

Newsletter Spring 2019

In this Issue

Saving Money | 1

News from MURA | 4

News from Creative Colleagues | 4

Reimagining Living Situations into
our Senior Years | 5

Travel News | 6



MURA's cycling group will be on the trails soon!

Welcome to the 2019 MURA-ARUM newsletter. Since, at this point, there is only one edition a year it gives me time to think about themes for each edition. Usually something I have read or topics that have arisen in conversations with friends are the spark for me to begin gathering information. In addition to news from our colleagues and our regular travel section, this time my focus has been on saving money, living and dying. Joan Wolforth, Newsletter Editor, joan.wolforth@mcgill.ca

Saving Money

The “Senior Discount” has long been the mainstay of many commercial enterprises, counted on by some seniors and shunned by others for fear of being seen as “old”. The age at which the discount kicks in varies considerably from the standard 65 years old down to 55 years. An article by Preet Banerjee (Globe and Mail, May 2nd, 2018) *Cashing in on Senior's Discounts* led me to wonder how many of us are missing out on options our colleagues may already know about. Yet these useful discounts may come under attack as more of us reach retirement age and a perception develops that many relatively wealthy seniors are costing businesses potential profits. Even back in 2013 Peter Shawn Taylor was writing in Maclean's about *Why Seniors Shouldn't get Discounts* (Nov. 19th 2013). So, until the corporations catch up with us, let's share the warmth and take advantage of the savings. Below are some savings our members have suggested:

SHOPPING:

Pharmaprix/Shoppers Drug Mart: 20% off for those 55 and older with an Optimum card on Thursdays.

Some Provigos (e.g. St Jacques but not Monkland) an extra 10% Optimum points on Wednesdays for seniors

You must ask for it at the checkout. Ask at your store if they have this program.

Hudson's Bay: 15% off for those 55 and older on first Tuesday of each month.

M&M Meat Shops: 10% off regular priced items every Tuesday for those 60 and older.

Aubut Distribution <http://aubut.ca/?lang=en> 3975 St Ambroise near Atwater Market Prices are excellent; no membership fee. Good parking lot.

Gasoline

Ultramar, Upper Lachine Road. Savings (3 cents/litre) on Tuesdays.
Optimum points at ESSO.

INSURANCE:

La Capitale give a 10% discount on car insurance and 12% on house insurance to members of AQDR (a Quebec association for the rights of retirees). (See details below).

TELECOMMUNICATIONS:

Telecons: If you are away for more than a month check with your telecon or cell phone service provider to see if you can put your phone, internet and TV on "seasonal hold" and save the fees.

TRAVEL

Many hotels offer reduced rates for seniors. Check the rates when booking online. There is also usually a CAA/AA rate and an AARP/CARP rate.

Choice Hotels: Up to 10% off for those 60 and older, with advance reservations.

DoubleTree Hotels: Minimum 5% off best available rate for those 65 and older.

Marriott Hotels: 15% or more for those 62 and older.

Radisson Hotels: 10% off standard rate for those 60 and older, if requested at time of reservation.

Sandman Hotels: "Preferred rates" for those 55 and older, if signed up for 55Plus Senior Program.

Best Western Hotels: Up to 15% off standard rates.

IHG hotels (Includes, Holiday Inn, Candlewood Suites, Intercontinental): discounted rates for members of a retired persons organization.

Greyhound: 10% off for those 62 and older.

Via Rail: Discounted fares available for those 60 and older.

EDUCATION

McGill: Senior citizens aged 65 and over, in School of Continuing Studies courses, pay 50% of the Quebec tuition fee. <https://www.mcgill.ca/student-accounts/tuition-fees/general-tuition-and-fees-information/exchange-senior-citizens-part-time-and-double-program#seniors>

Concordia: Register as an Independent Student. Each course costs \$6.00 with an additional \$25 semester fee. <https://www.concordia.ca/admissions/seniors.html>

MUSEUMS

McCord Museum: Free admission on Sundays and on Wednesday evening. Reduced admission fee for seniors at other times. <https://www.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/admission-fees/>

Montreal Museum of Fine Art : Wednesday evenings starting at 5pm half price for all
<https://www.mbam.qc.ca/en/information/admission-fees/>

Montreal Museum of Contemporary Art: Admission \$12 for seniors <https://macm.org/en/general-information/hours-and-admission/>

Many out of town Canadian museums have senior discounts, or discount admission if you are a member of another museum (e.g. MMFA members get discounted prices at the ROM), as do European establishments.

