Hello Family and Friends

Split, Croatia – We escorted two different excursions today. The first was titled Ancient Treasures of Roman Dalmatia. It involved touring the ruins of Salona followed by a tour and lunch at a working water mill. The stories behind the ruins were fascinating and our guide had a wealth of knowledge. The water mill tour was insightful and everything they served us for lunch was grown and made by them on their farm and at the mill. This included prosciutto, cheese, olives and two types of wine.

We learned the city is named after a yellow flowering shrub. Salona was a secret Christian city in a Roman area. Our guide explained being Christian in a pagan society was dangerous. When Christians were discovered by the Romans, they would be taken for the gladiator games and fed to the lions. She further explained that a mixed marriage in that day was between a Christian and a pagan. Our guide explained how important the seaport of Split was and as a result, how they were ruled by so many different empires over the years. One of the worst regimes to dominate them was the Yugoslavs, a Socialist regime, from whom they fought and received their independence as recently as 1991. Under the Socialists' rule, police would stand in front of churches noting who went inside. The police would then come to the homes of the churchgoers to ask why they went to the churches making it clear it was illegal to go to church. If they were caught going to church another time, they would be imprisoned. This is another example of so many we have seen of the violence and failure of socialism throughout the history of mankind.

On a similar note, there's a decrepit, rundown, abandoned multistory building next to the port. It used to house a private alcohol distributing business. The socialist government nationalized the business, stealing the assets and business in its entirety, then ran the business into the ground causing it to go bankrupt. All the employees lost their jobs. With this building in the government's hands and no business to operate, the Socialists attempted to lease the building. Guess what? No one wanted to lease a building from the government with the history of nationalizing a business and not being able to own the land. For decades, it has stood empty. Homeless people took over the building and built fires in it to stay warm. Today, all the windows are broken, there is fire and storm damage and the building remains an eyesore, a stark example of the violence of socialism. No, we don't have a picture of this building to share, but we do have these beautiful pictures below.

We were treated to a discovery off the ship in Zadar, Croatia, when we stumbled on to their famous Sea Organ. This is an experimental musical instrument which plays music by way of sea waves and tubes located underneath a set of large marble steps. They call it architectural sound art. It was constructed by Nikola Basic in 2005. The waves interact with the organ and create random, harmonic sounds. It's like its own symphony of sounds that never repeat. Our ship was docked right next to the

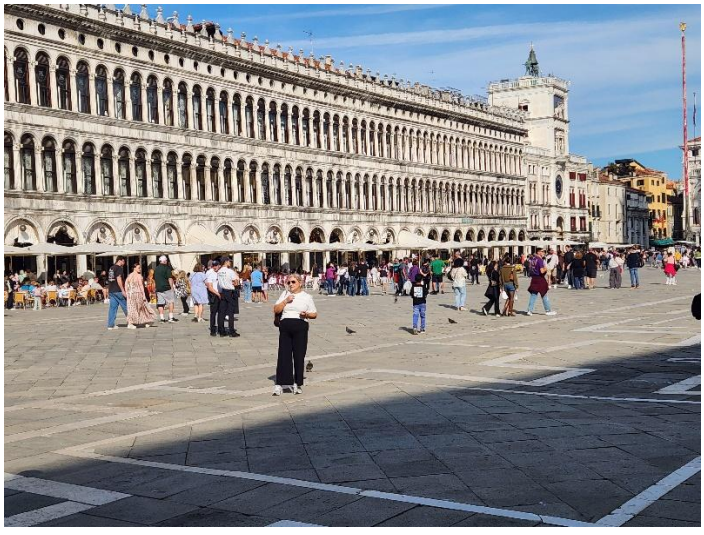
Sea Organ. To top it off, adjacent to the Sea Organ is “The Greeting to the Sun.” This is a large circular glass installation designed by the same architect. It collects solar energy during the day and puts out a colorful, automated light show after sunset. This “sun” is followed up with the planets of our solar system, all colored in their own light, in the walkway along the sea. The marble steps were populated with so many people on dates and with their families watching the gorgeous sunset. It’s such a romantic spot. This was a great experience after a day of excursions walking and enjoying the city on foot and hiking in Paklenica National Park. There are 550 rock-climbing routes in this park. Our guide described this rock climbing as a mixture between chess and ballet.

