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# Cruising Croatia with Colgate Sailing Adventures

By Heather Hild Atwater

*Editor's note: Flotilla cruising is an excellent way to enjoy an unforgettable charter vacation, particularly if your sailing experience is limited. And you won't find nicer or more capable flotilla leaders than Heather & Nate Atwater, who lead Offshore Sailing School's Colgate Sailing Adventures® Flotilla Cruises to exotic destinations around the world. Heather recounts a visit to the lovely Adriatic Sea.*

The Meet and Greet dinner at La Barca restaurant at Marina Agana kicked Leg 1 of our Colgate Sailing Adventures Croatia Flotilla off to a fun start. The food that Robert, the owner, prepared for our crew was exceptionally fresh and delicious. We started off with plates of cheese and fig with honey, caprese salad, and beef carpaccio among other appetizers. Next came platters of fresh Mediterranean seafood, crispy chicken with sauce, tender filet of beef...and the water and wine were plentiful, too. We were getting spoiled on day one!



**Overlooking Milna Town** © Heather Hild Atwater



**Plenty of room for a party in the Sunsail 47's spacious cockpit**  
© offshoreailing.com

## Getting Ready to Set Sail

Day 1 – Saturday, August 24, 2019

Before dinner, Skippers and Navigators attended the navigation session at the Sunsail Base run by Ivonka, who did a nice job. Nate and I met with Mirna, a local Croatian and an employee of The Moorings base in Agana, days before who helped us plan our

Leg 1 itinerary in detail, including day stops and restaurants. So, the navigation meeting was tailored to our plans and we were the only group attending, which is always nice. We reserved all the moorings, dockage and restaurant meals with help from Mirna, whose Croatian is better than mine. While that was going on, everyone moved aboard their home for the next week and helped to stow the plentiful provisions.

After the meet and greet dinner, we waited to hear that Skipper Craig and Bonnie, our late arrivals, had made it safely to their boats, as we arranged transfers for them from Split airport. Then the first day was complete and sleep was welcome.

## “Leaving the Dock is Half the Work”

Day 2 – Sunday August 25, 2019

After yoga, showers and navigation, we left the dock about 11 am with our fleet of four Sunsail 47s: *Aita Pea Pea II*, which I renamed *Seize the Day* since that's what it means in Tahitian. Wouldn't you? Comprising our crew were Skipper Nate, myself, Diana and Wayne. *Carnot*, which is named after a French physicist, was skippered by Mike and trusty crew Barbara, Laura, Kelly & Eric, and Sally. *Natalija I* was skippered by Craig, with Stephanie & John, Sara, Don and Kelly as crew. And finally *Mon Lochy Bay*, named after the bay in Scotland with Skipper John, his wife Blythe, Cathy & Mike and Bonnie aboard.



After last minute shopping, running about checking to be sure we had all the necessary equipment, we had a smooth departure. On the way out of the bay we steered clear of some swimmers. At first we thought they were large birds because they were so far away from shore in the middle of the bay. They waved to us as we passed. It was a hint of what was to come – lots of swimming!

As soon as the wind cooperated, we set sail, testing the monohull's sail handling with some light air upwind work and generally learning the rigging and systems. We dropped the hook at our planned lunch stop for a swim. The water was delightful – clean, refreshing, and a deep Mediterranean blue. After we had our fill, we picked up anchor and rolled our genoas out to sail to Trogir, an ancient seaside town complete with castle and cathedrals. We used our Med mooring skills...which were very good BTW. Then we all headed in to the charming town of Trogir, navigating a cobble maze of walkways through medieval architecture. We met up for a really good group meal at Restaurant Alta. A young duo of waiters served our group well and we enjoyed a really fine meal. We retired to our boats around 11 pm.



