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Peace Through Tourism
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February 5-8, 2003

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**RIHT
ELECTION
UPDATE**

WATCH FOR BALLOTS
THIS FALL.
VOTE AND HELP
RE-ENERGIZE
THE RIHT SECTION!

Thanks!

We greatly appreciate the two members who responded to our RIHT survey in the spring issue. Please take time to respond as your replies will help us shape the section's future with new officers. We'll share the responses in a future issue.

To receive the five RIHT survey questions again or to share lively submissions for future Travelers, please e-mail Traveler Editor Linda Sorenson at lindawrite@aol.com. Share your news, ideas, and insights today!

**Wanted:
Creative Webmaster to
Design RIHT Site**

Will you offer your talents to help share the RIHT message with fellow members? We're so eager to offer great articles, news, jobs, projects, events, and much more on our section website. A warm, welcoming site will help connect far-flung global members and provide a valuable, cutting-edge resource at the click of a mouse. If you'd like to lend a hand, please contact **Dave Aplin** or **Ray Tabata** (See their boxed contact info on page 2). Come join the RIHT adventure today!

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TREASURER: Open

**REGISTER NOW FOR THE 2002 NATIONAL INTERPRETERS WORKSHOP
"WHERE TIME AND TIDES CONVERGE"**
Virginia Beach Pavilion Convention Center, Virginia Beach, VA, November 12-16, 2002
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Summer 2002



TRAVELER

Newsletter of NAI's Resource Interpretation & Heritage Tourism (RIHT) Section



Vintage image of hearty hikers in beautiful mountainous Paklenica National Park in Croatia.

Photo by Ante Brkan

Creating Connections with Croatia Interpreters

by Dave Aplin, Traveler Contributing Writer

From this point of view, need for the resource interpretation is obvious. Creating connection with the resource is not only the future of Croatian resource, but also the good way to articulate national pride in a hard postwar period.

Dalia Matijevic

It was humbling. I found myself ill-prepared to be surrounded by greatness. I'd traveled from my home in tropical Hawaii to the frosty January woodlands of West Virginia to co-instruct a course on interpretive panels and wayside exhibits at the National Conservation Training Center.

About half the class of thirty was composed of US Fish and Wildlife Service people, mostly Interpretive Specialists, Outdoor Recreation Planners, and Graphic Artists, who work the interpretive beat. To the person, this group was bright, capable and focused: ready to improve their interpretive writing and design skills. The products developed by my peers were excellent, but it was the other half of the class that blew my interpretive socks off.

Croatian Counterparts add Zest to Gathering

The class also included a dozen interpreters from the European nation of Croatia. Within a few hours, we Americans recognized that we were sharing an experience with highly motivated, articulate, and passionate advocates for Croatia's cultural and natural history. The quality of the class discussion and final products rendered by the entire class was buoyed by the contributions of our new Croatian friends.

Cont. on page 2

Cont. from page 1

By day two I grimly assumed I would be discovered as an interpretive imposter, with no business standing in front of my American colleagues or Croatian guests. Fortunately, the week developed into an intensely interactive 30-person collaboration and I was never found out.

In the end, the participants produced some amazing interpretive products as reflected in Dragica Jovic's text, written in just two days during the class, on page 3. The workshop also helped refine the course developed around the Interpretive Process Model fathered by NPS's David Larsen and a host of collaborators.

Power of Innovative Cooperation

I realized on the long flight home that I had been a part of a remarkable convergence of people, ideas, and possibilities that hadn't just coalesced from the ethers. The success of the workshop, especially the contributions of our Croatian guests, resulted from the investments made by people on both sides of the Atlantic who realized the value of interpretation to economies, to the stewardship of cultural and natural resources, and to the human spirit.

I'm not sure who to congratulate for their visionary thinking to bring these two countries together through interpretation. A complete article written by Shenandoah National Park Superintendent Doug Morris describing this innovative US-Croatian collaboration can soon be found on the NAI's interpnet.com Web site.

Certainly Doug Morris, Lisa Eckart, Claire Comer, and their National Park Service colleagues, Chuck Howell at



Avid climber scaling the heights in Paklenica National Park.

Photo by Dragica Jovic

Lakes and Paklenica National Parks who benefited from the outstanding interpretive material produced by program participants during a 10 week long workshop within their parks.

Ecotourism has Great Potential in Croatia

It is certain that the Croatian interpreters attending the West Virginia workshop were clear on the potential of eco-tourism within their county. Course participant Ivica Vekaric of Dubrovnik observed that "Eco-tourism is not so developed although there is great interest in it worldwide.

We can boast with so many preserved and unpolluted areas which is not the case with our neighboring countries. In Croatia, you can find lots of authentic ancient villages whose populations still enjoy a life that is always in contact with nature. In my opinion, this is a good

Cont. on page 3

USAID and the folks at the World Bank all saw the benefits of this project. Officials from Croatia's Ministry of Environmental Protection and Physical Planning must have also seen value in the enterprise. Certainly, the timing was right.

