Chapter 22
Slovenia and Croatia 2006







Saturday, June 24, Izola, Slovenia

I've just finished the EIIT (Empirical Investigations in International Trade) conference held here on the coast of Slovenia. I traveled to Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, on Tuesday night, rented a car, and drove here to Izola. Tomorrow I will return to Ljubljana for two nights before traveling to Dubrovnik, Croatia, for another conference.

My travel here was without mishap, leaving me little to write about, except to note how remarkably well it went. I didn't expect that. I connected through the Charles De Gaulle Airport in Paris, and shortly before leaving I got an e-mail from Jon Haveman, the U.S. organizer of the conference, saying that his bag did not reach Ljubljana with him after his

connection in the "chaos" of Charles De Gaulle. I checked my bag anyway, deciding that even worse than not getting my bag would be negotiating the chaos while dragging it with me, and I fully expected not to find it on the baggage carousel at Ljubljana. But there it was. Even Charles De Gaulle was slightly less chaotic than it might have been, as the first information desk that I (eventually) found directed me easily (if not quickly) to my next flight.

But what really made me think I was having a lucky trip was my changing money. In Ljubljana I asked at an information desk for an ATM and was directed to one not far away. But right next to it was a bank, with its door open, and I decided to cash travelers checks rather than draw down my checking account with my debit card. I stepped into the bank and did that easily. While the teller was processing my request, I looked around and saw a man trying to get in the door of the bank, which now was closed and evidently locked. I asked the teller about that, and she said the bank was closed. Sure enough, I saw that it was 3:02 PM, and I had gotten in just before closing.

Next, I went across the street to the lineup of car rental booths where I rented the car I had reserved from Hertz. Here too I had wondered if I would have trouble, as I have only a debit card, not a credit card, and in the U.S. Hertz says it won't rent without a credit card. But here, either their policy is different, or they didn't know that my Visa Check card isn't a credit card. The transaction went without a hitch.

Driving to Izola was also easy, after I corrected my initial mistake of going the wrong direction on the expressway. The Hotel Marina, in Izola, was easy to find, even though my map was not helpful, as it was located next to the marina which was, as I'd cleverly suspected, in the water. The town seemed crowded with cars, but in spite of that I found a parking space just across from the hotel, where I was able to park until the hotel put me in a space of theirs. Everything went so easily that I've hesitated to write about it here, fearing I might jinx my luck. Since then, though, things have been ordinary, neither lucky not unlucky, so I've decided to risk it.

I saw nobody else from the conference that first day, Wednesday, as most of them had arrived, like Jon, several days early to take a boat trip in Croatia, from which they returned only late that night. I spent the rest of the day briefly wandering around the town, buying postcards, eating dinner, and then writing postcards before going to bed. Slovenia borders on Italy, so I thought it might have good pasta, but the spaghetti carbonara that I had that night was distinctly inferior to even what I could make myself. I've since learned that, perhaps because we are on the coast, the best food here is seafood.

Thursday morning, I went down for breakfast at about 8:00, thinking I might see others from the conference. At first there clearly were none, as the restaurant was filled with tourists who were almost uniformly dowdy, middle aged or older, and overweight. I knew from the conference program that I was the only participant who came close to fitting that description. Eventually a couple of younger people came in who I suspected might be participants, but I didn't know them. Only as I was finishing my breakfast did Jon arrive along with one other person I knew, Johannes Moenius. I later learned that the

group had gotten in at 2:00 AM the night before, so it was not surprising that they weren't having an early breakfast.

The breakfast was OK, but it too was not as good as I think I would have gotten across the border in Italy. There was a machine to make coffee in various forms, including cappuccino. There were some cereals, some bread with butter and jams, some sliced meat and cheese, yogurt, and two bowls of sliced, canned fruit. Oddly, the tables were set with a napkin, a knife, and a spoon, but no fork. I'm not sure how we were expected to eat the meat and cheese. I held it with a piece of bread while cutting it with the knife, then lifted it to my mouth with the knife. The canned fruit was not exciting, but it went very well with plain yogurt.

The conference started at 9:00, with the first paper by Johannes, and me serving as discussant. I always like it when I can get my duties out of the way early like this, since I can then relax. My only other duty was to chair a session at the end of the conference (today), and that does not amount to much. After my stint as discussant, I just listened to the papers and contributed to the discussion when I had something to say.

It's funny how my contributions to discussion at conferences vary so much from conference to conference. At the Boston Fed conference that I attended earlier this month on Cape Cod, I never had a thing to say. I did my job as discussant, but from then on, I never had a single thought about a paper that I was even tempted to speak up with. It was a big conference, with probably more than a hundred participants many of whom seemed eager to speak, so there was certainly no need for me to contribute.

But here, in a much smaller group (about 20), I found that I had at least one question or comment on almost every paper. As has happened sometimes before, once I begin to realize that I'm commenting on every paper, I try to hold back. But then a session chair will ask for comments and nobody will raise their hand, which is always a sign of mild failure on the part of both the paper giver and the conference. Then, if I do have something to say, I raise my hand. It then happens that I speak more than anybody else. Fortunately, I think I can believe them when the organizers later thank me for all this participation, as Jon did several times here, since it does seem to keep the conference livelier than it might otherwise be. The question is, will I know it, some day, when my comments cease being (as I hope they are) insightful and useful, and start being stupid or boring? And if I don't know it, will anybody tell me?

The conference provided all our meals. Lunch was served by the hotel all three days, as was dinner on Thursday. The hotel food was decent, though not exceptional, and I gather that the wine was the same.

The one exception to the hotel providing meals was yesterday evening, when we went on what was described as a "ship trip." This was on a boat that took us the entire length of the Slovenian sea coast, which is only about 30 miles long. After looking at the cliffs, beaches, and villages along the coast, we anchored off one of the beaches and about half of us (not I) went in for a swim off the boat.



Izola, from “ship trip,” from trip



Izola, from “ship trip,” from trip



Trade economists swimming, from trip

Several of our participants were attractive young women, and a couple of them went in the water, but one of them, Mary Amiti from Australia (though she works at the IMF in Washington) did not. She and I were talking on the deck when the Slovenian organizer, Jože Damijan, came up out of the water and threatened to drag her in. Apparently, they had both been on the longer boat trip in Croatia, and at one point he had made such a threat convincing enough that she dove in to avoid it. This time, however, she wasn't dressed for it, and it seemed clear that she was sincere in saying no. Joze didn't let up, at first, and I wondered if I needed to intervene. He did relent, however, and Mary commented after he returned to the water that she was planning to use me as a shield against him, since she figured he wouldn't throw me into the water. Until that point, I had rather liked Jože, but that episode did not endear him to me.

The boat had a gas grill, and while people were swimming, the crew put large pieces of fish on to cook. After the swimming, it wasn't long before dinner was served, consisting first of these pieces of fish, and then calamari that was also cooked on the grill. I don't think I have ever had such good fish, and I know I've never had such good calamari. They must have done something with the seasoning on both, because their flavors were stunning.