*Anchored next to a submarine cave at Uval Smrka on Brac Island*

© Heather Hild Atwater

### Light Air Sailing Tactics Come in Handy

Day 3 – Monday August 26, 2019

After early yoga and the 8 am navigation meeting aboard Seize the Day, we all shoved off the docks and had a nice sail to Krknjasi Bay on the east side of Drvenik Island. After anchoring, we all swam and snorkeled. I thought the underwater terrain was very interesting: large formations of limestone that appeared to be

A photograph of a boat's dashboard featuring three Raymarine electronic displays. The top display shows a radar view with yellow targets and a depth reading of 9.9 ft. The bottom-left display shows a heading of 271°. The bottom-right display shows engine RPM at 0.0 and a speed of 9.8. A steering wheel is visible in the foreground.

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*Hvar is one of the loveliest island retreats on the Adriatic.*

© Heather Hild Atwater

giant sculptures. Again, the Mediterranean waters were a welcome cool down. After lunch we picked up our anchors and continued sailing on to our night stop in Milna town. There was a little confusion, because the dock boy left his VHF at home that day and was nowhere to be seen. So, the next Med Moor practice ensued. Takeaway lesson when assisting a boat that needs help to dock: First establish ONE person, who knows what they are doing, to direct the skipper and crew. We all ended up ducks in a row, stern to the dock in beautiful Milna. We had a free night, so most walked into town to explore the sights, some stayed for pizza and gelato. Our crew elected to cook aboard.

### **Submarine Tunnel for Lunch and “Don’t give up the Mooring” for Dinner**

Day 4 – Tuesday August 27, 2019

Yoga this morning was under an ancient Aleppo pine, *Pinus Halepensis*. We were told that the original trees were brought to Croatia by the Romans. Since I am trained as a Landscape Architect and Designer, I find that history really amazing!

After our navigation meeting, we are underway around 9 am, and with no wind we powered to our lunch stop in Smrka Bay. We anchored and explored the small bay, which has a WWII submarine tunnel cut into the face of the rock cliff. It is a very picturesque little spot, great for swimming and snorkeling.

After lunch we proceeded to Soline Bay, arriving before 3 pm to find a very busy mooring area. After securing the boats on what we thought were 100 Kuna moorings, we are told to move by the owner of the restaurant, whom we affectionately dubbed Mr. Speedo. We held steady as we negotiated with him to let us all stay. Luckily, John had gone ashore to make reservations in person and got to know the owner’s dog, BY NAME, which won us some

favor and we all managed to secure a mooring for the night.

Mon Lochy Bay had kindly invited us all for cocktails aboard their boat, so, after relaxing a bit, we all dinghied over and enjoyed each others’ company before the water taxi arrived to take 16 of us to Hvar town. It was a speedy and enjoyable trip. We landed and made plans to meet back at the green light on the quay at 8 pm. We all explored Hvar: Mike hiked to the castle on the top of the hill, others shopped, enjoyed adult beverages and explored the beautiful ancient cobble walkways between stone buildings, with arches supporting flowering bougainvillea, and potted plants. It was well worth the trip! Back to the boats, some ate at Paridissimo, the island restaurant whose moorings we were on.

### **SAIL — LAUGH**

Day 5 – Wednesday August 28, 2019

After making the navigation rounds by dinghy, we dropped moorings and headed toward Peljeski Kanal, past stunning scenery, then past Korčula town. We saw all manner of watercraft from small wooden fishing dories to mega power yachts, sleek cata-



*Colgate Sailing Adventures Croatia Flotilla participants gather for a group photo in Dubrovnik.* © Heather Hild Atwater

marans, racing sloops with carbon sails, small sailing sloops with Dacron sails, classic wooden sailing yachts, and more! Our lunch stop was an interesting place, an island with a chain of smaller islands, great for snorkeling. There was a restaurant with a sign stating, “We don’t tell you what to drink. Don’t tell us what music to play.” It turned out to be pop dance music – not terrible, in my opinion. There was a swing at water’s edge and lots of visitors from boats nearby.