Value of Interpretation Appreciated

Croatia is still healing from the bitter and violent regional conflicts of the early 1990's. The economy of this diverse, beautiful, and historically rich country of 4.5 million people has yet to fully recover. There appears a growing awareness for the potential of cultural and eco-tourism within this country of towering limestone peaks, fertile valleys and the dramatically beautiful Adriatic coast where micro regions and micro-climates offer unequaled opportunities for visitors.

Remarkably, the relationship between eco-tourism and quality interpretive programs and facilities is also apparent to Park Managers at Plitvice

RIHT Traveler

Summer 2002

Volume 2, Number 2

P.O. Box 2246

Fort Collins, CO 80522-2246

Editor: Linda Sorenson

Contributing Writer: Dave Aplin

Production: Raymond Tabata

The Traveler is a quarterly publication of the Resource Interpretation & Heritage Tourism section, National Association for Interpretation, a private, non-profit organization and professional association.

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Cont. from page 2

starting point for the development of Eco-tourism and the tourism of Croatia should go in that direction."

Ivana Svetic concurs: "Croatia is a small country which is still struggling with economical problems. One of its main advantages is that, although small, Croatia is very rich in natural beauty. Ecotourism is the main thing that we should focus on in the future."

The relationship between high quality interpretation and high quality eco-tourism seems also evident. Ivana Svetic notes, "Since I work in a Croatian nature park I find it very useful to be able to learn new ways of interpreting, connecting the general public with that special place that they are visiting. The only obstacle that I can foresee could be the distrust of people who have worked for years using the old way of interpreting (facts, facts, and only facts, without emotional connections)."

Our Croatian guests returned home energized by the new skills and tools acquired during the week-long course. Participants report a flush of new projects to better convey the essence of their particular parks to visitors. But the interpreters from Zagreb, Split, and Dubrovnik were certainly not the sole beneficiaries of the workshop. My American colleagues were enriched by our guests unwavering commitment to interpretation. It was a humbling experience.



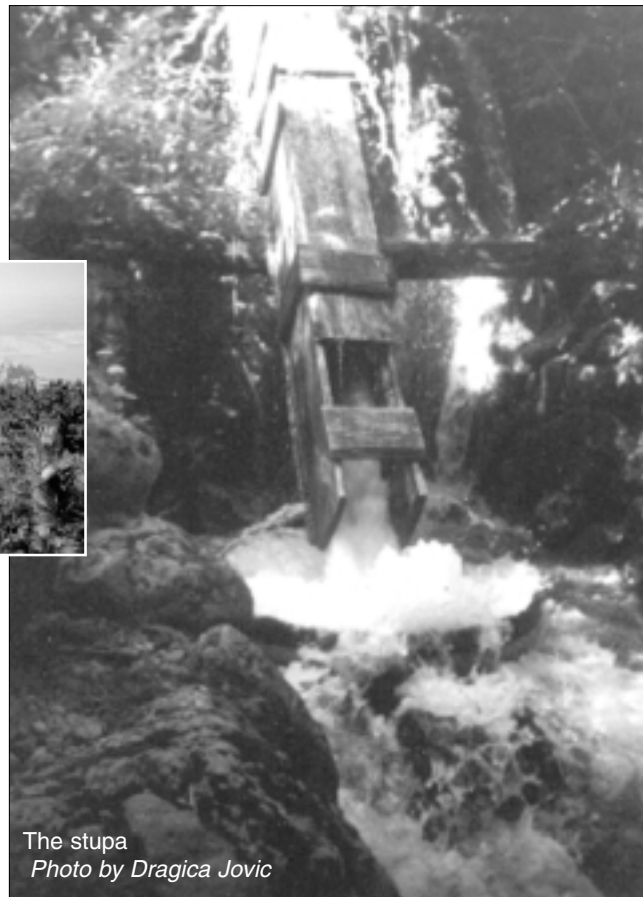
See the Fall 2002 Traveler for more information on this unique U.S.-Croatia collaboration.

Part II of this two-part series, "A Special and Successful Partnership between the National Parks of Croatia and the United States," will offer details on the role the NPS played in this unique international collaboration. Also, watch for this piece on the interpret.com website in the future.



Dragica Jovic is the Presentation Manager in Paklenica National Park.

Photo courtesy of Dragica



The stupa
Photo by Dragica Jovic

I See My Grandmother at the Stupa by Dragica Jovic

Can you imagine yourself waiting by the water to do the laundry? Sit on the stone and listen to the story of the women who sat here 50, 100 or even more years ago:

Early mornings, with big bundles on their backs and a child at their breast, they set off down the hill and over the water smoothed rocks along this stream. The basin upstream is already filled with water. This water flows into the stupa like a waterfall, tumbling the clothes over and over, rinsing away the laborers' suffering. Tomorrow the family will dress freshly in clean shirts.

In the shadow made by a big beech with its feet soaking in this stream, a few women sit and sing, their voices resounding in the gorge and rising up to heaven like a prayer.

Here, by water's murmur and stupa's chatter, suffering and happiness merge as one.