Throughout the trip, there were bottles of various drinks keeping us lubricated: both white and red wine, orange soda (not diet), and water. Jon, Johannes, and I were standing together in conversation when Jon suddenly spilled his red wine. Some went on the deck,



Jon Haveman, center leaning over, from trip

but a lot went on Johannes's jeans, making what I'm sure will be huge red stains. None, I think, went on me; thankfully, since I only brought the one pair of slacks. Johannes took it very well.

As usual, I was not drinking wine or soda, just water. But then one of the Slovenians poured himself a glass of half red wine and half orange soda. Others thought this was an awful idea and made quite a fuss, but apparently it is a not uncommon mixture in Slovenia. So I tried a glass myself. I liked it better than wine, and presumably it had only half the sugar of orange soda. Perhaps I'll try drinking it at our next poker game and see how my wine drinking friends respond.

After our meal I had a long conversation with another of the attractive women, Beata Smarzynska Javorcik. OK, she's much more attractive than her name. She's Polish, works at the World Bank, and I've known her for a few years. We talked a good deal about life in Poland, both before and after the fall of communism, which happened when she was 18 years old. It was fascinating learning about the period of martial law that happened when she was 9, and the difficulties that she had traveling when she was a teenager. Now, in modern Poland, it was also interesting to learn the problems that her parents have in adjusting to the new world. Beata herself, of course, is thriving, and at the World Bank she has played a small role in helping countries during these transitions.



Beata, center, and colleagues, from trip

In the afternoon eight of us went by car – mine and another – to a town that we had seen on our boat ride. It's called Piran, and it sits on a point of land near the border with Croatia. From the boat we'd seen what looked like a castle but turned out to be the old city wall, high on a hill, as well as a church and a Venetian style tower. It seems to be a popular destination for tourists and locals alike.

We followed the map to drive to the shore of the village but were turned away by a policeman who told us, we think, that all parking spaces were filled. We drove instead to the back of the town, high on the hill, where we found a parking structure with room for us. That had the advantage that we were already on top of the hill at the level of the city wall, which we climbed to the top of and took pictures from. It had a great view down onto the town and the coast around it, including the deep, clear green of the water just below.



Piran, from trip

To climb to the top of the wall, we used a stairway that was very cleverly constructed for a space that was too steep for a normal one. A normal stairway would have had steps too small to be safe, and you'd have wanted to scale it like a ladder, not a stair. What they did here, if I can describe it, was to have one half of each step, alternately on the left and then the right, cut back at an angle to give greater exposure to the wide part of the step below. Very neat.

After the wall we walked down to the town, which was teaming with tourists, some swimming in the ocean and others walking or sitting at the numerous cafés. We walked to the end of the point, then selected a café for ourselves and had drinks. The café had a large wide-screen television broadcasting the current soccer game (the World Cup is happening now) with a game just starting between Germany and Sweden. Our group included two Germans, as well as others from Belgium, Netherlands, Hungary, France, and Hong Kong, almost all of whom sat entranced by the game. The only exception, besides me, was Johannes (from Germany) who sat with his back to the TV and was fascinated by the identical expressions of the others as they followed the game. He tried to get a picture of them, sitting in a row with their mouths agape, but his bringing out his camera got their attention and spoiled the effect.

Monday, June 26, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Yesterday, I drove back to Ljubljana, bringing with me two of the conference participants (from Hungary and France) who otherwise would have needed more complicated public transportation to connect in Ljubljana to their transportation home. On the way we talked a bit about views of America in Hungary and France – much more favorable in the former than in the latter, as expected. They were also interested in US views of Bush and the Iraq war, which I tried to convey objectively.

I had originally reserved my rental car for 12 days, expecting to drive it to Dubrovnik. When I realized I could get there more easily by train and plane (which I'll do tomorrow), I rented the car only until tomorrow. Then, as I dropped my French colleague off at the Ljubljana airport, I realized that I had no need for a car here, since the city is small enough that one can reach everything easily by walking. I decided to return the car while I was there.

I pulled into the parking structure and went to the row of parking spaces reserved for Hertz, but suddenly realized that I hadn't filled the gas tank. It was less than a quarter full. Having entered the parking structure, I wasn't sure whether I could get out again without difficulty, but in fact the ticket I'd collected coming in got me out again without a problem.

I then set out in search of a gas station. I hadn't noticed one on the drive in from the expressway, so I first tried going the other direction out of the airport. This took me through some nice fields of corn and other crops to a small village, but I found no filling station anywhere. My Hertz map showed locations of filling stations, but the symbols of gas pumps were large enough that it was hard to tell exactly where they were. Eventually

I recalled that I'd stopped at a rest stop on the expressway my first day, when I'd gone the wrong direction on it near the airport. I now did that again and soon had my gas gauge pointing to full. I'm sure it wasn't cheap, of course, but in Slovenian currency I wasn't much aware of the cost.

I returned the car and caught a taxi to where I'm staying in Ljubljana: The City Hotel. It is near the center, and reasonably priced. Unfortunately, it is not air conditioned, and we seem to be having a heat wave. If I were going to be here longer, I would surely look for another hotel. But for just two nights, and one more on my return, I imagine I can get by. I did in fact sleep last night, after considerable tossing and turning.

I walked through the old part of the city yesterday afternoon. This is only about three blocks from the hotel, where a square has some impressive 19th century buildings, and a bridge leads across the river into the much older part. I walked much of this old section, which has mostly been nicely restored with outdoor cafes, restaurants, and many trendy shops. Behind it all, on a hill centered in the peninsula formed by a bend in the river, is a castle which is the highlight of Ljubljana. The hill is quite high, and I considered climbing it but eventually decided to put that off until today. I went looking instead for a place to eat along the river.

As I walked, not far from the bridge, I noticed someone sitting in a café waving. He seemed to be waving at me, and as I got closer I recognized it as Johannes. I'd forgotten that he would be staying another day in Ljubljana, and we had even spoken of getting together there. But we'd made no plans and I'd forgotten it. He had not, however, and



Ljubljana Castle, from Wikipedia 2023

apparently had stationed himself here, drinking a beer, hoping to see me. It's a small enough city, with such a focused area for tourists, that this was a plausible strategy, and it had worked. He and I spent the rest of the afternoon and evening together, first climbing to the castle and later having dinner.