ENTERTAINMENT: Theatre

National Theatre School. <https://ent-nts.ca/en> Productions at the historic Monument National, Boul St-Laurent and Rene Levesque, Pay what you can or pre-set modest prices.

Dawson College. <https://www.dawsoncollege.qc.ca/professional-theatre/performances/> Many productions throughout the school year. Usually pay what you can.

McGill Savoy Society. <https://www.mcgillsavoy.ca/> An annual operetta by Gilbert and Sullivan usually February, at Moysse Hall.

McGill's Department of English. <https://www.mcgill.ca/english/moyse-hall/upcoming-productions> providing students with practical theatrical experience.

Montreal- Stratford Festival Theatre Tour, now its 39th season, is scheduled over the 24th June weekend. The tour includes bus, accommodation, best theatre tickets for five plays <https://thomasmore.qc.ca/cultural-educational-activities/>

Don't want to join the tour? Save on any 2 pm performance from Monday to Friday, except for those between July 9 and August 23, 2019. Choose the **Senior** price when selecting your seats online.

<https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/WhatsOn/DiscountsAndDeals/Deals/Senior-Matinee-Savings>

ENTERTAINMENT: Music.

Schulich School of Music <https://www.mcgill.ca/music/> Featured are orchestra, choral groups, woodwind, brass, jazz, and opera. Many are free concerts, some with modest charges (~\$15) for staff and seniors.

McGill Opera at the Monument National is not to be missed: stunning casts, orchestral accompaniment, splendid costumes, and imaginative sets.

CINEMA:

Cineplex Odeon, Cinema du Parc and Cinema Guzzo: Reduced general admission tickets for those 65 and older.

Organizations That Facilitate Discounts:

CAA-Quebec. <https://www.caaquebec.com> In addition to on-road services across Canada, they provide a travel shop, travel services, travel insurance, free maps, and discounts at many hotels that soon can pay back the annual fee. Their recommended home service suppliers (floor sanders, roofers, etc.) offer a discount for members.

CARP (Canadian Association of Retired Persons) www.carp.ca offers many discount opportunities to members. Annual fee is \$19.95

Accès Montréal card; If you live in Montreal or own property in Montreal this card (\$8.00 annual fee) provides discounts at many Montreal activities including Botanical Gardens, many museums, concerts, festivals, tennis courts etc

http://ville.montreal.qc.ca/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/CARTE_ACC_FR/MEDIA/DOCUMENTS/20362%20BROCHURE_EN_WEB.PDF

ADQR (L'Association québécoise de défense des droits des personnes retraitées et préretraitées)

<https://www.aqdr.org> works on behalf of retired citizens. Several companies offer discounts to members.

Atwater Library Wednesday, April 17, 2019 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm

EATING WELL ON A BUDGET

Jaimie Yue, registered dietitian-nutritionist, founder of **Nutrivie Santé**, shares recipes and tips for seniors to make healthy meals that are affordable. No advance registration.

News from MURA

Annual Board-Senate Meeting – Poster Session –14 November 2018



MURA was invited to participate in the Poster Session of the Annual Board Senate Meeting on November 14, 2018. The members of the Board of Governors and the Senate focussed this year's meeting on life-long learning and the various ways that McGill could integrate it in its curriculum. The question asked was "How could McGill transform itself for a world of lifelong learning?" At the Poster Session various service units that focus on health, well-being, musical education, etc., were invited, as well as the McGill Community for Life-long Learning (MCLL). MURA's poster featured illustrations concerning the association's background and membership, as well as the various activities, events, and workshops offered. The Principal, the Chair of the Board, the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation), the Dean of Arts and many other

governors and senators visited during the hour-long session, and three members of the MURA Executive gave presentations and responded to questions. It was an excellent opportunity for MURA to raise its profile within the greater McGill community. (Photo: Kate Maguire, VP Internal, MURA)

News from Creative Colleagues

Alan Forster retired last year and keeps busy following his passion, painting. He says time flies when he is painting. He exhibits regularly and one of his paintings hangs in the Cancer centre of the MUHC. For those interested in seeing his paintings visit his web site at <http://www.art-3000.com/artist/alan/> or visit him on instagram #alanpforster

