Croatia Charter June 9-19, 2010
10 Days Cruise through Central Dalmatian islands

Itinerary : Kremik/Primosten - Skradin – Lavsa (Kornati) – Molat – Veli Rat (Dugi Otok) - Zadar – Tkon (Pasman) – Zlarin – Kremik.

Total mileage 190 nm
Crew: Jane, Peex (P.K.), Wilhelm
Boat: "Blue Star", Star-Yacht 1520, a trawler-style 15.2 meters flybridge cruiser, 2x Volvo TAMD61A turbo diesel on shaft drives. Chartered from Offshore Boote (https://www.offshore-boote.com)

Wednesday June 9 Arrival

We arrive from London Stansted 21:00 at Kastela/Split airport, by taxi to Marina Kremik, arrival after 22:00, in time for a meal in the marina restaurant. It seems very quiet; we assume this is due to the fact that Kremik is a charter marina with all the turnover activities on weekends, but today is a midweek day. We sleep on the boat the first night.

Thursday June 10 Kremik to Skradin

We take our boat over formally. The procedure is relaxed as always, and the staff helpful; some technical quibbles on the boat get fixed quickly.
A power cut in the Primosten area at 10:00 means all that computers are down; we have to wait until power is back before we can go food shopping. Luckily power is restored soon.

We leave berth around 14:00 and head for Skradin. We pass Sibenik and following the Krka river upstream. We berth at Skardin marina (ACI) around 16:30.

Approach to Skradin



A particularly welcoming and helpful marinaio explains the village and the excursions to the Krka falls, for next morning, to us.

It’s excellent and hot summer weather, with just a breeze from SE, the scirocco/maestral.
Skradin town is pleasant, we dine at restaurant Bonaca and enjoy quite a good dinner.

Skradin is the town at the end of navigation of the Krka river. The ACI marina is welcoming and practical for the town.

Friday Jue 11 Skradin, Krka falls and river trip

The hot summer weather (high pressure above the Adriatic) continues; we buy tickets for the Krka national park and take the boat from Skradin to the falls.

We take the full circle walk around the falls, which impress with lots of water after heavy rain falls in earlier spring.

Then we turn back uphill and continue the road to the bus stop, to catch one of the small boats to the “lake” above the falls, stopping at Visovac monastery and Roski Slap. We find it odd that no information or tickets for these trips are available at the main entrance to the National Park.

We choose the nearest departure time, which is a taxi boat for 12 people. Our captain is quite a character and does his best to provide his guests an entertaining and memorable trip through “Croatia’s Grand Canyon”, shoehorning his boat into cliff crevices and spraying his passengers under waterfalls.

It's getting a long tour with the little boat, from 13:15 to 18:00. At 130 Kuna per person it’s not cheap, but a good day out and worth doing on a balmy sunny day like this.

This evening we have dinner at Konoba Dalmatino in Skradin town, which we find enjoyable, too. We meet the owner & wife crew of a large catamaran berthed next to us in the marina; they seem nice people and really experienced sailors.

For one day, the competent crew is having a holiday on land



Below the falls, swimming in the Krka is possible



The falls impress with a lot of water at that time



Visovac monastery is situated on a small island in the lake the Krka river forms in its upper reach



Visocav monastery

Canyon, going upriver with a trip boat



Exploring cliff crevices



The upper falls at Roski Slab







Historic mills in Roski Slab



Saturday June 12 Skradin to Lavsa

We leave berth at 10:00 and head down the Krka, which has a speed limit of 5kn; finally through Sv Ante channel to sea and across to the Kornati.

Through the main channel we reach Lavsa, where we take a buoy in the bay.

Lavsa is a nice bay, and after the lengthy trip from Skradin we decide to stay here for the night.

A boat from the Kornati national park authority arrives and charges us 400Kn. We are told that it would have been only 250Kn if we had bought an advance ticket in one of the national park offices.

Jane and Willi take the short walk, or actually climb, to the hilltop above the empty house opposite side of the restaurants; there are good views over Lavsa and towards Piskera islands.

This evening there aren't many boats here; Idro, the only restaurant, looks so quiet that I wonder whether it operates at all; anyhow, we get into the dinghy and go over, and find the owner only too happy to serve us. It's Saturday and this means turnover day for charter boats, hence fewer boats out here. Plus, sailing crews often save money and eat on board he says. We have fish dinner and find the service pleasant.

Kornati, Lavsa Bay. There are now several buoys; towards the end it the bay gets very shallow (lighter water colour)



View towards Piskera; the pontoons of the ACI marina can be spotted in the distance. It seem quite empty.