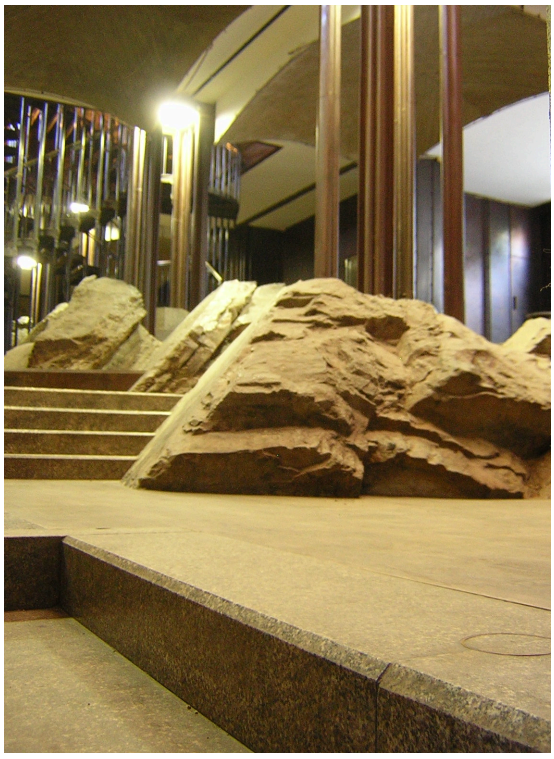
With Johannes atop Ljubljana Castle, from trip

Getting to the castle required climbing a long sloping path with occasional stairs, which I might not have done without company. In fact, Johannes had mentioned that there is a tram that takes people to the top, and I'd have much preferred that. But this was not really all that awful, and once I reached the top I quickly recovered.

The castle has a long history, and parts of it have been built at many different times, including quite recently. The tower at one corner, which we climbed, gives a great view of Ljubljana all around. The rest of the castle walls have been restored, or are being restored, using a mixture of old and new materials. Johannes was very impressed with the way this was done, and he viewed it as much superior to what is done in Germany, where he's from. There they always insist on keeping strictly to the old design and materials. Here they were mixing modern materials, such as steel beams, with the old stone in a way that he found quite appealing, and I guess I did too.

At the start of our visit to the castle, we first sat (at my insistence) in a café for a drink. When done, I asked directions to the rest room and went, alone, inside, and down some stairs. To my surprise, the open spiral staircase went down at least two stories. And I

saw a woman going up the staircase, except that the part she was climbing was separate from mine. These were two unconnected spiral staircases, intertwining like a double helix. They both led from separate entrances on the floor where I'd started to the same floor below. The chamber where both emerged was again of modern design but built into the stone walls and integrated with huge boulders that protruded from the hill in places on the floor. The men's restroom, when I finally found it, was also unusually shaped, with six tall urinals arranged on three sides of each of two adjoining tiny rooms. It was all quite remarkable, and when I returned to Johannes, I told him he would have to see it. After our tour of the rest of the castle, we both went back there, and he was indeed delighted by what the architect had done. We eventually figured out that this whole underground area was to become the entrance to a restaurant, no doubt a very expensive one to justify all this expense.



Deep in Ljubljana Castle, from trip

We found a gentler inclined path to take us down from the castle, ending in some stairs that took us to a different part of the old town than where we'd started. We were both ready for dinner by this time and began looking at menus of the many restaurants that we found. My guidebook mentioned a dish that I wanted to try – a local variation on tortellini – and when we couldn't find it on the menus, we asked about it. The waiter we spoke to didn't know of it, so he asked another, and learned that this was a dish one wouldn't find in Ljubljana, but only in another region of Slovenia. Hard to believe that such a small country could, within it, still have regional variations in cuisine.

We told this waiter that we were looking for Slovenian cuisine, rather than the "fusion" cuisine that this restaurant seemed to offer, and he directed us another 300 meters along the street to a restaurant that he said specialized in local foods. We found it, and it was wonderful. The menu had all sorts of game and country specialties. Johannes had a horse tenderloin. I had a mixed country sampler that included two kinds of sausage (one of which, apparently, was what Germans call blood sausage – dried blood in a sausage casing), two kinds of meat, turnips, cabbage, buckwheat, and some sort of slice from a loaf made up, it seemed, of different kinds of bread pressed together. Best of all, the restaurant had its own brew of beer that was far better than what we'd been served elsewhere.

We spent several hours there, and I learned a good deal of Johannes's life story. He learned a little of mine, but not as much. His life started under communism in Dresden,

East Germany, where he aspired to be a musician (a flutist) but was led by serendipity, luck, and lack of extreme musical talent first to business, then consulting, and eventually economics, where he did his PhD at UCSD and got his first job at Northwestern's Kellogg School. He didn't get tenure there, however, and is now an assistant professor at Redlands University in California. Given his obvious aspirations to do research, that must be quite a comedown, but he professes to be very happy. That is partly because of his wife, a Chinese woman economist from Xi'an whom he met at a conference in Istanbul, and whom he married legally a year ago but will marry ceremonially sometime soon in China.

Tuesday, June 27, Dubrovnik, Croatia

After the un-air-conditioned warmth of the City Hotel, I was hoping for little more than air conditioning here in Dubrovnik. I got it, and much more besides. This is a very luxurious hotel, built on the coast across a small bay from the old walled city, and thus with wonderful views of the city and of the Adriatic. The hotel was built in the 30s, but completely renovated a few years ago to a very high standard: all dark wood, plush carpeting, molded plaster, and so forth. The air conditioning in my room is perfect. Unfortunately, the heat outside continues to be extreme – in the 90s, I guess – and I can't see how I'll be able to explore the old city without putting up with it. I have just one day to do that, tomorrow, before the conference, and I'll try to get up early to walk there before it gets too awfully hot.



Old city Dubrovnik from hotel, from trip

Picking up where I left off yesterday, I got a surprise when I stopped writing in my journal. To escape the heat of my room, I had brought my laptop down to a part of the breakfast room of the hotel, which I'd noticed had some room air conditioners. I started

working at one table, but the man in charge soon moved me around the corner to an alcove, because workmen were banging away on the wall, and he wanted me out of the way. For an hour or two I sat in the alcove using my laptop, listening to the noises from around the corner, but not seeing what was being done. When I finally stopped and left the alcove, I found that they had almost completely removed a wall, exposing a set of wide stone stops leading up out of the hotel. By the time I returned there later in the day, they had completed this transformation, and the breakfast room had a brand-new wide entrance from above via these steps. This was impressive, but since the room was on the ground floor of the hotel, and since these steps did not apparently lead anywhere useful, I am still unsure of their purpose.

On the other hand, when I looked more carefully at the hotel from the outside, I saw that it was all under major reconstruction. They seemed to have completely demolished two wings of the hotel before I arrived, leaving the one I was in with the jagged bricks and beams exposed that once connected to the missing part. In fact, my own room on the 6th floor turned out to be across the hall from a wall that, from outside, was just a temporary arrangement of concrete blocks. Speaking of 6th floors, I'm on the 6th floor here in Dubrovnik too, but here that is the ground level on which we arrived. The hotel extends down, not up, from the road along the coast, with its bottom floor not too far above the sea.

I spent yesterday afternoon exploring more of Ljubljana. On the way to the train station, to buy my ticket for today, I passed a hotel that looked more likely to have air conditioning than my City Hotel. I went in, confirmed the air conditioning, and found the rates to be not all that much higher, so I made a reservation for the final night that I would be spending in Ljubljana before my flight home.