Lois Manton and Wendy Allen recently met up again several years into retirement. They were both attending **Readings for Treaty People**, a group that meets periodically for sessions of five to six weeks, one and a half hours per week. There are about 20-25 participants. Weekly topics require a few hours reading in advance of the meetings and may include essays and narratives, treaty documents, court decisions and chapters from texts. The topic of the last session was a discussion of The Indian Act and amendments to the Act. They also touched briefly on the upcoming federal Rights & Recognition Implementation Framework. The winter session of the group began on February 12, 2019 at 6:30 pm. This session they will be discuss a modern treaty, the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement. Anyone interested in participating can find further information on the current session or on future sessions at the following website: <https://readingsfortreatypeople.wordpress.com>.

John Gradwell's goal during retirement is to daily exercise both the brain and the body. In this regard he set himself two major tasks in the latter part of 2018. The intellectual part was, with his coauthor, to complete the 8th edition of a textbook entitled *Technology Engineering Our World*. This task was completed as planned and the book was published in December 2018 by Goodheart-Willcox, Illinois. All chapters were revised but the section on "design" received special treatment as it is at the heart of the creative aspect of technology. Cycling is at the core of his effort to slow down the aging process. He is part of the *Bicycle Adventure Club* where all rides are organized by members. Previously he has organized rides abroad but this year it was time to show Quebec to fellow club members. Twenty-six cyclists enrolled for the 2018 tour. The Châteaux Vaudreuil became home base for 10 days. He organized rides in different directions each day (like spokes from a hub) with distances varying from 60 to 100 kms. The title for the tour was "Montreal, je t'aime" but riders said that it should be renamed "Montreal gourmet extravaganza".

Frank Dumont's chapter *Introduction to 21st Century Psychotherapies* (by Wedding, D. and Corsini, R., 2018, *Current Psychotherapies*, Cengage Learning: Boston) was published in March. Frank says this will be his final published contribution He enjoys playing the stock market using a direct brokerage investing platform (e.g. National Bank) and referring to *The Street Quant Ratings* that, for a cost between \$US200 and \$300 per annum, gives a plethora of data on c.4000 stocks (both Canadian and US).

Reimagining Living Situations into our Senior Years

In a recent article on “Ageism” (*Opinion*, p1, *Globe and Mail*, March 2nd, 2019) Ashton Applewhite discussed some of the myths that abound about older citizens. The facts belie the myths. For example, only 2.5 % of Americans over 65 live in nursing homes. And even among those beyond 85 it is only 9% of the population. She reports that, in Canada, 92% of men and women aged 65 and over live at home. But as time progresses some of us may find that home maintenance both personal and physical becomes onerous and think that a senior's residence is the only option. However, because this is 2019 there are other options to consider. The following week *The Globe and Mail* followed up its ageism article with one on examples of semi-communal living or co-housing where a group of similar aged people purchase or build a joint housing community and share resources and company. (Chad Hipolito: *Reimagining Homes for Seniors*. *Arts and Books*, p.1, March 9th, 2019). In the USA **The Village Movement** has become a popular option for seniors. People remain in their own homes but organize a group to purchase support services centrally (gardeners, household support workers, transportation, dog walkers, shoppers etc.) A village can be people in a few blocks or be a district. There is plenty of information online to get you thinking about this option. Google “The Village Movement” or go to <https://www.nextavenue.org/village-movement-redefining-aging-place/> or <https://www.beaconhillvillage.org>

Atwater Library THURSDAY, April 4, 2019 from 12:30 to 1:30 pm

HOUSING ISSUES FOR SENIORS: STAY OR MOVE?

Marie-Claude Giguère, founder of **Helping Seniors**, shares practical information and answers questions about such issues as safety adaptations, downsizing, and assessing options to stay or move. No advance registration.

End of Life Decisions

In his book *Being Mortal: Medicine and What Happens in the End* (2014. Doubleday: Toronto) writer and physician Atul Gawande explores how and why decisions are made by doctors, by families and by patients themselves about how the lives of seniors can be improved but also how all those groups approach life's ending. Some of the content is related to how seniors can live better, how families emphasize safety over independence when influencing residential and other life choices, and ultimately what should be considered as the end of a life approaches. It is a thought-provoking book and provides more questions than answers. It is uncomfortable for many of us to think about our final choices but with Assisted death being considered from various vantage points perhaps it behooves us to think about how much we want to control that inevitable process. For example, we all should have a will, we should make sure our executors know where all relevant documents are held, we should leave our passwords to online and bank accounts with someone trustworthy and we should have a living will filed with a notary and our organ donor card signed.