Lavsa bay. Restaurant Idro in the background. Our boat to the right



There are several mooring buoys in the bay. They certainly make mooring easier than with an anchor, and give a sense of safety.

Whether the rope on the concrete block is strong enough to hold a heavy boat in a gale force bora for long remains to be seen.

Mooring buoy arrangement



Moored in Lavsa bay, on a beautiful morning



Sun June 13 Lavsa to Molat

Today is Peex' birthday, and the sun fully plays its part; sunbathing and glorious cruising through the Cornati channel to NW, and leaving the Cornati through
Proversa Mala. We note some additional buoys near restaurant Aquarius.

On the way further along the E coast of Dugi Otok we decide to anchor for lunch on the W side of Krknata island which is meant to be an 'anchorage in front of ancient olive trees'. We spot the trees, but the water here is too chilly for me to go swimming; maybe because it flows through the channel, same as in the main Iski Kanal.

We carry on along the E side of Dugi Otok, finally arriving at Molat, where we moor at the town quay with ease. The small place is welcoming and by no means busy.

The choice for eating out is only between one restaurant and a pizza outlet. After an exploratory walk through the village we choose the restaurant, Grill Mare, for dinner.
The football championship is on, which means a lively evening for the quay side cafe which has got a TV on. We too, though not into football, sit down for after dinner coffees.

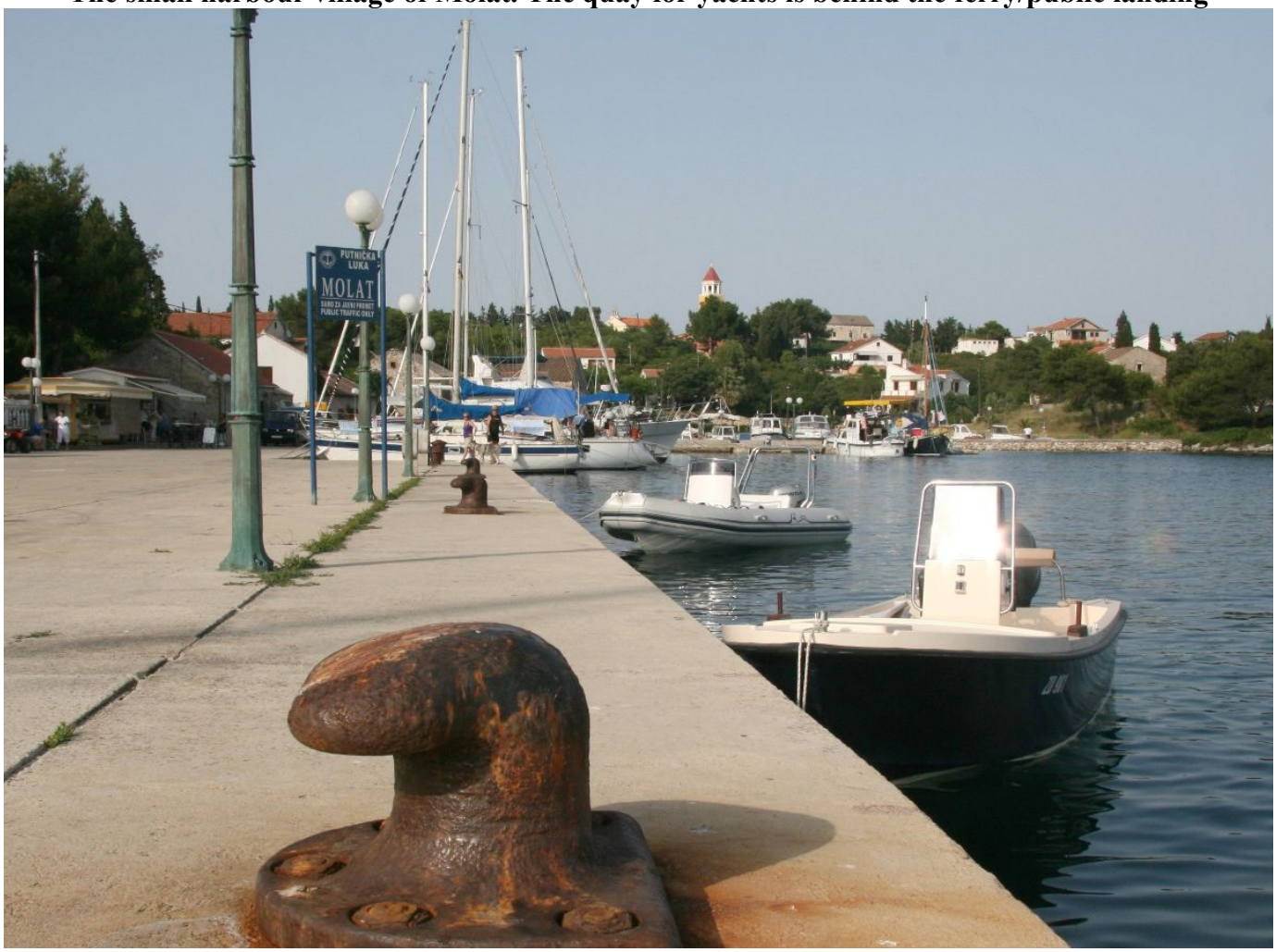
Panorama of the Kornatski Kanal to NW, on a glorious morning. Piskera to left, Kornat to right