I then headed for the Tivoli Garden. This is mostly just a park, not a garden, and behind it is a wooded hill that I had noticed from the top of the castle. I had seen a very standard photo of the castle that nicely showed both it and the old town below it, and I figured it had to have been taken from the top of this hill. I'm hardly an avid climber, but I was really hoping to get such a picture myself, so that was my purpose in going to the Tivoli Garden.



Without the photo as a goal, I'm sure I would have given up, as the walk up the hill turned out to be quite hard in the heat. Fortunately, there were log benches frequently along the path, so I was able to stop often to get my breath. This was nice, because it allowed me to hear the birds singing in the woods, which they were doing with enthusiasm that I don't think I'd have noticed if I was concentrating on walking. Unfortunately, when I reached the top of the hill, it turned out that the trees were just way too dense for me to see anything at all but them, and I didn't get the picture I was hoping for. I couldn't see the fortress for the trees.

After walking back down, I went through a different part of the park. It included an exhibition of photographs from a photographer who had captured beautiful scenes from many countries of the world. These were displayed in very large size, each about 8 feet wide and 3 feet high along both sides of a walkway. They were wonderful.



Large photos on display, from trip

I worked my way back toward the city center, where I'd been the day before, and took more pictures. I seemed to have pretty much exhausted all that I wanted to see, but I wasn't eager to return to my hot hotel room, so I kept wandering, killing time until ready for dinner. At random I happened to walk past the large church in the old city just as a couple of young tourists were going in through the huge ornamental metal doors. I decided to go in too, and as I did, I could hear music from an organ and choir. It turned out that I'd arrived just as choir practice was starting.

At first, they were singing some sort of warm-up exercises, with the organ playing a pattern, the singers following it, and then the organ working up and down the scale with different chords for them to follow as well. That was better to listen to than you might think, since inside this church the sound reverberated so beautifully. After a bit, though, they switched to practicing what I presume they would later perform, playing and singing bits of it, some short and some long, with interruptions by the conductor talking in Slovenian. I sat in a pew and listened to this for close to an hour. I never did see the musicians, by the way. They were in a balcony at the back of the church, and I sat too near the back to see them.



Church, from trip

During that time, the church, which had been nearly empty when I'd arrived, gradually became partly full. Old people, mostly women, arrived in ones and twos and took places in the pews. At the same time, more young tourists also arrived, though they mostly looked around and left without staying. Two young men in suits took places sitting in pews along the center aisle. I don't know their purpose, but a priest came from the front and spoke to them quietly a couple of times. There was also a youngish man in a white shirt in front, who seemed to be setting things up for the service. I didn't pay him much attention until he came out with a framed photograph of a priest that he proceeded to try to hang from a pole next to the altar. He had a heck of a time, trying to get the wire on the back of it to hang where he wanted it, and he must have tried a dozen times. When he'd get it hung, he'd stand back and look at it, shake his head, and try again. When he finally stopped, the picture looked to me to be in the same position that he'd managed to get it on his first attempt.

The music finally stopped, and I left. I suppose I could have stayed for the service, but I didn't. Instead, since it was now close to 7:00 PM, I went to the same restaurant where Johannes and I'd had dinner. That was enough for the day, and I turned in early.

Today I took the train to Zagreb, the capital of Croatia. I had three hours between my train and plane, and I probably could have spent some time looking at downtown Zagreb, but it looked like more of the same sort of 19th century buildings that I'd seen outside the

old city of Ljubljana. And I didn't want to risk missing my flight. After changing some money in the train station, I took a taxi to the airport. The driver was talkative, mostly telling me in English how awful the politicians here have always been. The current president is better, he said, but he didn't sound like he really believed that would last.

I ate lunch at the airport while waiting for my flight. At the gate, before boarding, I mainly watched a couple of women who were also waiting to board, one of whom especially was quite striking: tall, thin, long brown hair, reddish orange blouse, and great legs below a very short, denim skirt. After the flight, at the Dubrovnik airport, a man was waiting with a sign for our conference, and he directed me to a bus waiting outside. Because my bag happened to come out quickly, I was the first on the bus, followed by many of the young people I'd seen waiting for the flight. The woman with the short skirt sat in front of me, unfortunately accompanied by a man, who is probably the economist of the two.

Sunday, July 02, Ljubljana, Slovenia

I am back in Slovenia, and I will leave for home tomorrow morning. The conference and its activities kept me busy throughout my time in Dubrovnik, so I didn't have time to write.

On Tuesday afternoon, although I explored the hotel a bit, I didn't attempt to do much else. It was too hot to go to the old city, and I planned instead to get up early the next morning to go there while it was less hot. On Tuesday, then, I just spent some time reading, then ate dinner in the hotel restaurant.

Wednesday morning, I was up before 6, had an early breakfast, and set off as planned for the old city. It is just a five-minute walk down the sloping street from the hotel, and it turns out to be several times larger than I'd realized looking at it from afar. The old city is completely enclosed by a gray stone wall that is vertical at the top but then angles out and down to either the rocks or the water below. In many places, that makes for a quite high expanse of stone, maybe 50 to 100 feet. Inside the wall are houses, churches, towers, and other buildings, all apparently as old as the wall and made of the same gray stone in the same style. It seems to look exactly as it must have looked in the 16th century, or whenever it was built. From a distance it is stunning, and it is no less beautiful and remarkable up close.

Except for one main street that bisects the city, the spaces between buildings are narrow walkways that would not accommodate vehicles even if they were permitted. I spent the first hour or so wandering these lanes, sometimes just inside the wall and other times further into the city's interior. Much of the city is just living quarters, not shops or restaurants, but I gather that a great many of these living quarters are apartments that tourists rent for their visits. I don't know how many local people live inside the old city, though there may be quite a few.

In one narrow lane with no people in sight, I passed a house with a dog sitting next to the partially open door. The dog seemed only mildly interested in me, until I backed up and tried to peer through the door. Then he jumped up and barked. I got the message and moved on.



In the old city, from trip

For a couple of blocks either side of the city's main street, much of the street level is shops and restaurants. I ignored those early in my visit but spent quite a bit of time in them later. The restaurants mostly served at tables out in the lanes outside their doors, and I saw no sign of any that might have air-conditioned seating indoors, which is what I would have preferred.

As I walked the city, especially near its edges, I was of course very aware of the city wall above me. Beneath it I was usually able to stay in the shade, which helped a great deal both because of the heat and because I hadn't thought to put on sun block. The sun, as the morning progressed, rose higher and brighter in the sky. Eventually I sought refuge at an umbrella-shaded table of an outdoor café on the main street and had something cold to drink. At the end of the street, by the city's north gate, I could see people climbing the stairs to the top of the wall, and I pretty much decided not to do that. But then I read my guidebook, the section on Dubrovnik, and although it didn't say a lot about the wall, it seemed clear that climbing it was a major attraction. Eventually I decided to do it.