To make sure that your specific wishes on medical interventions are followed you can go to the RAMQ site and fill out a form on Advanced Medical Directives. This is filed with RAMQ and is therefore available to your doctors when perhaps a directive filed with a notary are not.

<http://www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca/en/death.html#ramq>

Quebec also provides a very useful web site on who and how to contact various public authorities in the case of a death <http://www.etatcivil.gouv.qc.ca/en/death.html>

Atwater Library May 15, 2019 – 1:00 to 3:00 pm

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR SENIORS – SERVICE CANADA

Michèle Payette, Citizen Service Specialist, Service Canada, conducts an information session on Old Age Security (OAS), Guaranteed Income Supplement, OAS Allowance for spouses and common-law partners, issues for immigrant seniors, issues for caregivers, and more. Discussion with Q&A. No advance registration.

Wednesday, June 26, 2019 – 1:00 to 3:00 pm

PROTECT YOUR MONEY FROM FINANCIAL FRAUD AND ABUSE

Diane Skiejka, lawyer and legal plain language specialist with **Éducaloi**, conducts an information session. Discussion with Q&A. No advance registration.

Wednesday, July 24, 2019 – 1:00 to 3:00 pm

WILLS AND PROTECTION MANDATES

Diane Skiejka, lawyer and legal plain language specialist with **Éducaloi**, conducts an information session. Discussion with Q&A. No advance registration.

If you are interested in sharing your views on the topics covered, or in having MURA organize a session on any of them, let us know mura-arum.association@mcgill.ca

TRAVEL NEWS

Biking along the Spree River in Germany: Janet Boeckh and Lawrence Mysak



Last May we did our second bike trip in Germany. (Our first was along the Mosel River in 2016.) We prefer to cycle alone, and use a company to rent bikes, book inns, move our luggage, and provide maps.

After flights to Frankfurt and Leipzig, where we had 3 great days, an easy train ride took us to Cottbus, in the former E. Germany. A German family recommended a lovely dinner spot. It was asparagus season and along our route the white variety was featured, along with other delicious food, and local beers.

We averaged about 50 km. a day, which we did in 3 hours. The terrain was flat, and the landscape varied: riverside, fields, woodlots, small sleepy towns., mostly on dedicated paved bicycle paths. The area is famous for its pickles, and we often followed signs of a pickle on a bicycle! Around 11AM daily we stopped for “kaffee und kuchen”, and usually arrived at our destinations in time for a hike or a canoe paddle. We slept like logs, and ate copious German breakfasts: buffets of fruits, yoghurts, cereals, many breads, platters of cold meats and cheeses, eggs. Lunch was always a picnic by the side of the road or river.

After five days, we biked into Koepenick, a suburb of Berlin, where friends joined us for a few days. We’re already planning our next bike trip, probably along the Elbe, starting from Dresden. We’d love to tell you more, so if you’re interested, let us know.

A Tour of China: Joan Barrett

In May 2018 we flew from Montreal to Toronto to Beijing (population about 22 million), and returned home from Shanghai (24 million people), after spending 10 to 12 days in China, visiting Beijing, the Great Wall, Xian (site of the Terracotta Warriors), Wuhan (a smaller city – population only 10 million!), 2 days on a boat on the Yangtze River and then Shanghai. Our overall impression was that China is a huge country (size and population) and is or was at the time of our visit a very rich one.

We went on an organized tour with Sinorama – now out of business. We were a little apprehensive about being organized since we have always travelled on our own, seeing what we wanted when we wanted. On a number of days part of the tour was a stop at a factory – jade, silk, etc. and we were there longer than we would have chosen. However, this was more than compensated for by our guides who gave us information about Chinese history and daily life in China (did you know that Chinese children are usually toilet trained by the age of one?) and patiently answered questions.

Although Beijing and Shanghai have many signs in English it would have been more difficult to get around some of the comparatively smaller cities without having a guide, or speaking Chinese, or having an online translation tool. In Xian we ate dinner in a restaurant where a waitress used her cell phone to communicate. She typed in her question in Chinese, showed us the translation in English. We typed our answer in English and she read it in Chinese.