Through the Kornati, passing Toreta



The small harbour village of Molat. The quay for yachts is behind the ferry/public landing



Molat inner harbour for small local craft. Grill Mare, the only open restaurant, in the background



The crew under Molats' larger than life historic heroes



Evening sets in at Molat harbour



Mon June 14 Molat to Veli Rat

Bright sunshine wakes us up early. Molat is a friendly place but after the hours of motoring on the previous day we want to have a good day swimming and lazing at anchor; so we leave berth and head for nearby Pantera bay at the N end of Dugi Otok.

First, of course, we do a tour of the well known wreck in vista of Veli Rat lighthouse.

The large Pantera bay offers numerous buoys which are easy to pick up; it provides excellent swimming possibilities and nice views.

We decide to stay over night nearby; the first idea is to try the new Veli Rat marina, but once under way we venture past the marina and through the narrow passage into the more shallow Cuna cove. The head of the jetty of 'DM' restaurant is just what we need, offering enough depth to go stern-to the end, at a water depth of 2m. We are helped by the friendly restaurant staff.

The mooring rope here is not the usual silty "slime line" but quite sharp on the hand, covered with edgy tiny shells; maybe it hasn't been used much recently.

DM restaurant surprises us in a very positive way: The service is of high standard, and the cooking (bass cooked in a foil) truly excellent.

Quite reasonable too, especially when considering they offer a free mooring with even mains power available.

A starry and completely calm night follows; just the moon, the quayside lights, and Veli Rat lighthouse flashing in the distance.

Off the N end of Dugi Otok, the wreck of an Italian merchant ship run aground 1984.
Veli Rat lighthouse in the background

