

Rotarians and Friends Trip to Croatia and Bosnia. Early September, 2009

Purpose of the trip:

- Enjoy fellowship with local Rotarians from this area
- Enjoy the beauty of the Dalmatian coast of the Adriatic Sea
- Visit ancient historic cities and sites
- Enjoy fellowship with Rotarians from the USA and Canada
- Learn about the current landmine situation in Croatia and Bosnia

Join other Rotarians on a 12 day trip to parts of the former Yugoslavia where we will visit areas of minefields left over from the conflict in the 1990's. We will also take time to enjoy the beauty of the Adriatic Coast, traveling parts of the coastline in air conditioned buses, taking a scenic ferry ride to the magical island of Hvar, and spending two days at the "Pearl of the Adriatic," Dubrovnik.

We start by flying into Ljubljana, Slovenia, and spent two days here. (Note: since I won't know when you are arriving in Ljubljana, we will meet on Sunday morning as a group.) Our first afternoon on Sunday after breakfast we will visit the International Trust Fund (ITF) headquarters for a briefing about the landmine situation in the former Yugoslavia. The ITF is a non-profit funded by the EU and the USA for the purpose of clearing mines throughout this region. Later in the afternoon we will visit the Postonja caves, a remarkable tourist site with extensive underground caves.

Our day (Monday) we will visit the Institute for Rehabilitation to see the work they are doing to help mine victims with prosthetics, physical therapy and vocational rehabilitation. That afternoon we will fly to Sarajevo.

Day three in Sarajevo will be busy with a short bus ride to the mine fields on the outskirts of the city. We will watch the deminers in action and learn more about the extent of the mines problem here. Later we will visit with Bosnian landmine victims and hear firsthand their stories about the conflict they lived through and how their lives have been changed by their injuries. The afternoon is free for shopping and touring this beautiful city where the Winter Olympics were held. That evening, we are hoping to arrange a reception with the American Ambassador as our host.

Day 4 and 5 (Wed. and Thurs.) we will meet with the Bosnia-Hertogovina Mine Action Center personnel. We then visit the Sarajevo tunnel, a miles long tunnel build under the city through which the residents could come and go during the bombing and fighting, securing food for themselves.

Because we will be here two days, there will be time for shopping and sightseeing.

Day five we will leave the city in the early afternoon on our way to the Dalmatian Coast and the beautiful Adriatic Sea. On the way we will visit the Mine Detection Dog Center. This center, funded by the US State Dept, trains dogs to detect mines. We will have the opportunity to watch a demonstration of the dogs in action. The night will be spent in Mostar, a picturesque medieval city, great for walking and photographing.

The next morning (Friday) on our way to Dubrovnik we will stop at the Mostar Bridge, a bridge build in Roman times, destroyed during the war, and now rebuilt, brick by brick. Another stop will be at the Shrine at Medugorje where visitors from around the world come to see the place where the Madonna is said to have appeared to several local children.

We spend the night in Dubrovnik, where we will eat at a wonderful seafood restaurant at the end of the harbor, facing the ancient medieval walls of the city. The City often has evening concerts in several of the medieval chapels and those interested can attend.

We spend the next day (Sat.) in Dubrovnik enjoying the shopping, touring the almost perfectly preserved city, and learning more about its history and its difficulties during the hostilities of the 90's. Some people may want to visit the beach for a swim in the Adriatic.

Next morning (Sunday) we travel by bus up the coast, enjoying the beautiful scenery of the mountains and the sea, to the city of Split. Here we board a large, luxurious ferry for a two hour trip to Hvar, a small island with tiny fishing village with wonderful restaurants, interesting shops, and buildings dating back to the Romans, including a mile long marble promenade along the shoreline of the village. Dinner at the water's edge, with the lighted castle on the hillside behind us and small fishing boats lining the shoreline will make you want to stay here forever! I had the opportunity of staying in Hvar for 5 days in the summer of 2007 and it was hard to leave as it is truly a special place. I know you will fall in love with it as I did.