Xian -Terra Cotta Warriors



Shanghai



Great Wall



Forbidden City

There are many cars in the big cities and traffic was often (believe it or not) worse than Montreal. In Beijing people are not allowed to drive their cars two days of the week (restrictions are based on the license plate) and are fined heavily if they break the law. So.... some people buy a second car with a different license plate so they can drive a car every day.

China has changed drastically in recent years; the growth was very apparent to us during our visit. Some examples:

- 20,000 km of high-speed rail track have been built in the last 25 years.
- Estimates are that by 2022, over 550 million people in China will be considered middle class.
- Shanghai Airport has 2 terminals with a total of about 83 gates (a 3rd terminal is planned) and has about 70 million passengers in a year. (Trudeau Airport – about 18 million passengers and about 45 gates)
- The Apple factory in China employs or employed about 350,000 people.
- In 2014, the 3rd largest automaker in China sold 3.5 million vehicles.

It is unfortunate that the current political situation has undoubtedly decreased the number of Canadian visitors to such an interesting and culturally different country.

For a BBC timeline of key events in China from 1700BC to 2018: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13017882>

Cornwall, UK: An Enchanting Destination: Ginette Lamontagne and David Brown

You know that you have arrived in Cornwall, UK, when you find yourself driving on a narrow road lined with dense six-foot-high hedges that is barely wider than your car and you encounter a car coming the other way! One of you must back up to a narrow lay-by to let the other proceed. And so it is, again and again, on the way to

Keveral, the communal farm where our daughter has lived over most of the last twenty years.

Still, arriving at the farm is always a delight as it is perched on a hill above the Cornish cliffs, and settle into an empty room in the main house with a sea view for £3 a night – unless that is you opt for a Caravan, Tepee, or a Yurt nestled in the woods. These later accommodations hark back to the farm’s hippy communal past, remnants that are still apparent in the dreadlocks, clothing and laid-back ease of some residents. While in the early days most worked the land, baked bread, ran food box schemes and pitched in for a communal meal, many now depend on regular jobs off the farm. If you would like to visit, check out their website: <http://www.keveral.org/>.



Of-course, there is more to the Cornish region than a communal farm and it is a delight to discover some of the many attractive areas, such as Land’s End, Tintagel, and St. Ives which steeped in history and myth and have been a rich source of inspiration for literature. The awesome beauty of Land’s End, its rocky shorelines at the confluence of the English Channel and the Atlantic Ocean, make it a popular destination for rock climbers. In 2012, it gained worldwide prominence as the starting point of the Summer Olympics torch relay.

We particularly enjoyed visiting the village of Tintagel and its castle, a mediaeval fortification located on a small outcrop of a sharp cliff that is reached via by a pedestrian bridge. This is one of the many locations that are steeped in the legend surrounding King Arthur, Lancelot and the knights of the round table who sought the Holy Grail.



We also loved St. Ives, the jewel of the crown, one of UK’s most popular destinations, not only for tourists but also for artists who come to capture its breathtaking natural beauty of its quaint historic fishing village, sandy beaches, and narrow-cobbled streets. The ideal way to access St. Ives is via a most scenic 20-minute train ride along the seaside from St Erth.

Cornwall has a lot to offer. One can find at times a rugged coast, sandy beaches, charming harbour villages, spectacular sunsets, as well as its well-renowned pasties and its delicious Cornish cuisine.

Two Months in South Africa: John Wolforth

In 2018, Joan and I flew to Johannesburg via Paris and then took the train to Cape Town. The famous BlueTrain follows the same route and is incredibly expensive, so we took the regular Shosholoz Meyl (www.southafricanrailways.co.za) sleeper, which offers a more authentic experience. In Cape Town we rented an apartment for a month in Sea Point, one of the seaside communities east of the downtown area. We liked staying for an extended period since it gave us the opportunity to shop at local grocery stores, find favourite restaurants, take in shows like the Cape Town Opera, chat with the locals in this incredibly multi-ethnic city, get to use city transit to visit places like the amazing Victoria and Alfred (yes, “Alfred” not “Albert”) waterfront (www.waterfront.co.za). The bus system in Cape Town (www.myciti.org.za) is very up to date and very safe, compared to the suburban train system which is run down and, in our limited experience, quite dangerous. Our impression of Cape Town is that it is (surprisingly) a safe city, although there are areas where it would be inadvisable to stray. Of course, there is still, over 20 years after the end of the apartheid regime, an enormous gap between the city and the sprawling black townships, two of which we visited, but on a guided tour. The only caveat is that Capetonians do not go out and about much after sundown except by car.