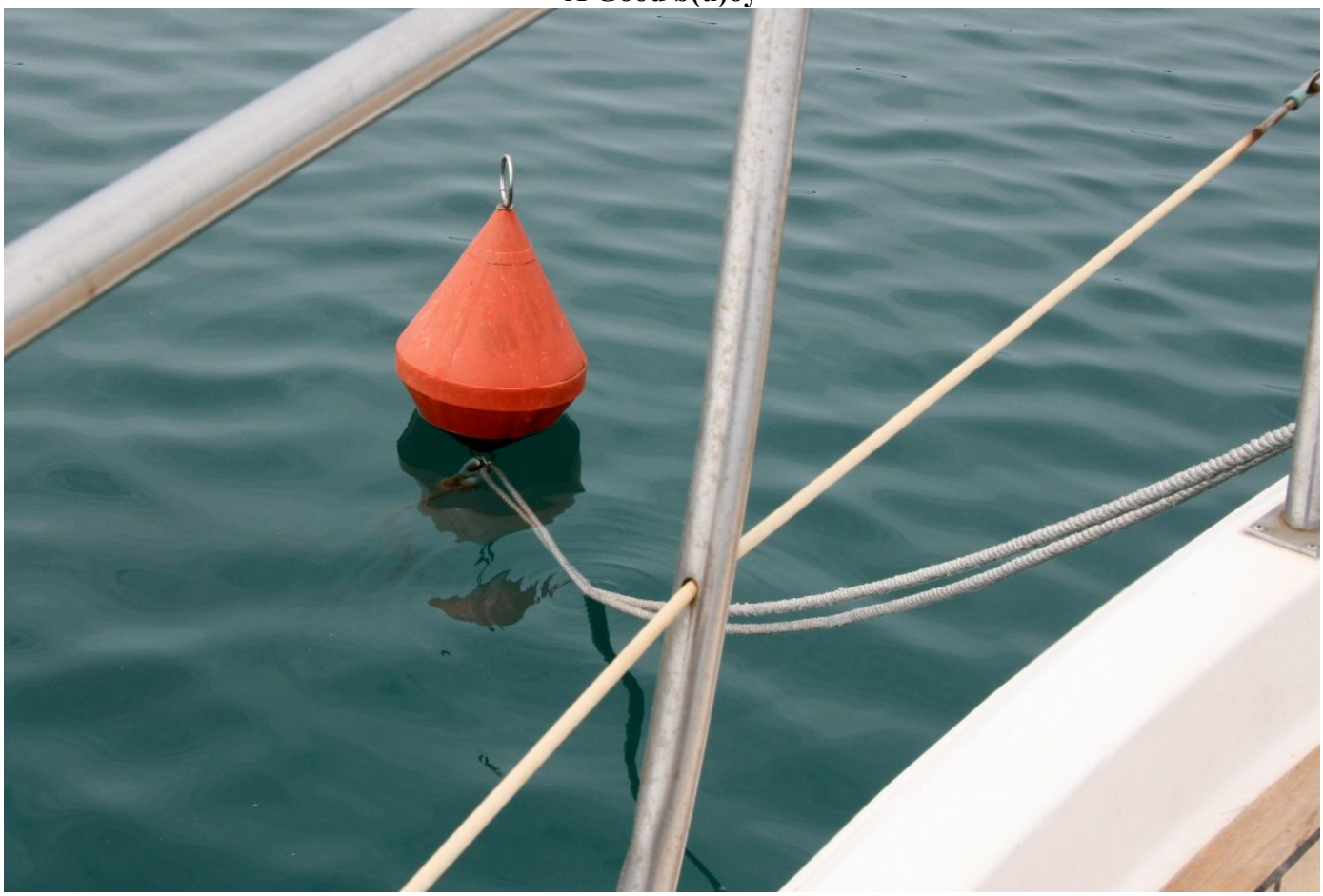


Mooring in the large beautiful Pantera bay. There are plenty and convenient buoys



Done the proper way, the rope goes through the ring on the bottom of the buoy. But with some buoys, that isn't easy...

'A Good b(u)oy'



Moored on the jetty of DM restaurant in Cuna cove.



Evening in Cuna cove



Tuesday June 15 Veli Rat to Zadar

Start of another sunny hot day; we want to use it for swimming and sunbathing, mooring on a buoy in beautiful Pantera bay just outside.

Leaving Cuna cove through its marked channel - seems to get narrower every time. Veli Rat marina to left.



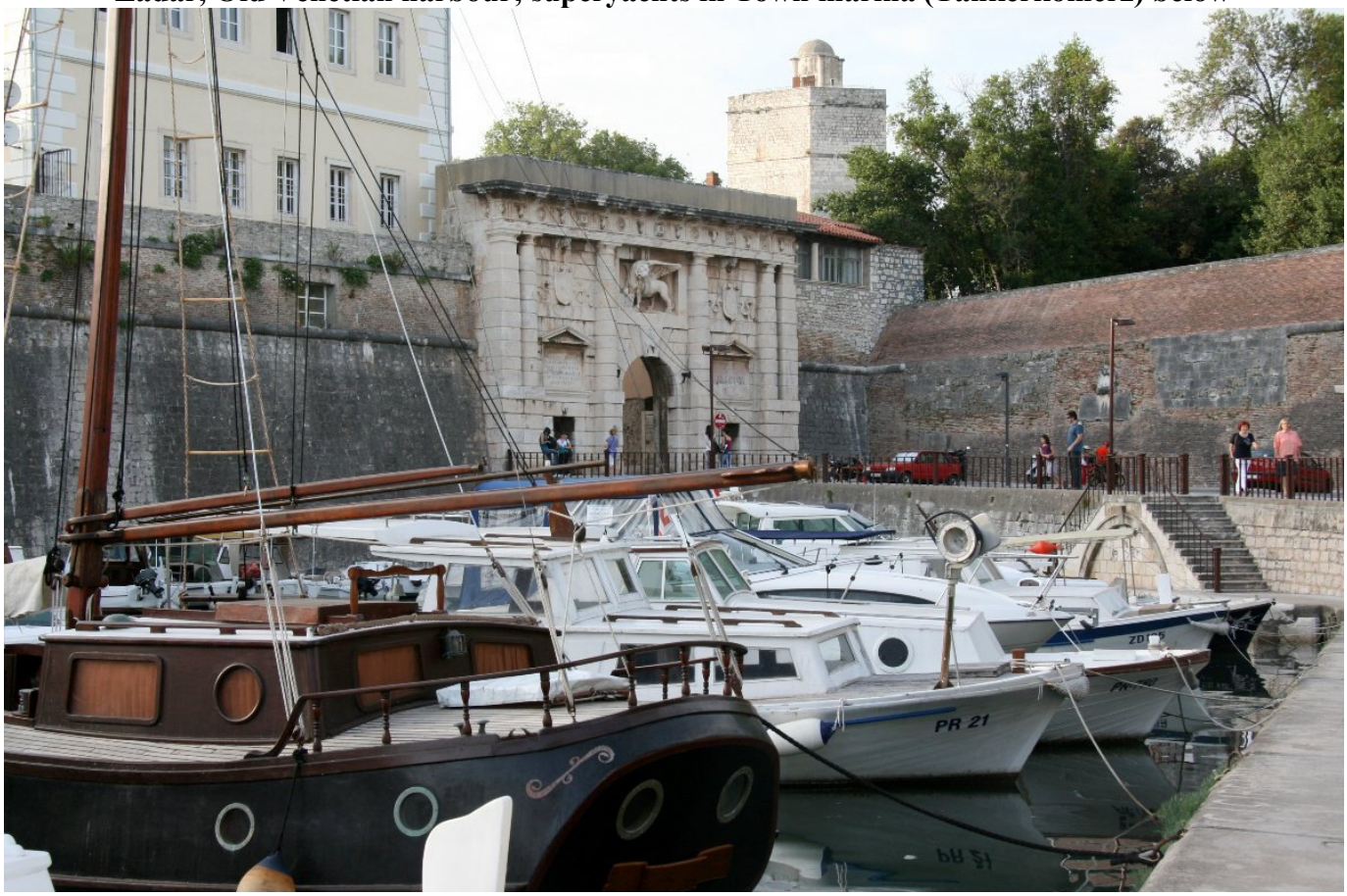
Pantera bay, overlooked by Veli Rat lighthouse



