

RABAC RAMBLING: West Essex in Croatia

In May thirty-nine West Essex Ramblers forsook their regular walking patch and flew to Croatia. The base for the week was in Rabac, on the east side of the Istrian Peninsular. Whilst a holiday resort, Rabac also gave a great opportunity to explore other areas well off the tourist track. Apart from our UK tour manager, Bill, local guides accompanied us on our daily walks. They greatly added to our enjoyment and interest.



On our first day we climbed briskly through woods to the fascinating medieval town of Labin, passing on our way a number of delightful waterfalls. On separate days most took to the peaks of Ostri and Sisol, both offering stunning vistas over sea and countryside. The ascent/descent of Sisol was particularly challenging, even for the hardest group members: "incredible views" and "the best walk I've done and one of the toughest" were typical comments from participants. Excellent lunches, one in a mountain lodge, the other in a restaurant overlooking the old town and bay of Plomin followed both hikes. This was a chance for us all to experience local rather than hotel fare.



There were also shorter rambles to savour. One of these was in the Karst area of North Rabac, passing the remote villages of Kosi and Ripenda. A long coach ride across Croatia took us to the Plitvice Lakes, an area unique in Europe. Waterfalls cascading down wooded mountainsides link sixteen natural lakes, each on different levels. Seen from numerous walkways the contrast of water colours, ranging from azure to green, grey or blue was amazing. Another trip saw us in Opatija, an elegant mid 19th century resort built for the rich and famous of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. We 'imperially' walked part of the seven mile promenade weaving along Opatija's sea-front. It was only there that rain was encountered, something of a shock after six days of glorious sunshine.



Our accommodation was in the Hotel Hedera. After our walking endeavours there was the opportunity for swimming in various pools, massage, saunas, dancing and evening strolls along Rabac's promenade. We even managed, one afternoon, to fit in a two hour cruise around and beyond Masclinica Bay. An added treat, if we were back at the hotel in time, was complimentary afternoon tea and cakes. Along with plentiful buffet meals, a number of waistlines were expanding just a little!



Time's winged chariot flew by all too soon and we had to return to a damp, cloudy West Essex. Thanks go to Bill of Travelsphere and the friendly informative local guides for making the trip such a joy. Finally, 'Hvala to everybody for being such a great group.

John Juchau