Sea Point Cape Town



Victoria and Alfred Waterfront

After our time in the city, we were anxious to see something of the countryside and were frankly a bit nervous about driving, since we had heard many tales of car high-jackings and other dangers. However, we plucked up courage and drove along the so-called Garden Route (https://www.sa-venues.com/garden_route.htm) as far as Port Elizabeth and the Addo Elephant Reserve and came back through, in our view, the more interesting and less touristic Little Karoo, with its charming Afrikaner towns. No problems anywhere! The highways are well maintained, well signed, very scenic, and generally well provided with clean and safe service centres. And B & B lodging is available in distinctive country houses and inns en route (www.portfoliocollection.com). Back in Cape Town, we took a flight to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, and from there visited Victoria Falls and Chobe Park in Botswana (the subject of another entry, perhaps), and then flew back to Johannesburg with the intention of taking our flight back to Paris. However, on looking at the weather in Paris, we did a quick reappraisal, changed our flight, booked another rental car and a couple of nights accommodation in Nelspruit, and set off for the Province of Mpumalanga. Good decision as it turned out. We stayed in Nelspruit and Hoedspruit and toured in the wonderful Blyde River Canyon area (https://www.sa-venues.com/game_reserves/mp/ blyderiver.htm). We drove through a part of Kruger Park (which is a little smaller than Belgium) and saw a good number of elephants, giraffes, water buffalo and other animals from the (well-paved) road. Our host in Nelspruit found us a 2 night stay in a “bush camp” and this provided a much richer experience. The hospitality in the camps (www.bushbreaks.co.za) on reserves around Kruger is outstanding and the safari guides know exactly where to locate lions, leopards, rhinos and even cheetahs, so although some of the camps tend to be a little pricey you get what you pay for. South Africa is a distant winter destination, but it is one we would highly recommend, and one that can be planned easily via the internet without going through an expensive tour agency.



Joan and the house manager in Nelspruit



A sleepy leopard resting after her fill of antelope

A Visit to Croatia: Hugh Ray

History, beautiful scenery, architecture, good food, dining al fresco, hot sunny weather, and beaches await the visitor to Croatia. (but If going to the beach bring water shoes, most are pebbly/rocky and some with sea urchins to watch out for.) English is spoken just about everywhere that tourists venture so language is not an issue. Of

course, knowing at least some basic Croatian words will be advantageous and well-received by people you speak to. While perhaps at one time it was an inexpensive destination, years of peace and increased tourism have caused prices to rise, but not unrealistically. Lastly, Croatia is one of the safest countries in the world to visit - safer than the UK, France, and Italy for example.

Unless this requirement has changed, you will have to allow your hotel/Airbnb host to take a copy of your passport.

Original Plans

The original idea was to spend about 15 days in Slovenia and Croatia which included a weeklong small boat cruise (see below) out of Dubrovnik. However, getting between Slovenia and Dubrovnik proved to be complicated and/or uncomfortable so we modified our plans.

Croatian Destinations All the places visited were quite different from one another in both look and feel. There are just too many museums and churches to describe, best to get detail from a good guidebook. A Rick Steves tour book is a bible for me, and his *Croatia & Slovenia* book was no exception. In addition to his wonderful commentary his books have many excellent self-guided tours, both in museums & historic buildings and walks around cities & towns.

On the Mainland



Dubrovnik (pop 45,000) is situated in southern Croatia on the Adriatic with dramatic hills rising above it. It is probably the number one destination in Croatia, and it does not disappoint. However even in late May tourists sometimes choke the old city, especially mid-day when the large tour boat passengers throng into the old town. There are enough things to see and do to warrant spending several days here. Cruise passengers that only spend a few hours in the crowded old town in the heat of the day are unable to do it justice. The city dates from the early 7th century. It has changed hands at least half a dozen times since then. It once rivalled Venice in trade. Shelling during the war that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia has left its

mark. Some of the highlights we enjoyed:

The Old Town is an absolute must-see. We especially enjoyed exploring the back streets and alleyways which rise from the main street, the Stradun. Apart from the Stradun (and then only at off-hours) no vehicles are permitted in the old town. So given the history, the beauty, the churches, the second oldest synagogue in Europe, the museums, and the amenities, it is a strolling tourist's paradise. Cats are often seen sauntering down the streets and in the evening the air is filled with swallows coming home to roost in the ancient nooks and crannies. Too much to describe in detail!

