

Croatia rich in history, beauty

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In April in Zadar, on the northern Dalmatian coast, I don't even have to contend with those. My plan is to spend a couple of days in the historically rich city, visit an offshore island or two, and eat as much seafood as possible.

Once part of the Roman Empire, Zadar's ancient forum is still the center of action, even though much of it was destroyed during World War II. It's fun to mingle with the locals at the large outdoor cafe, sip a latte and watch kids play on the ruins, jumping from one beautifully carved stone to another as if they're nothing more than giant Lego blocks.

The remains of the Roman temple, half a dozen historic churches, the archbishop's palace and a Benedictine nunnery are all included in a section of the city nominated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Of these, the convent of St. Mary is particularly fascinating. It houses a remarkable collection of gold and silver reliquaries from the eighth to the 18th centuries, often in the shapes of arms and hands that contain the remains of saints.

At the end of our tour, our guide, a nun dressed in a traditional black habit, suddenly burst into song, belting out a tune with words we didn't understand. But it didn't matter — to her or to us. It was another beautiful display of that passion for life that Croatians seem to have in ample supply.

Over at the city's Museum of Ancient Glass, we examine a beautiful collection of Roman glassware, considered the best outside Italy.

The music of the sea

For me, the best part of Zadar is something much newer. A few years ago, a local

architect had the brilliant idea of installing organ-style pipes under the concrete steps leading down to the water's edge at the city quay. When waves hit the pipes, they push air through them, creating music. The 35 pipes are tuned to create pleasing notes.

Nikola Basic's Sea Organ won the European Prize for Urban Public Space in 2006. Basic also suggested installing solar panels on the quay. The glass plates absorb the sun's energy all day; at night they light up under your feet, changing in time to music from the Sea Organ.

On the road

Needing some nature, I head south the next day to Krka National Park, about an hour from Zadar. In late April, wild purple irises blossom along the banks of the emerald green Krka River. A boardwalk leads visitors along cliffs high above the river and past a series of seven spectacular waterfalls.

Farther along, where the Krka River widens considerably, is the tiny island of Visovac. Home to Franciscan monks since the 16th century, the monastery is surrounded by poplar trees and almost entirely hidden as you approach by boat.

The monks welcome visitors. Their museum contains an eclectic assortment of artifacts, including a rare original copy of *Aesop's Fables* from 1487.

Photos from the war grab my attention: bombed churches, broken bell towers, burned parish houses. "With extreme hate they destroyed and burned Catholic religious objects," reads a sign, referring to the Serbs of that era.

"This was not a good place to be in '90-'91," says park guide Stjepan Gundic, explaining



Photos by Suzanne Morphet/Special Contributor

Kids play on an ancient column from the time of the Roman empire. The Roman forum is part of a site nominated for designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It's fun to mingle with local residents at the large outdoor cafe there.



A nun from the convent of St. Mary in Zadar is happy to photograph visitors. If you're lucky, one might sing for you.



The Visovac Island monastery, started by Franciscan monks in 1576, is inside Krka National Park.

that Serbs were on one side of the Krka River and Croats on the other.

Somehow the Visovac Island monastery was spared. Its biggest challenge these days is attracting new monks.

The secular life has decidedly more pleasures, especially in a country with a long coastline and a rich fishery. That evening I watch two diners devour the largest prawns that I've seen outside Thailand.

My own favorite meal was

served from a small kitchen on a dock on the island of Ugljan.

There were several courses, but it was the calamari that I'll remember. It was fresh, light, crisp and chewy at the same time. I dipped it in olive oil from the island.

I have never tasted its equal — and don't expect to until I return.

Suzanne Morphet is a freelance writer in Victoria, British Columbia.

GOLF

Drive (and putt) the Indy

Part of course is inside famed speedway

SPEEDWAY, Ind. — Many golfers no doubt come to the Brickyard Crossing golf course to play the four holes situated inside the famed Indianapolis Motor Speedway.