I'm glad I did. It was indeed very hot, and not much protected from the sun, but there were occasional spots in the shade of a higher wall or building, and I took full advantage of them. The view from the wall, both out over the sea and especially into the city, was phenomenal.

I had taken lots of photos in the streets below, but now I took even more, as I walked the perimeter of the city. I was not halfway around, though, when the last of my rechargeable batteries gave out. My digital camera uses double-A batteries, which has the advantage that I can just buy regular ones when the rechargeables give out. But there were only two entrances to the wall, and I wasn't eager to go back down to the city, find a shop selling batteries, pay again to climb the wall, and then retrace my steps to photograph what I'd missed. Well before I got to the second entrance, however, at a corner of the city, was a small shop selling drinks and other things on top of the wall. I asked if by any chance they had batteries, and they did! I bought my double-A's, backtracked just a little bit, and continued my tour snapping photos. I continue to find things working out well for me on this trip.



Inside the old city of Dubrovnik, from above, from trip

Shortly after I started walking the wall, I found myself near a family that was doing the same with two young kids. I heard the mother say, "Vincent, come back here." And "Vincent, don't go into that window." I looked and saw that Vincent was a blond-haired boy, perhaps 8 years old, who was climbing everything in sight. The outside wall, which was maybe three feet thick and extended six or eight feet above the floor on which we were walking, had niches built into it, some U-shaped, others rectangular windows. Vincent insisted on climbing into each of these, and his mom was understandably concerned, since there was no barrier to keep anyone from falling out the outside. This didn't happen, of course, but this possibility, as well as his name (Who, after all, could ever trust a Vincent to behave sensibly? [This for my regular reader, Vincent.]), got my attention, and I stayed aware of this family throughout my time on the wall. Often, I lost track of them, as either I would pass them or they would pass me, but on average we went the same speed, since we reached the final corner of the city, just before the entrance where we'd all started, at the same time.

This final corner was the wall's tallest part, an impressive square tower looming well above the rest and reached by stone stairs. At the top was a square area, with low walls on all sides, and a doorway to a small, enclosed room. Just after I got there, Vincent appeared alone at the top of the stairs and darted immediately into the dark interior of that room. Moments later, his mom appeared, looking in all directions, and she happened to

be standing right next to me as she asked nobody in particular (her husband and daughter hadn't arrived yet), "Where's Vincent." I pointed to the room and said, "He's in there." I don't know if she was surprised to get an answer from a stranger, or not. With Vincent as her son, I suspect that she has often had strangers comment on his activities.

After the wall, I mainly did some shopping, and had lunch. I picked a restaurant whose tables were in one of the narrowest lanes, largely because that gave the illusion, at least, of being cooler. The place I picked served pizza, and I ordered one that shared its name with the restaurant itself. In addition to the usual cheese, tomato sauce, and sausage, this had bacon and, in the center, a reasonably runny, sunny-side-up egg. The pizza was delicious, but it was large enough for two, and I was forced, regretfully, to leave almost half of it uneaten.

By the time I finished shopping – which at one point required a side trip to a money machine, since the shop I wanted didn't take Visa – it was 2:00 or so in the afternoon, and I'd had more than enough. I walked back up the hill to the hotel and returned to my room, drenched in sweat and exhausted. I had deliberately postponed my shower in the morning, knowing I would need one now, though I first collapsed on the bed for a while before taking it.

The first conference event was to be a reception and dinner that evening at 8:00 PM, in a location that had not been mentioned. When the time came, I went to the lobby, freshly showered and dressed, wearing my sport coat. I asked about the reception and was told it was on the poolside terrace. That was not good news, since the coast of Croatia, and the hotel, faces westward. The sun would be shining down directly on that terrace, and even though it was 8:00 PM, both the air and the sun were still hot. I went anyway, wondering whom I would meet. I'd gone down the list of conference participants and had noticed only a handful that I knew.

One of these was Kresimir Zigic, whom I'd first met in Ann Arbor and who hosted me when I visited Prague a few years ago. He's a largish man who looks rather like a Slavic version of my old colleague, Ted Bergstrom, the sort of person whose hair is always mussed. Just moments after I stepped out onto the poolside terrace, Kresimir saw me and greeted me with great enthusiasm. It seems that he had learned from Jan Svejnar that I was interested in attending the conference. He had told the organizers that they should invite me, but they had never answered him, so he hadn't known whether I would be there or not. He was delighted to see me, in part, I think, because he aspires to do work on international trade (he's basically a theorist, I think). It turns out that, although he now lives and works in Prague, he is not Czech but Croatian, and he has regularly attended these Dubrovnik conferences (this is the 12th annual one). He more or less adopted me as his guest that evening and through much of the conference, directing me to what he thought were the best dishes at the buffets, for example. He also delighted in telling me much that he knew about Croatia and Croatian history.

For example, that evening we sat together at dinner, along with Evzen, a much quieter but very pleasant Czech colleague from the same institution in Prague, and the two of them –

but mainly Kresimir – told me much of the life story of Tesla. [I mis-understood this name as Tessler, and am only now, in 2023, correcting it here. That may account for how ignorant about him I was then, but I surely should have understood after he told me all about him.] Tesla, according to him, was the greatest scientist who ever lived, and he sought to prove it by telling me some of the things that Tesla invented. I had vaguely heard the name before but knew little about him. Most memorably, Kresimir says that Tesla was given the Nobel Prize, along with two others, but because he despised one of those two, he refused to accept it, and as a result both he and his rival were not given the prize. This was early in the 20th century, and I think the rival may have been Edison. The conversation through a large part of the dinner that first night was about Tesla, which was interesting but rather odd. [I've now, in 2023, read a biography of Tesla and this story does not seem exactly right.]

It seems – as I also learned from Kresimir and which coincided with some of what I'd read – that Dubrovnik is distinct in never having been conquered. Its impressive walls were never very seriously challenged by attackers, who apparently found them too daunting. It wasn't that Dubrovnik wouldn't have been a worthy prize, as it was a Mediterranean power that rivaled Venice. I gather that Dubrovnik never controlled as much land as Venice did, but it seems to have been Venice's main competitor. According to Kresimir, Dubrovnik ceded some of the coastline it controlled, between it and Venice, to another inland power (I forget which), because it did not want to have a common border with Venice.

By the time we were done eating, although the heat had lessened a bit with the eventual setting of the sun, I was still hot and eager to get back to my nicely air-conditioned room. Kresimir and others were heading down to the city to drink into the night, a practice that I gather he and others, especially the Croatians, did every night of the conference. Actually, "into the night" is not quite right. It should be "into the morning," since they usually returned at only 3 or 4 AM.