Walking the walls

surrounding most of the old town. Wonderful views out to sea on one side and the soaring hills to the north and east.

Beaches

Even in late May the daily temperatures were very high during our stay (30+ most days), so we visited two nearby mainland beaches. Both are rocky, not sandy, beaches. There are lots of swimming options in other parts of the greater city and offshore islands and there are even places one can swim off the battlements of the old city.

Fort Lovrijenac

(Fort St. Lawrence). Easy walking distance from the old town and included in the ticket to the walls. While this old fort is empty, the views are great.

Not being a viewer of *The Game of Thrones*, it is lost on me, but much of that show was filmed in and around Dubrovnik and tours are available





We stayed at an Airbnb outside the old city up the mountain. If walking hills is an issue for you make sure to get accommodation close to the sea or in the Old Town.

Split (pop 180,000)

Split has four times the population of Dubrovnik and one feels it has the buzz of a small city even if this is partly tourist based. A wonderful destination where one could, like Dubrovnik, spend several days haunting the streets, churches, and museums.

Zagreb (pop 800,000)

The capital and largest city in Croatia. It is located 150 kms inland several hundred kms north of the other places visited. It was quite a change to stay in a large city after visiting so many small cities and towns. Zagreb has what I think of as an eastern European feel. A bit grimy, diesel fumes, smoking a bit more prevalent than we are used to, graffiti. However, don't let that dissuade you from a visit! I wished I had a couple of more days there. Unlike the other places we visited, Zagreb had the hustle and bustle of a real city and was not overrun with tourists. One quite quickly felt at

home here. While traffic abounds, there so many things to see and with a number of pedestrian-only streets in the downtown area, exploring by foot is a pleasure. There is just too much describe in detail. Just walk, walk, walk.

Mijet National Park

A quiet respite from the city. Pretty but not spectacular. Because of the heat we opted not to hike the hills but swam in the "lake" (actually a saltwater bay) and took a boat to visit St Mary's Church on an island on the lake.

Hvar: After the serenity of Mijet National Park, busy, "happening" Hvar was a dramatic contrast. A party town where rich and famous enjoy themselves. It was a bit too much that way for us, and I was shocked and saddened to see the occasional sign in English only. However, even if you don't like the scene don't give Hvar a pass. Well worth seeing:

Korcula

Korcula is quiet in comparison to Hvar. The intact medieval old town (no earthquake here) is doable in a few hours and is very pretty and atmospheric.

Other Places to See

We didn't get a chance to visit what is reputed to be the most beautiful part of Croatia, Plitvice Lakes National Park.

Small Boat (Small Ship) vs Large Boat Cruising Observations: Hugh Ray

What follows is certainly NOT the definitive comparison between small boat and large boat cruising as it based solely on one vacation on each. However, it is my intention to give you a rough sense of what some of the differences are. As small boat cruises operate in many different locations in the world and the itineraries vary wildly, my sole experience can hardly be extrapolated to them all. Anyone interested in exploring what a small boat cruise has to offer can begin by checking out the web sites listed at the end of the article.

*This article does **not** address river cruises.*

Many, perhaps even most, of the people reading this newsletter have taken at least one large boat cruise, often with a thousand or more passengers, but I imagine most have not experienced small boat cruising where the number of passengers number roughly 20-50. They are in many ways quite different experiences.

No one vacation style fits all. Many people justifiably want a stress-free escape for their vacation and opt for all-inclusive resorts or large boat cruising where often even the transfers are arranged for you. Others prefer trips which involve lots of physical challenges such as backpacking or canoe-tripping. Still others search for cultural stimulation exploring museums and historic sites from dawn to dusk. Just as in life it is important to know yourself as well as you can, it is important to know what you want out of a particular vacation.

What is a Small Boat Cruise?

Boats usually have around 20-50 passengers. However not all small boats are the same. The cruise line I took (Katarina Line, see below) has 6 different ship classifications from roughing it to very luxurious and corresponding price ranges.

