

2/12/05  
PUB: STL 20-MAR-2005PRE  
STL 20-MAR-2005PRE

1 2 3 4 Drop



# Croatia's Dalmatian gemstones

By CAMERON WILSON

When the Roman emperor Diocletian built his palace in the Croatian town of Split in the third century AD, he surely never imagined that things would come to this.

On a sunny day, along the sea-facing wall of the former imperial residence, the current inhabitants can be seen hanging out their unmentionables, on laundry lines strung between the windows of what were once the emperor's private apartments. This state of affairs can be traced back to what might be the most pragmatic decision ever made by a people living under the yoke of empire: upon the emperor's death in 311AD, the good folk of Split decided that the best way to preserve the palace was to move into it.

Today, about two thousand people live or work within the palace precinct, whose passages

and walkways have evolved into the narrow streets of what is now the city's historic central district.

You can buy a pair of jeans, get your hair cut, drink a cappuccino or a cold beer and even rent yourself a room — all inside the 1700-year-old home of a real Roman emperor.

My two-day stay in Split seemed a promising start, indeed, to a journey that would take me down the Dalmatian coast to the city of Dubrovnik, stopping off at two of Croatia's most popular holiday islands along the way.

Choosing from among the hundreds of islands that guard the coast (and shelter it from anything resembling serious ocean weather), was not easy, although in the end my decision was largely dictated by ferry schedules, which thin out once the main tourist season (June-September) ends.

First stop was the island of Hvar, only an hour by ferry



Simply stunning: Laid-back living in Dubrovnik (left) and Split (far left), and (facing page) the island of Korcula (top) and a cafe in Diocletian's Palace in Split

from Split. The main town has a striking piazza, hemmed in on three sides by handsome examples of Venetian architecture — courtesy of four centuries rule by the Republic of Venice. It's said that if you visit Hvar anytime during August, you could be forgiven for thinking the place still belongs to the Italians, as they invade in their thousands to sunbathe, swim, strut and preen.

Hvar remains lively, if less showy, until at least early October, when room rates also drop by as much as 30 per cent.

I found the ideal accommoda-

tion to be an apartment with kitchen and balcony, as this allows you to make good use of local produce including seafood, olive oil and wine, while enjoying your very own private sea view.

Besides the various restaurants, bars and gelaterie (another Italian legacy to be grateful for), Hvar offers superb swimming in protected coves, bays and inlets, in the clearest waters I've seen anywhere.

I can cheerfully confirm that the island has plenty of secluded swimming spots and the locals, like Europeans everywhere,

don't mind at all if you trouser-down for a dip in the sea.

Three or four hours further south by ferry, the island of Korcula has a different character again. Less obviously sexy than Hvar, Korcula's eponymous port town still offers distractions to hold your attention for two or three days at least, with a historic walled town that's well-endowed with restaurants serving Italian dishes, seafood, and the ubiquitous Dalmatian speciality, octopus salad. Having strolled every street of the old town (and eaten close to my body

## INDULGE YOURSELF ON A GREAT TRAIN HOLIDAY AND WE'LL PAMPER YOU WITH AN UPGRADE, TREATS & SWEETS.

Discover the secrets of South Australia on a great train holiday aboard the mighty Indian Pacific. Travel before 31 May 2005 and you'll receive a complimentary indulgence package. Pamper yourself with chocolates, Kangaroo Island produce plus an upgrade to a superior room or suite in Adelaide. Or choose a mixed case of fine South Australian wine delivered to your home. Explore the delights of Adelaide in the Autumn. Join the droves of nature lovers travelling to pristine Kangaroo Island aboard the SeaLink ferry. Or perhaps a paddle wheeler cruise down the majestic Murray is your kind of South Australian indulgence. You can even take your car on the train with you for just \$99\*. Trainways has a captivating collection of holiday packages to all the right places.

For a free brochure and bookings,  
**Call 1300 13 21 47**  
or see your licensed travel agent.  
www.trainways.com.au



FREE OFFER

<b>DISCOVER ADELAIDE</b>	<b>4 DAYS FROM \$630<sup>A</sup></b>
Includes - Indian Pacific Gold Kangaroo Service, 2 nights accommodation in Adelaide - choice of hotels, Introductory City Tour including Colonel Light's Lookout.	
<b>Indulgence Package includes - Option 1</b> - Haigh's Chocolate gift box on train, Upgrade to a Superior Room at Hilton Adelaide or Mercure Grosvenor or a Park View Suite at the Pacific International <b>OR Option 2</b> - Mixed dozen bottles SA wine delivered to home address.	
<b>SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TRIFECTA</b>	<b>8 DAYS FROM \$1720<sup>A</sup></b>
Includes - Gold Kangaroo Service, All meals on the train, Quality accommodation in Adelaide and on Kangaroo Island, Introductory tour of Adelaide City, Kangaroo Island tour including coach and ferry transfers, 2 day / 2 night weekend cruise on the PS Murray Princess.	
<b>Indulgence Package includes - Option 1</b> - Haigh's Chocolate gift box on train, Bottle of wine in cabin on Murray Princess Cruise, KI local produce pack, Upgrade to 1 bedroom suite at Holiday Inn Adelaide. <b>OR Option 2</b> - Mixed dozen bottles SA wine delivered to home address.	

INDIAN PACIFIC Discover the Secrets of South Australia

<sup>A</sup>Concession Fares Ex Sydney per person Twin Share. Conditions apply. Fares valid 1.4.05 - 31.3.06. Airfares not included in package price. Offers available for bookings 26 Feb - 31 May 2005. For travel from 1 March and completed by 31 May 2005. Offer limited to 1 option per booking. Indulgence offers valid only with purchase of Adult/Pensioner holiday package. Indulgence wine offer is valid for 1 carton per booking - minimum 2 persons travelling. Indulgence Packages - room upgrade subject to availability. \*Motorail offer available only with the purchase of two Gold Kangaroo Service tickets or holiday packages. Motorail offer valid to 31.3.06. Strictly non refundable. Subject to availability. Available for intercapital travel only. Car booking must be made at time of holiday booking. Travel Agent License No. TTA 164 190

T2048/SST Readcomm

18 CMYK 2 5 6 7 8 15 25 50 75 98  
PROOF OK CORRECTION SIGNATURE: ED  
tdmax