

Croatia a destination for baby boomers

BY KELLY M. LOUDENBERG

Baby Boomers have a unique set of beliefs and characteristics; their preferences are vastly different than generations before them. To generalize, when members of this generation travel, they choose destinations that are tasteful, sophisticated and new.

They like places where they can learn about other cultures and history. A place with a great respect for the environment, an environment that they can admire because it is still untouched appeals. They like a place where they can actively see the landscape through hiking, biking or sailing. Baby boomers have found that Croatia fills the bill, according to Wanda S. Radetti, the Croatia travel specialist of Sacca Tours, at 28-38 42nd St., in Long Island City.

Baby boomer Louise Belulovich has traveled to Croatia on more than one occasion, on trips Radetti helped plan. "We love to explore and we were are looking for something new and different," she said. "We grew up when the world was getting smaller and smaller and now that we have traveled to more traditional places, we want to see places that are somewhat off the beaten path."

Radetti, who is also president of Tasteful Croatian Journeys, said that "baby boomers love to travel and have journeyed to most countries of the world. Now they are ready to see places that are new and fresh." She added that "curiosity, excitement and expansion of mind are all character traits of baby boomers. Croatia, a country on the crossroads of European cultures, is sophisticated, stunningly beautiful and intellectually stimulating."

She says that travel to Croatia has grown tremendously, due to vacationers from Europe and the United States. Even during the war, 10 years ago, she had groups going there. Sacca Tours is primarily business-to-business, selling packages to other travel agents, but Radetti said they do individual trips as well.

Indeed, baby boomers with a strong sense of curiosity will have plenty to discover in Croatia.

In the Adriatic Sea, scattered along the Croatian coast, lie more than 1,000 islands, islets and reefs to explore. Many of the islands are uninhabited, dramatically stark and beautiful; others are alive with art, history and cultures that are linked to ancient Mediterranean civilizations. Whether you are sailing from island to island or you have decided to visit just one or two, each island offers a piece of deep Croatian culture and history. Chartering a sailboat or a motorboat is what Radetti offers, among other services.

Cities along the Adriatic, such as Spilt and Dubrovnik, were built by the Romans with walls to protect the inhabitants from pirates centuries ago. Opatia, Estria and Opatija are other destinations worth seeing. "Estria is like Tuscany," Radetti said.

Croatia's culture is based on a 13-century history. As a result, several cultural and historical monuments from all periods characterize the seaside. These monuments include influences from antiquity, the Roman period and early Middle Ages, Mediterranean culture, and Romanesque heritage. There are also a series of Mediterranean urban complexes that dot the coast. Islands will offer old fortresses and castles of the late Middle Ages and architecture from the baroque period.

Croatia's history is not all that draws in baby boomers. Rather, it's the sensual experiences one gains there. Belulovich described her trip as very sensual. "You walk onto an island and you can smell the rosemary and the lavender. It's really a beautiful place."

Taste is another sensual experience that baby boomers have long been fond of. Natural foods without additives or preservatives are served in Croatia.

"The food is all local. When I eat the lamb, I know it is lamb from a nearby village that has been grazing on the aromatic greens," Belulovich said. Tourists will enjoy homemade olive oil and wine from ancient olive trees and vineyards. Wine is to be coupled with the exquisite lobster, shrimp, oysters, date shells and quality white fish from the coast. Venetian, Greek and Roman influences offer tourists a variety of tastes.



Photos by Wanda Radetti

Vacationers at the entrance to the hilltown of Motovun in Istria, Croatia.



Active Boomers can enjoy water sports or sailing in the changing shaded blue waters of the Adriatic Sea. The country is famous for its many national parks, four of which are on the coast. Nature lovers will be amazed at the environmental preservation and pride of Croatia. Regional planning and protection has allowed Croatia to avoid a heavy amount of industrial and urban development.

Baby Boomers seeking to find beautiful places that are not heavily trafficked will find delight in Croatia. For those not looking for just an overview, there is much to be found in this land that is rich in culture, history, and beauty.

"Being there, going there, I sell what I have seen and touched," said Radetti. "I am from there, too, so for me it's going home all the time."



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