The lowest class has shared toilets/showers and no air-conditioning expect for the dining area. The facilities gradually improve until three higher levels have bigger more luxurious ships, larger cabins, more crew, usually all meals included, perhaps a few more passengers, and may have a hot tub/jacuzzi on board. The two lowest ship classifications are probably more appealing to young adults as they are less expensive and have more of a party atmosphere.

Distances Covered/Cruising

Small boats cover much smaller distances so one explores a region, not a large geographic area. Cruising is closer to shore. They are in port at night and generally cruise from early morning to mid-afternoon, so are at sea roughly 30% of the day.

Language Spoken

There were 6 Croatian crew members on the small boat. Apart from the captain, they performed a variety of roles on board. All communication with passengers was in English but only two of the crew were fluent. The vast majority of the passengers throughout the season (May to early October) are from English-speaking countries.

Interaction with Fellow Passengers

Small boat cruises are more informal and interaction with others is a fact of life. While one can choose to read or lay on the sun deck, and not converse, one does sit at a communal table for meals. (In the more luxurious small ships classifications separate tables are more the norm I suspect.) I lean more to the introvert side of the scale yet I regarded meeting and talking with other passengers a bonus, as you get to know some of them well and engage in interesting conversations and perhaps even make new friends. I suspect small boat cruisers are more sociable and open to new experiences and people.

Passenger Demographics

As this cruise occurred from the end of May to early June, off-season, the passengers were mostly older, many retired. Of the 30 passengers 2 were in their 20's, the rest from 50 to about 85. 7 were from Quebec, 2 each from the U.K. and South Africa, 1 from the USA and 18 from Australia.

Cost

The cost of my class of small boat cruise was roughly the same as an inside cabin on an inexpensive large boat cruise. The more luxurious classes of small boats cost 2-4 times as much. I was in a small cabin on the lowest level with a porthole I could open. The cabins in the two higher decks were a bit more expensive with windows and a door to the outside deck.

Meals/Alcohol

On the small boat a basic buffet breakfast and a served lunch was included. We had an excellent cook, the delicious lunches consisted of 3 courses and dessert. Alcohol was not included but various wines/spirits/beer were available for purchase at fair prices. One special evening meal was also included, the "Captain's Dinner", which was also excellent.

Ports of Call

On the small boat there was a port of call every day. Cruising was from early morning until mid-afternoon, with a late morning 30-minute swim stop. Usually this consisted of the boat anchored in a quiet bay close to shore. We docked in port mid-afternoon and had the rest of the day to explore. Usually the docks were very close to town (closer than cruise ship docking). Except for the Captain's Dinner evening we had to find dinner for ourselves. As the boat docked overnight, there was no set time when we had to be back. Therefore, dinners were wonderfully relaxed, eating food in a local restaurant, usually outside, lingering over dessert, drinks, or coffee. Sometimes several small boats were docked in parallel and it was fun to walk from boat to boat to reach ours. One disadvantage to mid-afternoon docking is that there is less time for visiting museums before they close.

Entertainment

Apart from breakfast and lunch, while on board until mid-afternoon one had to entertain oneself, usually reading, sun bathing, talking, swimming at the swim break.

In Summary: Advantages of Small Boat Cruising to Consider

- Cruising is done closer to shore, so it is more scenic
- Often visit places that large boats don't go
- Easier and faster to disembark and re-embark
- One gets to experience a port-of-call by mid to late afternoon, evening, and night
- Less crowds in ports that are shared with large boats as passengers from large boats generally have to be back on board by late afternoon
- For those comfortable swimming from the boat, one gets to enjoy a lovely bay rather than in a small, noisy, crowded, chlorine-laded pool
- Dock closer to town
- One doesn't have the "We Have to be Back on Board by 5pm or they Sail Without Us" anxiety,
- No days at sea
- Interaction with other passengers
- Eating a lovely lunch on board rather than a rushed lunch on land because of having to see the sights and get back on board by late afternoon.
- While meals at the restaurant on a large boat are enjoyable and one feels well taken care of, I prefer eating a leisurely dinner al fresco in a local restaurant.

Resources:

Katarina Line <https://www.katarina-line.com/> ; Small Ship Cruise Collection <https://www.small-cruise-ships.com/ships/>; Adventure Life <https://www.adventure-life.com/>
Responsible Travel <https://www.responsibletravel.com/>



Hugh's Boat is the Small one