On Thursday morning the conference began at 9:00 AM, and everybody seemed to be present and alert despite their activities the night before. The conference was the usual series of papers and discussants, with short periods of discussion from the floor. Unlike the conference in Slovenia where I'd had so much to say, here I said practically nothing. That was not surprising, since the topics were not in my field. I did, just once late that afternoon, have a comment to make on Jan Svejnar's paper. But for the longest time I couldn't get the session chair to call on me when I raised my hand. I'm sure that's

because I was an outsider to the topics and the conference itself, so he didn't know who I was, and it was easier for those he knew to get his attention. I did eventually get it, though, with the help of a woman sitting next to me, and I stated my point. Unfortunately, I must not have stated it very well, since Jan's response showed he had misunderstood what I meant.

Dinner that evening was in a restaurant in the city, to which we all walked as a group. I was sorry that I didn't bring my camera because the setting was wonderful. The restaurant was in an old building, just outside the old city walls on the other side from our hotel. We ate, again, out on a terrace overlooking the sea, but this time with the city walls extending out into the sea on our left, and a large matching stone fortress high on a hill above us to the right. To add to the effect, just after we sat down, a modern reproduction of an old sailing ship sailed across the expanse of sea between these two.

As we walked to this restaurant from the hotel, Kresimir again accompanied me, and this time he asked me lots of questions about the work I've been doing. His interest must have been genuine, because several times in subsequent days he would make connections between something that we saw or talked about and the work I told him about during that walk. This was true even though, at one point in the middle of our walk along the main street of the old city, I got a call on my cell phone from Pat. She and I spoke for several minutes as Kresimir and I continued to walk, and he waited patiently. Then when I hung up he picked up the conversation exactly where we'd left it. I sat with him at dinner and learned yet more about Dubrovnik, although he later had to correct one of the answers he gave to a question when he checked it with someone else and found he'd gotten it wrong.

Speaking of getting things wrong, at lunch that day I sat, yet again, with Kresimir and Evzin, and also another guy from their place in Prague, an American named Randy Filer. The conversation turned to soccer, as almost every conversation here eventually does due to the World Cup. Kresimir and Evzin happened upon a disagreement as to whether some country – I forget which – had ever won the World Cup. Kresimir is often so blusteringly sure of himself, and Evzen so quietly confident, that I felt sure that Evzen was right, though it turned out he was not. At that point, Randy chimed in with a comment about the United States having won the World Cup. Both Kresimir and Evzen were horrified at that thought and dismissed it as nonsense. Randy said something, which apparently only I heard, about this showing that they were sexist. They continued to argue and dismiss this as nonsense. I chimed in to agree with Randy, now that I understood, and this only incensed them further. They tried such explanations as that there was a world cup in some other sport, or that the Americans always think that their national championship is a world championship (e.g., the World Series). But no, we insisted that this was truly the world cup in soccer, beating out contenders from all over the true entire world. They were just mystified, and even when Randy gave the hint about sexism again, it took them a while to get it: that the U.S. recently won the world cup in women's soccer.

Speaking of sexism, the treatment of women in the conference has been interesting. There aren't many participating, of course, but that's usual in economics. In one of the

early sessions, after several comments from men on the floor, the session chair noted that we hadn't heard from any women. He more or less directed attention to one of the few woman participants who was sitting near the front, as though he expected her now to speak. She had never raised her hand, so there was no reason to think that she wanted to, and indeed she ignored the opportunity, with some embarrassment, I'm sure.

On Friday morning I was discussant in the first session. It had been routine for speakers and discussants to start by thanking the conference organizers for inviting them, and for discussants to say how much they enjoyed the paper they were discussing. I began by saying that I couldn't do the first of these, since they hadn't invited me – I had invited myself, since I was in the neighborhood – but that I could certainly thank them for letting me attend. I went on to explain that I was not a specialist in any of the fields that the conference was mostly about, including macroeconomics, transition economics, and in the case of the paper I was discussing, political economy. Because of this, I attested to having learned a lot from the paper, since it was completely new to me. All of this got quite a bit of appreciative laughter. It is not obvious, as I state it here, why it should have, but it did. And later I had several conference participants tell me how much they had enjoyed my comments, and that they were funny. Of course, my comments did go on to include some substance on the topic of the paper, which also was appreciated at least by the paper author, but it seemed that the main impression I made with others was as a comic.

The conference had been scheduled to continue until 6:30 Friday, with a few closing remarks after that. But World Cup games were starting at 5:00, and the organizers were told that they had better not interfere with that, or attendance would fall off. They rearranged the schedule starting after my session, giving each speaker less time and shortening breaks. This was no doubt wise, but it did mean that Friday's speakers after the first session were all short changed. I heard a complaint about this afterward, from an American speaker who was not a soccer fan.

Friday evening, they took us by bus to a restaurant in another town, perhaps half an hour away, called Cavtat. There were two buses. I caught the first and ended up at a table next to Menzie Chinn and his wife Laura. I'd met Menzie but not Laura, who turned out to be a professor of composing in the music school at University of Wisconsin, Madison, where Menzie is in the school of public administration. I told them about my having been on the committee of a music student, and it turned out that Laura also had an economist on her doctoral committee, although in her case it was the Nobel Laureate George Akerloff. She has, by the way, also met both Henry Kissinger and Sting. I very much enjoyed talking with both of them, and I ended up hanging out with them and another couple on our Saturday excursion as well.

Also at our table was a somewhat younger economist from Greece, together with his wife. The wife was young, beautiful, dressed rather provocatively in a sexy bright green dress, and she was remarkably immature. What surprised me most in her conversation was that, though Greek, she spoke English like an American teenager. How does a Greek

learn to tell stories of conversations as "He was like…; so I was like…". She must have spent time in an American high school.

When we first arrived and had chosen our tables in the outdoor restaurant, Kresimir, who was not at our table, came over to say he wanted to take me for a walk later. Then he came later to say we would take our walk after the fish. That was a bit ambiguous, it turned out, since we had three courses, all seafood, but the first two were shellfish. After the third, which was white fish, he did indeed take me for a walk, first one direction and then the other along the shore. What he wanted to do was to tell me about all the famous Croatians who had come from this tiny town, and to explain to me their various accomplishments. There were several, including one of the founders of Yugoslavia, and we saw several statues of them during our walk. I'm sure they were famous, but I had never heard of any of them.

After the walk, I returned to our table just as someone was handing out to each of us a sheet of song lyrics. It seems that this conference, in recent years, has established a tradition of singing at this final conference dinner, starting with an "anthem" that somebody had composed that puts macroeconomics into a familiar Mexican tune ("Aye, Aye, Aye Aye," etc.). The lyrics, it was acknowledged, do not scan, and frankly they don't make much sense in economic terms either, but everybody loves it. A guy named Ricardo had brought his guitar, and there was a sound system and a portable mike, so that he could lead the singing. Our large group dominated the outdoor restaurant, even before the singing, but we occupied it almost solely by the time the singing was done.

Initially, Ricardo called over a dozen conference participants to come forward to join the group to perform the song from a sort of stage. When that was done, he then led them around from table to table, repeating the song over and over. Finally, he turned the mike over to various others to perform different songs, mostly familiar ones in Croatian apparently. Kresimir was one of those who performed, as was the young Greek woman.