The weather forecast for the following night is for some wind maybe a little rain, so we leave in the afternoon and head for Zadar, where we choose the (expensive) town marina.
We stroll through Zadar Old Town, where there appear to be many locals but not as many tourists.

It seems more difficult to find a nice restaurant for al-fresco dining here than in one of the small island harbours! We have dinner in a restaurant with tables outside in one of the squares; followed by coffees in a cafe overlooking the bridge to the Old Town.

Zadar, Old Venetian harbour; superyachts in Town marina (Tankerkomerz) below





Wednesday June 16 Zadar to Tkon

There has been slight rain over night, but the morning is clear and getting hot quickly, with an increasing SE breeze.

We stock up in in a small food shop nearby and leave the marina around 11:00 heading for the anchorage near the Zdrelac passage.

We notice that there very few boats here; there is a range of yellow buoys on W side and we decide to take one of them: It's time that this year's minor drama happens, to remind us that boating is an "adventure" holiday: The buoy turns out to have an awkwardly small ring on top, in which our boat hook jams while the fresh breeze pushes the bow over the buoy swiftly. "No hook any more" Peex announces stoically, then dives off the bow to rescue the elusive boat hook.

Dropping an anchor in this spot does not seem an option to me due to the presence of the field of buoys, and rocky looking ground.

To get Peex back on board Jane takes the helm to keep the boat in position whilst I launch the dinghy and get the bathing ladder down. It's amazing how long such a procedure takes when you try to be fast!

We then let the wind push the boat towards Peex who is clinging to her buoy; as soon as close enough she gets aboard using the bathing ladder; after that, we catch a buoy just floating past, from the bathing platform. From there, adjusting ropes and mooring properly is a matter of routine.
Back to normal, that means lunch and swimming!

Our plan had been to pass the Zdrelac passage and head for Iz. However, there are work boats and cranes around the passage (apparently engaged in widening it), and the passage is closed for traffic. The passage between Ugljan and Pasman islands, under a road bride, gives access to Iz, Dugi Otok and the Kornati from Zadar.

We turn back and proceed SE through the Pasmanski kanal towards the ferry port of Tkon on Pasman.

Less super (but more useful) ships moored in the Zdrelac passage, S end of Ugljan island



