

Chartering a Bareboat in Croatia,

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Part One

Aaaa, finally the day to fly to Croatia came. The long months of preparation, plotting the courses, selecting the islands and places we want visit, calculating the routes, distances, time, fuel, learning the ports, memorized the pictures from the internet, ordering charts from Imray Company in London it was all fun during the long winter months.

We arrived at Split Croatia on June 13, 2015. Pre-arranged taxi was already waited for us. Next 20 minutes ride and we arrived at our Marina Kastela located in Kastel Gomilica. Our excitement was reaching a maximum point. Dora and I could not believe that we finally here and we have two weeks of unknown challenges ahead of us. However the excitement was at the pick point that we did not think about those challenges and we had a full confidence in ourselves that we are going to have a fantastic time.

Marina Kastela is pretty big marina with over 300 slips and can fit a mega yachts easily 100 feet and over. You can imagine walking to the docks and looking over 200 sticks in the air. One of the best views I have seen.

After checking in and complete the formality (verifying our ASA 101, 103, 104 licenses plus VHF radio operator license) we were directed to go to our boat and been told that employee name Ivan from chartering company www.sail-croatia.com will meet with us in 30 minutes for briefing on the boat. If you do not have American Sailing Association license than you will not be able to charter a bareboat. You can still charter a boat but you will need a skipper that chartering company will offer to you for 150 euro per day plus provision. So if you ever decided to charter the boat in Croatia and you do not want to get an ASA license, Captain Chris and Captain Dora are available for next trip. We will not charge you, just pay for the boat and provision. Ha, ha, ha...

Our lovely Jeanneau 32 name "Prophecy" was waiting for us inside the breaker. It took us 15 minutes to walk to the boat. Good exercise after sitting for 10 hours on the plane.

"Prophecy "came with everything that a sailor needs. Haul, stay, backstay, spreaders, mast, jib, main sail ... just kidding. Our boat came with decent 21 hp. Yanmar, auto pilot, Garmin GPS, VHF radio that were located at the navigation desk in the cabin. 90% of charter boats have GPS located at navigation desk not at the helm.

So, there is a one general rule when you chartering a boat anywhere in the world:

Rule # 1. It is not like your boat and will not be like your boat. So you need to pass this message to your brain, process and keep it in the memory for the time you are chartering the boat.

Rule # 2. If you still have any doubts refer to Rule # 1 for clarification.

So with that rule in our heads we passed the GPS issue at the helm and continued our briefing with Ivan, which happened to be a very nice young person. Ivan presented to us how to open roller furling jib and furling main, how to operate electric windlass, location of the gas tank, emergency steering device, quick overview of electrical panel, check the refrigerator, start the engine and that was all. Aha, one more thing we got the dinghy and the 2.5 hp. dinghy engine, so got quick instruction how to start the dinghy engine and turn off. Entire briefing took 30-45 minutes and at 3PM we were done and ready to cast off if we want to.

At that point we decided to have a quick lunch and then get some provision from a local supermarket that was walking distance. Actually there was a small supermarket at the marina but we decided to walk few blocks to the bigger one. Well, if I said bigger supermarket do not expect the size of King Kullen in Huntington Bay. Any way we got the provision, and set the boat for next day which was a Sunday to cast off.

As prudent sailors we went over and over the chart, courses, weather for Sunday and next few days, etc. Weather was cloudy with 10-15 kts. in the morning gusting to 20 kts. in the afternoon with waves 3-6 feet. Our first leg was about 16 Nm so we figure if we start early AM by noon we should be at the other island. Our first destination was Island Brac, ACI Marina Milna 43°19.60'N - 16°27.00'E.

Few words about how the marinas are build and docking in Croatia. Docking is call Mediterranean style. That means you bring your boat astern to the dock and bow mooring line is sunk at the bottom and is attached to the concrete block. So as you coming astern your deck hand needs to pick up the bow mooring line and walk to the bow while you are steering astern to the beautiful shiny concrete dock wall that has no fenders whatsoever and on top of that you need to pass your stern lines to the marina crew. So that how our "Prophecy" was docked. To cast off you do those things in reverse and watch which way the wind is blowing.

We casted off nice and easy despite 10 kts wind blowing on our starboard side. After motoring from marina and get to open sea Dora as a Captain behind the helm shouted the order "Open half Main". As a respectful crew I replied "Yes Captain" and half main was flying. Next we opened half jib and we were sailing. The wind was not prevailing to our course but we wanted to sail for a while. After sailing for 45-60 minutes wind shifted and now we are on the broad reach on the port side and off the course with steady 20 kts, gusting to 25 kts, with the following sea. What a nice rocking. With each wave "Prophecy" was rocking from port to starboard almost touching the railings. At that point it was the time to roll the sails cranks the engine and changes the course. We were on very close-hauled. We decided to open a quarter of the main to gain little more stability. Along with the engine we were making our way to the first destination. I'm thinking to myself that on the first day of our journey Adriatic Sea really welcome us very nicely and on the back of my head I have this message that was wondering for a while and didn't want to go away. How the hell am I going to back this boat to the dock with 25 kts, wind and other boats at the dock...?

To be continued