Just after the first performance I felt the need to pee and went inside the restaurant to do so. Menzie and Laura, the composer, both followed me; Menzie and I both returned, but Laura didn't. As we sat listening to the continued singing, I began to wonder what had become of her and whether perhaps something was wrong. Menzie didn't seem concerned, however, so I assumed he had reason to know that her long absence in the ladies' room was not a cause for concern. When the singing finally ended and we were told that a bus would now take those of us who wished to end the evening early back to the hotel, she emerged and waved to Menzie to join her. I did as well, and she explained to me that people sometimes ask her, as a musician, if she finds it hard to listen to people who sing out of tune. She does. Indeed, because she has perfect pitch, she finds this physically painful. Her absence had evidently had nothing to do with the restroom, which may have been just an excuse to escape the noise.

Our "early" bus returned us to the hotel. I reached my room at about 1:00 AM.

On Saturday (yesterday), after the conference itself was over, we had our excursion. This was run by the same local travel agency that had arranged my transportation to the conference, Gulliver Travel (how many of those are there in the world, I wonder?). Our group again took up two buses, each with a guide who used a microphone to tell us what we were seeing.

The bus took us first to a palace just on the other side of Dubrovnik. It had been seriously damaged in the war of the 1990s, which we heard mentioned repeatedly that day as the cause of damage, vandalism, and theft in the Dubrovnik area. This palace was still being restored, and it turned out it was not open to us, which our guide only just learned when we arrived. She assured us it would have been nice to see it. The gardens in front, which we did see, would have been nice too, but for the war.

Next, we went to an "arboretum." This was a 16th century property that extended down the steep slope toward the ocean, and which we walked down to, saw, and then walked back up. It too had suffered damage to the house in the recent war, but the grounds were quite worth seeing. They included an aqueduct from the 16th century that was very impressive and that still provides a continuous flow of spring water from the mountains behind to a fountain there. There was also a remarkably old and large tree, a "plame" or "plane" tree I think she said.



Garden on excursion, from trip

Our third stop was on an island, for which we first had to transfer from the buses to a boat that we then used for the rest of the day. The island had another old property that I thought was the best that we saw. It was another 16th century house in a walled courtyard that also enclosed a beautiful garden. The house was furnished in 16th century style, including its kitchen which was beautiful in its primitive way. The kitchen had a square opening in the ceiling, letting in sun light that lit up different parts of the kitchen at different times of day. The tools of food preparation were in the parts of the kitchen where they would be most visible when they were needed.

Our boat finally took us to another island where we had lunch – many courses again – and could swim if we wanted to. I had bought a swimsuit intending to swim, but instead I just hung out with Menzie, Laura, and a German couple, none of whom had any desire to swim.

The meal started, like every meal we had in Dubrovnik, with a plate of anchovies. That seems to be a standard appetizer, just a few anchovies arranged prettily on a plate with a bit of lettuce.

Next came, for each of us, a big bowl of steamed mussels and steamed whole shrimp. Before I'd eaten any, Laura sort of gasped at the site of these and pointed out that the mussels still had their "sea worms" sticking to them. These are tiny greenish worms, about 3/8 of an inch long, that she said are normally found on mussels but that are normally washed off before cooking. But here they were, and she thought that she even saw one of them move. Now I'm not fond of worms either, and I'm not big on shells, or all those little legs, feelers, and faces on the whole shrimp. But perhaps in reaction to Laura's dismay, and poor Menzie's attempts, with knife and fork, to extract edible meat from the shrimp for him or her to eat, I plunged in and ate every single mussel and every single shrimp in my bowl. Nor am I too fond of getting messy while I eat, but I ate the shrimp with my fingers and ended covered with juices that I felt I needed to suck off before I cleaned them in the communal finger bowl that was provided.

The next course was a fish steak, perhaps swordfish, blessedly free of bones and accompanied by potatoes. Laura brightened when this arrived, but she then didn't eat any of it while I, of course, consumed it eagerly (the mussels and shrimp having hardly made a dent in my appetite). She explained later that her acute sense of smell allows her to know immediately if a fish is "off," and this was. In the end, the only thing she ate was a dessert, which she complimented enthusiastically – some sort of fruit pie with meringue.

Aside from these few concerns about the food (the German couple, by the way, didn't eat fish as a matter of principle, and asked instead for meat and cheese), our little group had a genuinely wonderful time talking together throughout the day. Our conversation was interrupted several times, though, by the two troubadours that Gulliver Travel had hired to serenade us all on the trip. Both on the boat and during lunch, the two middle aged men, one with a guitar and the other with an accordion, strolled from table to table singing songs in Croatian. On the boat I thought they looked exquisitely bored, but as the day progressed, they put more and more emotion into their performance. Someone attributed this to the schnapps they were drinking, which may have been confirmed by the fact that they slept on the final leg of our boat journey.

Perhaps by coincidence or perhaps by design, at our table during lunch they positioned themselves directly behind Laura, and stayed inordinately long with their instruments just inches form her ears. There was no escape, except once when she put her head down on the table. She found a pen and a sugar packet and wrote on it a note to all of us, "The lunch from hell." After they finally left, she asked if one of them had been playing with her hair. I'm pretty sure that what she felt was just her long blond hair being moved by the folds of the accordion.

After the trip, our little group agreed to meet at 8:30 PM to go for dinner. There was some time, and I still hadn't been for a swim in the Adriatic, so I decided to take a quick dip from the hotel's seawall. There are ladders down into the water and no beach, since



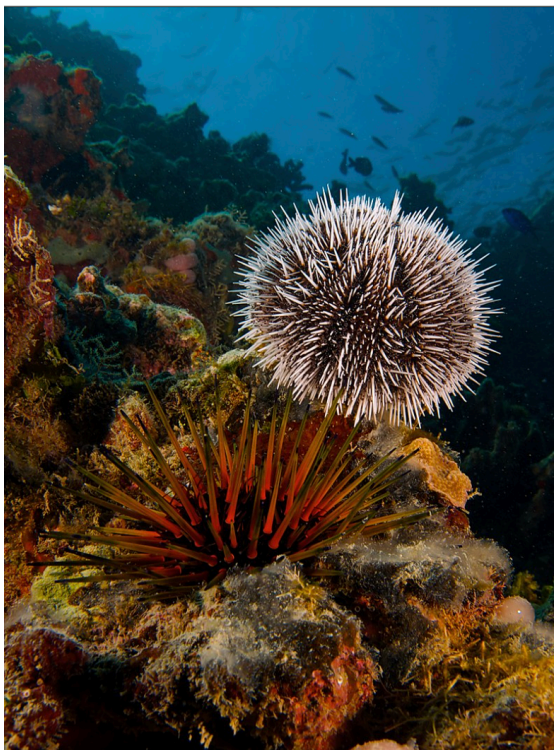
Troubadours at lunch, from trip

the water is very deep. I put on my suit, went down, and climbed in. The water was cool but not cold, so that was fine. It was also rather rough, the waves pitching me up and down, which was a little more than I'd have liked. But I didn't want to climb right back out again, so I set off, side stroking toward the other ladder. This was harder than I'd expected, by quite a bit, mainly because of the waves. A one point my foot hit the sea wall, which felt sharp like it maybe had barnacles, so from then on, I stayed out slightly further from the wall. I can only swim on my right side, so that meant I had my back to the wall. Every time I looked around, I could see that I was making a progress, but not a lot. Eventually I did reach the other ladder and climbed out, so fortunately I don't have to tell you that I didn't make it. That would be hard. I was very out of breath and feeling more than a little stupid for having done it at all.