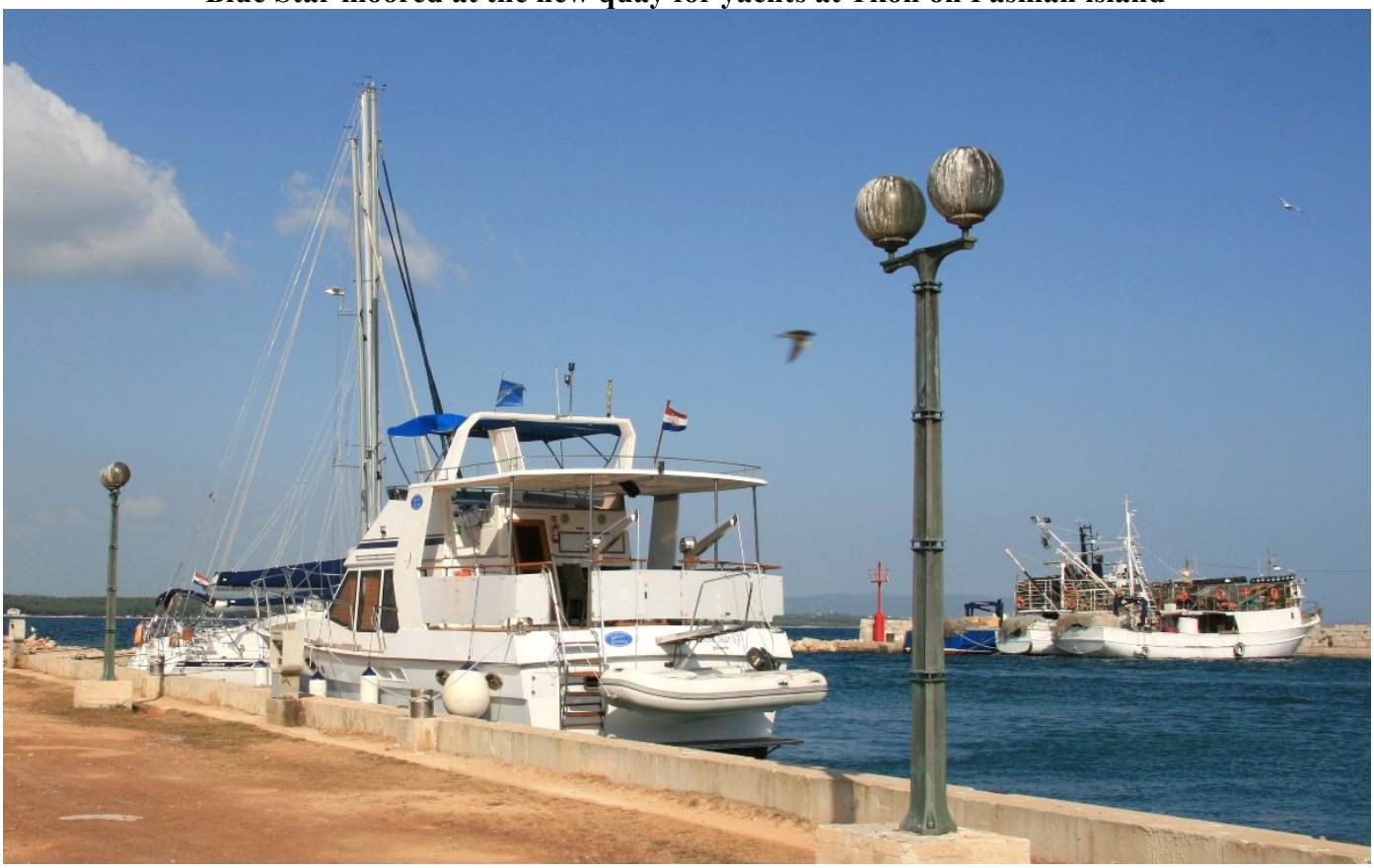
Zdrelac passage closed for widening works in June 2010.



On the W jetty at Tkon about 20 new berths for yacht have been created with moorings, but there are only few boats at this time and no people around. We go alongside the half finished quay, and make fast in an NW (off-land) breeze. There is even electricity available; but no one turns up and asks for money.

Tkon appears to be a simple fishing village and ferry port, but there are several konobas and cafes, maybe because it's a short hop across the channel from Biograd, a main tourist resort. We have nice dinner al fresco at Aquarium restaurant, directly on the water with views across to Biograd.

Blue Star moored at the new quay for yachts at Tkon on Pasman island



Thursday June 17 From Tkon to Zlarin

Sunshine cruise from Tkon along the Pasman coast to SE.

For the first time we note a busy anchorage (the small bay Zaklopatica), where all four buoys are taken, so we go to nearby Triluke bay, round the S end of Pasman, for a swim. We notice the presence of numerous gulls at the tip of the cove, and realize that there is a waste dump site on the slope above the bay (who can be careless enough to put this right there?). Anyhow, with on-shore wind and being anchored far enough outside, it does not affect us today.

Triluke cove, S end of Pasman island. Would be nice, if the waste site above it was not there



After a swim we venture on to Vragada. The fish farms between Vrgada and Murvenjak take a substantial amount of surface space; they seem to have grown; yellow markers with crosses on top deny access respectively passage.

The bay on the S end of Vrgada, Kranje, is a fine and popular day anchorage; we have lunch and another swim. The Bstaendig guide mentions a nearby camping site but there are no signs of it at the time.
We notice more yachts than in the earlier anchorages, we seem to have finally reached yacht tourism territory.