After lunch we sailed to Loviste. It was a nice light air sail. We arrived early enough to secure the three other moorings with



our inflatable pineapple and beverage center, which I procured at Agana, as previous charters pass on their swim toys to the next charter. They came in very handy not only as float toys but also as the seat for our dinghy! We had group reservations that night at Restaurant Gradina. We were so close that I swam to shore. The owner served us with his bandaged hand as he had cut it earlier chopping wood for the open fire. It was a really nice waterside open-air meal, and I think a very good time was had by all...lots of laughter!

### Ro Mlijetski Kanal on a Light Air Day

Day 6 – Thursday August 29, 2019

Navigation rounds as usual, and then we headed off to Mljet in light winds, sailing on and off, arriving at Luka Polace around 4:30 pm. After identifying Stella Maris, our docking arrangements and dinner spot, one by one we Med moored and explored a bit before dinner. We had a nice group dinner not far from our boats on a terrace overlooking a stunning bay. Lucky us!

### Beautiful Mljet

Day 7 – Friday August 30, 2019

I had arranged for an early bus to the ferry in the National Park to see St. Mary's Monastery. We could have spent a lot more time here for sure. It was stunning and the chapel with its simple architectural design and beautiful stained glass, paintings and carvings made for a memorable visit. The gardens were also well done. We got back on the ferry, to the bus, to the boats, to leave by 11 am

and hoof it to the base and the ACI Marina in Dubrovnik. Let's talk about squeezing a lot into a day, not to mention a week!! That is why it's called a Colgate Offshore Sailing Adventure Vacation.

The approach to Dubrovnik was visually stunning as frankly the entire trip had been. We lined up to dock at the very busy ACI Marina, Med mooring one last time, which was a bit tricky weaving in and out of lines of boats in reverse.

### Last Night: Our final Dinner at Vimbula Restaurant

After a slight mix-up on the restaurant's part (the owner doesn't use email and his wife mistakenly told him it was the following night), we made the best of it and took our group photo with our orange cruise shirts while the restaurant owner and staff hurried to get set up for us. The sun was setting behind us and the picturesque chapel's bells chimed from a nearby hilltop. 'I don't think it gets better than this,' I thought. We were all treated to a fabulous riverside dining experience, where we concluded, thanks to John & Stephanie, that raising our hands for our chosen meal was totally smart and way cool.

Nicely done everyone! Hats off to the Skippers especially, who through teamwork made this a very special flotilla for all! ■

*This article is excerpted from the author's Offshore Sailing School Flotilla Blog and reprinted with permission. For more information on Colgate Sailing Adventures Flotilla Cruises, visit [offshoresailing.com/adventure-vacations/](http://offshoresailing.com/adventure-vacations/) and [offshoresailing.com/offshore-blog/](http://offshoresailing.com/offshore-blog/).*

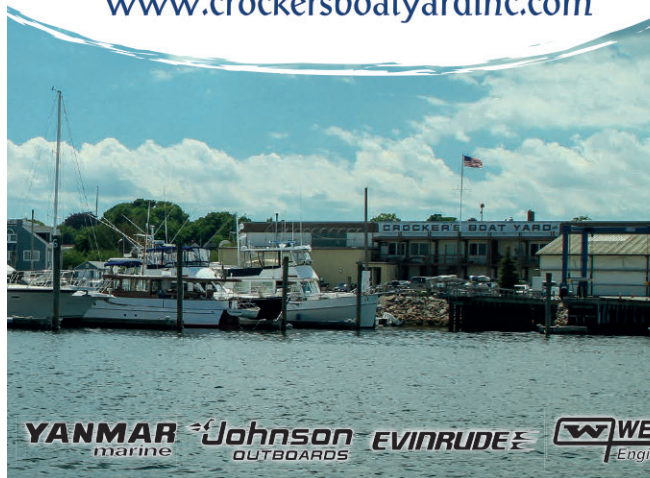
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