We will spend two full days in Hvar, leaving on the third morning (Wednesday)) for Split where we will catch our flight home if enough time, or spend the afternoon and night before catching a flight to our destination city for our flight home the next day. (An extra night will be booked for you at a local hotel but you will need to pay for it separately). Split has a fabulous waterfront promenade with restaurants and coffee shops to sit and enjoy the warm evening at the harbor's edge. Diocletian's Summer Palace is in the heart of the city and well worth an hour or two of exploring.

(Note: Some of you may want to continue on with the trip by yourselves. Certainly some of the other islands are worth exploring. Italy is just a short 4 hour ferry cruise from Split and an even shorter air flight. In any event, the trip ends at Split.)

Our host for the trip is Pat Patierno, former head of the US State Department's Mine Action Office. Pat now works for the International Trust Fund (ITF), and is helping me organize this trip and will be our host during the trip. With the ITF as our hosts, we will be able to see and do things that other tourists simply do not see.

One purpose of the trip is to introduce Rotarians and others to the mine situation in this part of Europe with the hope that some clubs will want to support demining or some of the rehabilitation projects for those maimed by mines. Another purpose is to meet Rotarians from this part of the world and enjoy evenings of fellowship and fun. I will be in contact with Rotary clubs in both Croatia and Bosnia so that we can either attend one of their meetings, or join them for an evening of fellowship. The trip will give all of us an opportunity to experience the “International” part of Rotary.

Cost for the trip, without trans-Atlantic airfare, is approximately \$1,995, double occupancy, additional single room occupancy charge of \$850. Because people will be coming from various locations throughout the USA and Canada, we will make our own air reservations and meet at our hotel in Ljubljana, Slovenia, on Sunday the 6th of September. Most breakfasts are included, but other meals are on your own. (Dining out is relatively inexpensive in this part of Europe.) The cost also includes all bus transportation between cities, ferry costs, all tours and one or two receptions. Participants are responsible for their meals, incidentals, and transportation to and from our arrival and departure hotels.

A \$500 deposit for the trip is due by May 1, with final payment August 1. A full refund of deposit is available prior to July 1, 2009.

Travel insurance is strongly suggested for all participants and should include medical insurance and trip cancellation in case you cannot attend due to a serious problem. Travel insurance can be found online.

YOUR ROTARY GUIDE

Sally Mackle is a member of the Rotary Club of Seattle (#4), one of the largest clubs in Rotary with more than 700 members. She has chaired her Club’s International Service Committee for three years and also served on its Board. In 2002, she led her District’s GSE team to Thailand and Vietnam. She also spent two weeks in Vietnam on a Discovery grant visiting humanitarian projects for her district to fund. In January of 2009, she will return to Phnom Penh, Cambodia for a third time as a Rotary volunteer at a vocational training school for your adult women.

As founding member of Rotarians for Mine Action and VP of North America West for that group, Sally has been leading trips to SE Asia since 2004. These trips, for Rotarians and friends, divide time between visits to humanitarian projects, with special emphasis on the minefields along the Thai-Cambodian border, with cultural sightseeing. The success of these trips has encouraged her to now add a trip to Croatia and Bosnia so that Rotarians can see the human suffering caused by these remnants of war and to encourage them and their clubs to help fund a mine action project. Sally spent a month in Croatia in 2007 and fell in love with the country. She is pleased to be able to offer Rotarians the opportunity to see for themselves the beauty of this area, while at the same time learning about the suffering of the people of this region during the conflict in the 90’s. The goal is to encourage participants to fund a project through their club’s international service funds.

Sally is happy to provide recommendations from those who have been on her trips before.

If you are interested in the trip, please email Sally at sjmackle@msn.com. You may send your deposit to Sally at: 4500 Lake Washington Blvd, Kirkland, WA 98033 USA

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