Those four holes are an unusual treat, with such great views of the speedway that you'll consider knocking balls onto the racetrack just for fun.

In fact, there are practice days in mid-May, before the race gets underway on Memorial Day weekend, when you

actually can play as cars speed around the track.

The other 14 holes, all in the shadow of the grandstands, some of them adjacent to the track and some next to concession stands, are no less spectacular.

Brickyard Crossing brings together the engine muscle of the nation's most famous auto-racing track and the finesse of a golf course, a mix of speedway asphalt and fairway grass.

It is a challenging golf course of undulating fairways, blind approach shots on some holes and tough greens that should help make Indianapolis a destination for avid golfers.

A round or two at the Brick-

yard Crossing course can be the highlight of a weekend in this sports-focused city, which counts the NFL Colts, NBA Pacers and Indians AAA baseball team among its hometown squads. The city will host the NCAA Final Four basketball tournament in 2015.

Just down the street from the golf course and inside the track is the Hall of Fame Museum, where you can inspect championship cars dating to the race's earliest days.

Add the city's restaurants to the mix, such as the famed St. Elmo Steak House, a popular spot for professional athletes and broadcasters and known for its shrimp cocktails, and Indianapolis can compete with more traditional golf destinations.

For a less expensive but no less tasty choice, the Mug n Bun drive-in, a local favorite just south of the track, offers a breaded pork tenderloin sandwich that is quintessentially Hoosier, as well as homemade root beer and classic shakes.

The golf at Brickyard Crossing puts a premium on accuracy: Leave your tee shot on the wrong side of the fairway and you will find yourself grappling with a blind approach to the green. That's what happens on the third hole, a par 4 where it's tough to even see the green from the left side of the fairway, which is where my tee shot landed.

That makes the approach shot tricky; massive, deep Pete Dye-designed bunkers sitting

When you go

The Brickyard Crossing golf course is at 4400 W. 16th St., Speedway, Ind. (surrounded by Indianapolis); 317-492-6572. brickyardcrossing.com.

Regular season rates are \$100. After 4 p.m., twilight rates of \$60 apply. The replay rate is \$50. There are blackout dates for the Indianapolis 500 and two other events.

behind and on the right side of the green are waiting to swallow errant shots.

After the sixth hole, you go through a tunnel that runs under the racetrack to holes seven through 10, where pine trees dot the landscape and almost make you forget you're inside the speedway.

On the day I was on the golf course, workers were readying the track for the Brickyard 400, a NASCAR race.

The golf course was built in 1929 and consisted of 27 holes, with nine crowded inside the track. Dye's redesign in the early 1990s brought the course to the modern era. Only four holes remain inside the track, so players never feel crowded.

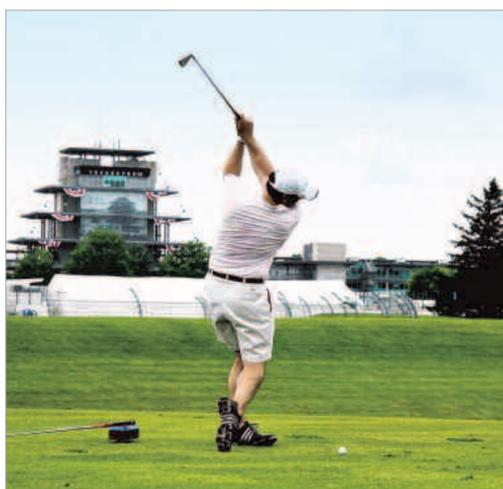
The course has been listed on *Golf Digest's* Top 100 public golf courses, and in the past it has hosted PGA Tour players and tournaments. It generally receives raves from golfers and commentators alike, who see the inside-the-track holes as a surprising element on an otherwise fine course.

Steve Mills, Chicago Tribune



Brickyard Crossing

Brickyard Crossing golfers get to play four holes inside the famed Indianapolis Motor Speedway.



Brickyard Crossing

The course, designed by Pete Dye, is a challenge for golfers and accuracy is essential.



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