toni



## Geja – 1976 Islander 36 Andrew Vik A Quickie in The Med (San Francisco)

[This is Part II of Vik's sixth annual report from cruising in the Med — mostly the Adriatic — aboard *Geja*. Part I appeared in the October issue.]

After arriving in Zadar, I lost my Swiss crew Lukas, but picked up first-timers Henrik and Mats. Great winds took us from Zadar to Sali on the island Dugi Otok. Alas, the port was full. Actually, it

**Oh no, they're back again?! Andrew Vik, left', and the so-called 'Geja Wolfpack'. Time to lock up the daughters and alert Interpol.**



ANDREW VIK

in Skradin, where they cook each dish for an hour under a preheated iron bell. Compared to the bland, uninspired food at most Croatian restaurants, this place stuffed us with simple but fresh platters of meat, potatoes and veggies.

This year's three-week summer cruise — my shortest ever with *Geja* — went by much too quickly, as we found ourselves back in little Trogir on a Saturday night. Though small, Trogir has its fair share of nightlife, and my crew and I could not help but notice what I affectionately call the 'supermodel' parade. Girls from Croatia's Dalmatian Coast are naturally tall and thin, and they love to emphasize their body type with high heels and short skirts. It was yet another late night, but a fun end to an abbreviated season of Mediterranean cruising.

My crews and I covered 360 miles during the three weeks, 40% of them with the motor off. Usually this percentage has been higher, as much as 60%. We were underway 19 out of the 21 days, and overnighted in 14 different places,



PHOTOS COURTESY GEJA



***Clockwise from above; A waterfall at Krka National Park. One of countless anchorages at Kornati National Park. Mats, who is still working on his diving, plunges into the clear water. Two of the buff crew at Kornati. Vodice has insane crowds. Henrik thought he'd gone to heaven, not Croatia.***

six of which were new to me. Two hundred dollars/person/week pretty much covered the shared costs, such as on-board food, berthing and fuel. Groceries cost about 25% more in Croatia than in the Bay Area, despite income levels in the United States being several times higher.

Based on my six years of cruising Croatia and the Adriatic, I can vouch for its being a great place for sailing adventures. The afternoon winds are pretty consistent, the water is sparklingly clear, and there are so many spots to explore. The fact that there's a book called *777 Harbours and Anchorages* says it all. Development is greatly restricted, so you rarely see modern, multistory hotels along the coast. The historic villages are as quaint as can be. Croatia is as clean and as safe as any European country you can find. We seldom lock the boat, and I never worry about somebody snatching my iPhone out of my hand — as I do at

home in San Francisco. In many ways Croatia is more civilized than San Francisco.

As lucky as I was to buy an affordable boat in the Med, I'm even luckier to have so many good friends to share my sailing and social adventures with. In six years, a total of 59 people have joined me. As long as they keep showing up, count on me to continue my adventures in the Med.

— andrew 10/15/2013