I was also, now, feeling pain in the ball of my right foot. I looked at it, and there were a dozen or more little black spots. Out of one of these extended a quarter inch or so of a black spiny thing. I pulled that out, and squeezed at some of the other spots, making them bleed, but otherwise I couldn't do anything about it. I limped back to my room, messed with the spots again, took a shower, and got dressed. At 8:20 I went down to the lobby, still limping, to meet the group.

As I sat waiting, it occurred to me that of course they would intend to walk down to the old city to find a restaurant. I wouldn't enjoy that. When they arrived, I begged off, explaining what had happened. We said our goodbyes, and they were off.

I asked at the desk if they might know what this was that I had done to myself, and it was simple. I'd stepped on a sea urchin, which is apparently a sea creature about the size of a tennis ball with spines like a porcupine, except that these spines normally break off so that they are very hard to remove. The man at the desk assured me that they are harmless, though painful. And he said, with some pride, that the presence of sea urchins is a sign that the water is clean. I later confirmed all this with Jan Svejnar, who remembers having stepped on them as a kid. Now he's more careful.



Sea urchin, from Wikipedia 2023

All this has reconfirmed some of my old prejudices: That exercise is way overrated. And that oceans are a bad idea.

My flight out of Dubrovnik was at 6:00 AM, and the conference organizers had arranged a bus to take 18 of us to the airport, leaving at 4:45 AM. My flight was to Zagreb, where lots of the Croatians were going, and there was also a flight at about that time to Frankfurt that others were taking. Jan was flying to Zagreb, then Amsterdam, and then Shanghai to meet his wife Kathy, and he and I chatted while in line at the airport. I mentioned that I feel that I travel a lot these days, compared to many of my friends and family, but when I talk to people at conferences like this, it's clear that others travel lots more. He agreed.

In Zagreb I had a couple of hours of wait in the train station. There was a restaurant where I sat and drank cappuccinos and ate a sandwich, which was the closest I could come to breakfast. The station and the restaurant looked and felt like it must have during socialism, rather dark and uninviting – though come to think of it, I've seen train stations in the US that weren't much better. On the train I shared a compartment with an American couple, close to my age and from Berkeley. We pretty much talked the whole two-and-a-half-hour trip, though it was all ordinary American stuff.

Back here in Ljubljana I checked into the hotel that I had switched to, and it is nicer. It does have air conditioning, but the weather has changed and now it is hardly needed. I've been out to lunch (venison pâté), then later dinner (pizza), and this last time I wasn't even aware of my foot. So perhaps the sea urchin will now leave me alone.

Monday, July 03, en route from Paris to Detroit

My flight from Ljubljana to Paris was fine, the only difference between this and my earlier trip east being that they didn't check me in for both flights, only for the first. They said that while they would check my bag through to Detroit (yes, I checked it, and I don't expect to see it today in Detroit), I'd have to check in separately in Paris for the flight to Detroit. As we approached Charles de Gaulle airport, we passed over the center of Paris and I saw the Eiffel Tower.

The plane from Ljubljana was small, and it was not surprising that we were put on a bus out on the tarmac. The bus then had to drive a surprising distance, winding around groups of planes, before it got to the terminal. Even then it continued to drive until, at some point, the driver got on the phone, then proceeded to turn the bus around. Making a U-turn with a big bus in a cramped airport was not easy, but he managed it, then took us back to a place he had passed previously and let us out.

Inside, on the right, was a desk with two airline representatives and a line of more than a dozen people. The sign said "Transfers" and showed the trademarks of all the airlines in the Sky Team Alliance, including Northwest, so I got in line. On the other side of the room were two employees who were letting people exit the room to board busses. At one point the man behind me tried to ask them if this was the right place for him to transfer to American, which wasn't mentioned on the Sky Team list. They said yes, but he didn't believe it. He said he thought he remembered from before that he would be sent upstairs to check in, but he stayed in line anyway. I was reassured that at least my airline was listed.

I needn't have been. When I finally got to the front of the line and showed my ticket to one of the agents, she looked at it quickly and said, "That's Northwest. You need to check in at terminal E." She directed me to the busses that people had been boarding outside for the last 15 minutes.

Fortunately, one of them was waiting and was almost full as I got on, so it soon departed. A recording said, first in French and then English, that the bus would take us to terminals F, E, C, A, and B. It took quite a while to get to F, and then more time still to get to E, but at least the driver didn't get lost.

In terminal E, an attendant sent me up an elevator to the second floor, where another attendant sent me around a corner and down a flight of stairs to another transfer desk. This looked pretty much like the other one, with the same Sky Team sign, but this one had more agents working at it and a somewhat shorter line. The woman just ahead of me in line said that she had missed her connection to Morocco because the bus between terminals had taken so long and she'd only had an hour between flights. She was here to book a later flight. She was remarkably accepting of this situation. Fortunately for me, I'd had two hours between flights and so far, I'd only used up half of it.

After all of this, though, I was not particularly optimistic that when I reached the front of the line, I would be able to check in. Or if I was, I thought I might be sent to yet another terminal for the flight. But no, the agent did check me in and told me that the flight would leave from gate 76 which was just upstairs. The only change that she told me of was that I would be flying business class instead of economy – I'm not sure why.

I went upstairs, and I could see a mob of people waiting in line to go through security. But a barrier prevented me from getting to where they were, and instead a sign directed me to another security lane that must have been just for transfer passengers. It had nobody in it at all; I whisked through.

When I reached the gate, the flight was boarding. But in this case, that meant we were slowly boarding more busses, because our plane wasn't near the terminal and there was no jetway. Charles de Gaulle has jetways, I'm sure, but I never used one there on this trip.

On the bus, I found myself sitting among a large group of high school students with matching T-shirts that said People to People. They were from the twin cities and were on their way home after visits to Malta, Italy, and France. I might have enjoyed sitting among them on the plane, too, but sadly, I'm in business class. That, by the way, is why I can comfortably use my laptop to write this. Not only do I have plenty of room, but there is an electrical outlet for plugging it in.

Like I said at the start, I've been lucky on this trip. I'll close with just a few more photos.



With Menzie, Laura, and another, from trip



Ljubljana, from trip



In Drubrovnik, from trip