

Dubrovnik, Croatia

Today we are at anchor off the Croatian coast near to the city of Dubrovnik, and need to collect tickets for the tender boats that will take us ashore. When we have been on other ships there was often a mad scramble for tender tickets, so we are pleasantly surprised when the Black Prince passengers form orderly queues and sit quietly and patiently for their numbers to be called.



The journey by tender boat takes around 20 minutes, and we pass many cruise ships alongside the quay. One of them is a huge ship called the MSC Poesia, and all of the other berths are occupied by some smaller ships. We now understand why it was necessary for Black Prince passengers to tender ashore today!

At the quayside we disembark the tender and board a coach for the 20 minute drive to Dubrovnik itself. The coach drops us off just outside the Pile Gate (the entrance into the old city) as there is no traffic allowed within the ancient walls. When we walk towards the gate itself we can see that there is a dry moat surrounding the city walls and we walk over a drawbridge straight into the main street which is called Placa Stradun.

It is mid morning when we arrive and the town is very busy with both tourists and local youngsters, the latter singing and playing instruments. They are all wearing similar T-shirts and if we could read the Croatian wording on them perhaps we would understand why they were so exuberant! Perhaps it is the last day at school?



The buildings in the old town are 3 or 4 stories high and made of light coloured stone with red tiled roofs. Looking down some of the very narrow side streets we notice the many steps leading upwards to the city walls - you would need to be very fit to live here!



At the end of the main street we come across 2 beautiful churches, some other fine ornately carved buildings and a square where there is a small market. The streets are kept immaculately clean by men with brooms, and one small electric truck. We decide to sample some of the local food in one of the many eateries by the pretty harbour and decide on a Pizza and Pepsi which was excellent.



After lunch we decide to climb up onto the walls for some fantastic views of the main street, fine buildings and the views out to sea. We walk perhaps a third of the way around the city walls, both up and down the slippery polished stone ramps and numerous steps. As we are not sure how long it will take us to walk in a complete circle, we decide to retrace our steps and make our way back to the Pile Gate for the shuttle bus back to the quayside. The traffic is very busy and our shuttle bus arrives just in time to catch the last tender boat back to the ship.



Our short stay in Croatia has whetted our appetite for a future return trip and we would love to come back here for a longer holiday. It is amazing to think that this country was at war until fairly recently, and if we look carefully we can still see evidence of the conflict. In fact we had our meal in a restaurant where the outside walls had a scattering of bullet holes!

La Goulette, Tunisia

We dock at La Goulette, the port for Tunis at 9am and local immigration officials come aboard. All passengers must fill out 2 landing cards each and wait in line for passport control, which is held in the main lounge on board the Black Prince. After our passports are stamped we are all "photographed" with a thermal camera in order to detect passengers who are running a temperature. Apparently this is a precaution against the introduction of Swine Flu into Tunisia, although we suspect we are more likely to catch something here and bring it home with us!

Tony is a courier on our tour - "Panoramic Tunis" - this morning, and before we set off, both Tony and the official guide count the number of passengers on the coach. At the first stop we have 20 minutes to walk around the main square in the medina and photograph the modern buildings with their darkened windows and the local church and mosque.



We even find some old cars to photograph! When we arrive back at the coach, Tony can not find 2 of the passengers and has to race around trying to find them. When he finally catches up with them, they proudly tell him they have been bartering at a local stall and have bought some bracelets!

Back on the coach the guide tells us about his country: the history, education, and especially the religion. After $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour most passengers have "switched off" and some have even fallen asleep! We pass by a large lake with flamingos standing in the shallow water - apparently this lake dries up completely in the summer months.

Our next stop is at a car park in Sidi Bou Said, where enterprising individuals have set up stalls selling goods made from Olive wood. The toilets, although

welcome, are not very nice at all, and Alvina decides that she can wait to get back to the ship! A further headcount of coach passengers reveals that we have again "lost" one passenger and Tony walks around the car park several times in order to find the missing person. Eventually, after an extra 20 minutes, Tony realises that the missing passenger must have got on another coach in the car park and we must leave now in order to return to the ship for its 2pm sailing.

We now have a race to cover the next few photo opportunities, and in fact we end up photographing most of the fine buildings and busy street scenes through the coach window. We are taken to a site in Carthage where ancient Roman ruins have been uncovered including a Roman aqueduct, baths and water cisterns. We photograph these sites again through the window.



When we arrive back at the ship, Tony has to file a report on the missing passenger and as we sail off towards Motril, Spain at 2 o'clock, we wonder whether this passenger made it back to the ship at all!