Rovinj, Croatia was up next. We rode e-bikes and explored the city on our own following our excursions. Rovinj is one of those iconic cities you see in brochures with narrow streets and orange roofs. The Romans left their mark here with a colosseum, other structures and relics as they did throughout the region. The e-bike excursion got off to a bad start when there were one too few waivers to sign. The next problem was one too few bikes. The solution was to have me walk 800 meters to the bike shop to pick up a standard bike as there were no more e-bikes. Then we proceeded to climb a mountain with steep sections. I was certainly getting my exercise this day. After the steep climbs were completed, a guest offered his e-bike in exchange for my standard bike stating he wasn’t using the electric option because he wanted all the exercise he could get. I gladly accepted and enjoyed my first e-bike experience. I loved it! Our excursion ended at the bike shop. The guide pointed the direction back to the port and sent us on our way. Many guests promptly got lost but fortunately, all of us made it back in time.

The final port on this segment was Fusina, the gateway port to Venice, Italy. Being the beautiful city Venice is, this port is a must see for so many guests. From St. Mark's Square and Basilica to the Bridge of Sighs, a gondola ride through the canals, the restaurants and shopping, there are more attractions than time to visit.

Good fortune follows us and this day was an excellent example of that when we were unexpectedly treated to the 2026 Venice Regatta outside the Grand Canal. The beauty of the sailboats and excitement of the race were serendipitous. We were on a morning boat excursion to take pictures of Venice and Murano when we stumbled onto the race.

We got off the boat about noon then spent the afternoon eating at a tiny, crowded restaurant, walking the narrow streets of Venice, going for a romantic gondola ride and visiting an art gallery where Francois Reboul's, **From Chaos to Freedom's** exhibit, was being displayed. Yes, there are many more leaning towers in Venice similar to Pisa. The ground is so wet due to the nature of the area. This truly was a highlight day.



Koper, Slovenia was a personal day for us as we explored the city on foot and had lunch at a delightful bakery/sandwich shop. Rijeka, Croatia was an interesting port as we went high up a mountain to visit the town of Moscenice. This town is so small, there are no street names; only numbers on the eighty homes in a truly Medieval setting. Of note, Nikola Tesla was born in an area near here.

Dubrovnik, Croatia made the Game of Thrones series come to life for us. We toured many of the locations where the series was shot. Remember, King's Landing? Remember the emotional goodbye John Snow shared with his siblings? Remember the Pile gate where King Joffrey met a citizens' riot with force? Remember the walk of shame on the stairs? The fortress complex of buildings and massively tall walls were so perfect as backdrops, the directors made almost no change to the locations. Check out these pictures. The walled city is massive. We also hiked 2.3 miles on Srdj Hill overlooking Dubrovnik with views of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Bari, Italy is known for the famous song, “Nel blu, dipinto di blu.” In the states, we know it as the Volare' song. We went on an excursion to the white cliffs where this song was inspired and saw the statue of Domenico Modugno belting out his creation. The blue-green water vistas from the cliffs were spectacular. This area is also known for handmade orecchiette (little ear pasta).

My friend, Thomas Daniel Nehrer, author of **The Essence of Reality**, had a mystical experience in Corfu, Greece, at age 25 that changed his life. It served as a catalyst for his life's philosophy which was revealed in his books. I always hoped I would visit this port and today was the day. We went on a foodie tour to three restaurants and to an olive mill and winery. We had no mystical experiences.

This update ends with our visit to a very special port, Katakolon, Greece, the gateway port to Olympia, home of the Olympics. We toured the sacred grove, then walked the original Olympic stadium and the Olympics museum. Most special was to stand in the location where the Olympic Flame is lit by way of a parabolic mirror every two years. The flame then travels around the world to the next Olympic Games stadium where it is on display for the duration of the games. 776 BC is the official first year of the Olympic Games which were held in this very stadium. The games were invented to stop wars. They were created to teach peace and unity. The olive branch awarded to the winners of the events was a symbol of peace, brotherhood, immortality and fair play. The Temple of Zeus is on these grounds. The significance of the Olympic Games and how important the games are to each of us made these hallowed grounds a moving experience. The guys racing in the original stadium in the picture below was an attempt to feel the presence of the games.

Love and hugs from the Adriatic and Mediterranean Seas.

David (Dave/Dad) and Dianne