At 15:00 we leave for Zlarin harbour.
The weather is very hot, we estimate it must be 30 deg C.

The guide described Zlarin as a nice village, and it certainly looks picturesque.

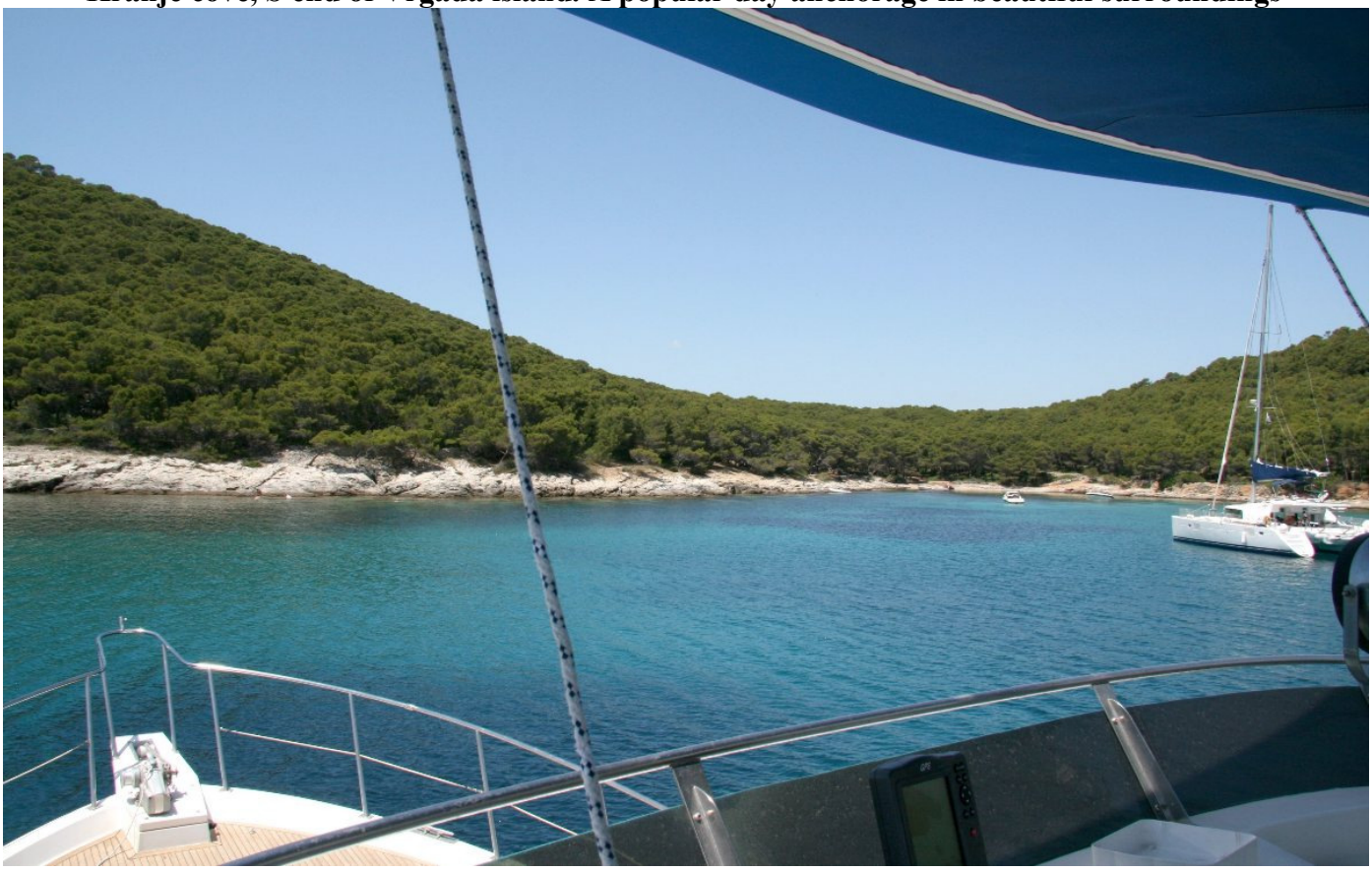
Unfortunately we come across a harbour master who has his very own plans where we should berth, and changes them in the course of our berthing manoeuvre! He does not appear to have a good judgement of how to handle heavier boats in on-shore winds. By trying to accommodate his intentions I pull my right arm badly when hauling in a tough mooring. The guy has no knowledge of languages either, apart from proudly shouting out in Italian the amount of mooring fee he's charging. I am getting very annoyed with his performance, but this does not help the crew morale. Anyhow, we recover swiftly.

