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EUROPE



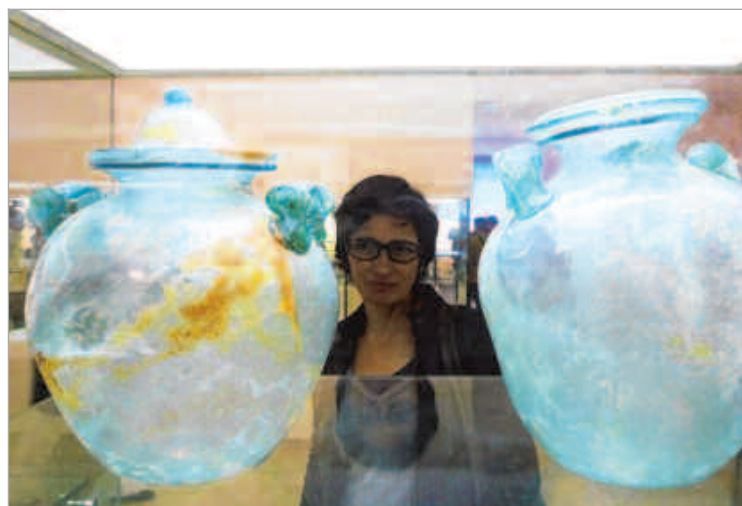
A peaceful walk along the Adriatic Sea in Zadar, Croatia, is a world away from the violence that tore through the region in the early 1990s.

Coast is clear in Croatia

New EU member offers art, music, history, chocolate and a joy for life



Krka National Park, about an hour south of Zadar, is a naturalist's paradise, with a series of seven spectacular waterfalls.



A visitor examines two Roman-era glass jars at Zadar's Museum of Ancient Glass, considered the best collection outside Italy.

Story and Photos by
SUZANNE MORPHET
Special Contributor

ZADAR, Croatia — “My goal is to export,” says Dubravko Vitlov as he watches over a pot of bubbling cream. “I want to make more people happy.”

Vitlov is a master chocolatier in Zadar. He is demonstrating his technique for a Toronto television crew that's filming a show about high-end travel experiences.

He has flavored the cream with cinnamon, vanilla, star anise, cardamom and — oddly enough for chocolate — extract of green pepper. Vitlov seems to be the perfect ambassador for Croatia, which joined the European Union on July 1. He personifies all that's good about the country: its sophisticated culture, its fabulous food, its easygoing *joie de vivre*.

“You always do this by taste,” he says, lifting a spoonful of the rich ganache to his mouth.

“I think it needs more green pepper,” he says after a couple of seconds.

Croatia's membership in the EU might come as a surprise to some, with the 1990-91 war of independence still a recent memory. Since then, corruption has scarred the country. The damage might be less visible than the bullet holes that still pock many buildings, but it's still exacting a huge price.

According to Global Financial Integrity, a Washington-based research and advocacy organization, the illicit flow of money — be it fraud, money laundering, tax evasion or other crimes — cost Croatia more than \$15 billion between 2001 and 2010. The country's former prime minister, Ivo Sanader, was found guilty last November of accepting millions of dollars in bribes and was sentenced to 10 years in jail.

It's easy to feel sorry for the locals, who feel cheated and complain openly about the corruption. “It's a monster, it's a cancer,” one of my guides told me.

But for visitors, Croatia, which lies east of Italy across the Adriatic Sea, is endlessly appealing as well as safe. The biggest danger might be stepping on a black sea urchin at a beach near Dubrovnik, or getting dehydrated under the hot Mediterranean sun.

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MISSOURI

On the road to genius

Along Missouri's Route 36, find the homes of notables

By **JIM WINNERMAN**
Special Contributor

Perhaps there was something in the water people were drinking in northern Missouri in the late 1880s and early 1900s.

Within a few miles of either side of Route 36, which stretches 184 miles and bisects the state

from Hannibal on the east to St. Joseph on the west, are the hometowns of four individuals who had a profound impact on America.

“We refer to the route as ‘the Way of American Genius’ because it passes the hometowns and museums of Mark Twain, Walt Disney, Gen. John J. Pershing and J.C. Penney,” says Beth Carmichael of the St. Joseph Convention and Visitors Bureau. “The

route also comes within three blocks of the museum and stables that were the origination point of the Pony Express.”

Not included in the genius list is notorious outlaw Jesse James, who was living three blocks off Route 36 in St. Joseph when he was gunned down April 3, 1882. His home is on the grounds of the Patee House Museum. The picture he was hanging remains on the wall, just above the hole from

the fatal bullet that pierced his body.

The Missouri Highway 36 Heritage Alliance offers an audio tour that can be played on the route, and has directions for a bicycle route connecting the same sites. Call 1-800-785-0360 or visit americangeniushighway.com.

Jim Winnerman is a freelance writer in St. Louis.

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Mark Twain Boyhood Home & Museum

Children dressed as Tom Sawyer and Becky Thatcher sign the famous white picket fence in Hannibal, Mo.



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