We are unable to spot any toilet or shower facilities for "Zlarin Yacht Club" guests.

The village has about 4 restaurants and a couple of cafes. We have dinner in Konoba Aldura, directly overlooking the quay, it's ok.

The moorings on the main quay are plenty but exposed to swell from NW and from passing yachts. There are many yachts here tonight, several with Austrian crews; we are the only motor boat on the quay. By midnight the noises have settled down, the night is starry, and the outlook from the end of the quay across the bay and to Prvic is nice.

Kranje cove, S end of Vrgada island. A popular day anchorage in beautiful surroundings



View from Kranje anchorage to SE



Nudism has a long tradition in Croatia respectively former Yugoslavia.

Just a sun hat



Sailing flotilla heading to the Pasmanski Kanal towards Biograd



Prisnjak lighthouse on Murter island



The approach to Zlarin is straight forward. The main quay for yachts is sticking out in front, with the church seen behind. The inner harbour moorings would be less exposed to NW swell.



Moored at Zlarin's yacht pier. Prvic can be seen across the water.







Walk through the traditional village

Inner harbour of Zlarin



Friday June 18 Back to the base

It's the final day of this cruise; the sun is bright in the morning but the forecast has been for slightly cooler and cloudy weather with light W wind due to a low pressure area deepening.

From Zlarin we head to a bay SE of Zmajan, which is good for a swim. The sky is getting grey.
For lunch we choose to anchor in a different bay, Mala Stupica on Zirje, before setting course back to our charter marina.
We anchor in the N tip of Mala Stupica which is a nice swimming cove - but missing the sun we do not feel like swimming today.

The S end is occupied by fishing nets. A couple of sailing yachts are mooring here with landlines.

Around 15:30 we weigh anchor and make our way back to Kremik; the weather is brightening up and upon our arrival the sun reappears.

It's time for re-fuelling and doing the usual paperwork with Offshore Boote.

This evening we take the shuttle bus to Primosten and have dinner at Staro Selo; Jane's favourite fish, Skarpina (dragon fish), is available and tastes as delicious as we remember it.

For the night we stay on the boat and will vacate Saturday morning.

Anchored in Mala Stupica on Zirje. Grey skies and sea look unfriendly



Back at Offshore Boote's charter base at marina Kremik. We have safely completed our cruise



Sat June 19 Primosten

Day out in Primosten which is a picturesque and friendly holiday resort; taxi to Split and flight back to London Gatwick in the evening.

SUMMARY

We were very lucky with this year's turn of 10 days; mostly sunny days, very hot for mid June, and no storms or rain.

Blue Star, our 15m (50ft) aft cabin semi-displacement motor yacht, although dated, proved comfortable and performed to expectation. It offered lots of space and relaxed cruising at 9-10 kn displacement speed, with very good fuel economy. At semi-displacement speeds, however, the engines produced increasingly unpleasant noise and vibrations, so we didn't open the throttles much. We did not experience any mechanical issues.

We found that this year's yachting season in Dalmatia was starting late, we encountered very few boats cruising, mostly sailboats, and few people in restaurants. It might be an effect of the low economy; however, for us the lack of crowds was welcome and reminded me of cruises nine or ten years earlier.

Croatia slowly moves towards more regulations, more organized and/or charged for moorings, and even higher prices in restaurants; but one can still find good value and extremely pleasing cruising grounds.

THE FIGURES

Mileage (nm):
10/6 Kremik – Skradin 21
11/6 Skradin/Krka –
12/6 Skradin – Lavsa 32.5
13/6 Lavsa – Krknata – Molat 38.5
14/6 Molat – Pantera (Dugi Otok) – Veli Rat/Cuna 9.5
15/6/ Veli Rat/Pantera – Zadar 21.8
16/6 Zadar – Zdrelac – Tkon (Pasman) 17.2
17/6/ Tkon – Triluke – Vrgada – Prvic - Zlarin 27
18/6 Zlarin – Zmajan – M.Stupica (Zirje) – Kremik 22.7

Total 190 nm

Fuel 551 ltrs (2.9 ltr/nm); Kn 4600 (8.35 Kn/ltr)

Notes:
Payments in restaurants, harbours and shops are usually only accepted in cash, Kn or Euro.
Credit cards are accepted in marinas and large tourist resorts.
Numerous cash machines are available, even in smaller villages; but some have limits of how much they dispense (2000Kn should work).

Fees (2010):
Tourist tax 231Kn
Marina Skradin ACI, for 2 nights, 955,21 Kn
Molat harbour 293 Kn
Zadar Tankerkomerc 527Kn
Zlarin harbour 338 Kn

Who says sail boats are white or blue?



Primosten



End of log.

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