

# Junior

## Travel Reviews

### Family afloat: Sailing out of Dubrovnik: Family travel review

Writer Emma Oxley writes about the virtues of spending one week sailing in Croatia



Captain kids

"A holiday on board a yacht can be the adventure of a lifetime for any family whether you've sailed before or not. You have the freedom to hop from bay-to-bay at your whim, your private pool follows you wherever you sail, there are sea views forever and you couldn't get closer to nature. If you are not qualified sailors, you can hire a skipper and they'll always encourage you with some basic lessons."

#### Setting sail

"From London it is just a two-and-a-half hour hop over to Dubrovnik, Croatia, and from the airport less than 30 minutes to the marina, which has a classy resort feel, with two good restaurants by the sea and a pool. We had a delightfully relaxing evening before the excitement of sailing out the next morning. Leaving a marina can be tense as you often sense the critical glares of old timers, just waiting for that charter to do something idiotic..."

With my husband as our skipper, who hadn't sailed in a year, we were apprehensive, and all three kids were put at the ready with fenders. We were relieved when he steered the unfamiliar vessel past the packed pontoons without hitting anything expensive. We were also very impressed with his navigation that is until we discovered our first lunch stop was not on Lopud Island as planned, but the island next door! I don't blame him entirely as the Elephite Islands all look similarly gorgeous; undulating green, punctuated by cypress trees rocketing into the blue sky; the oleander vivacious and when you land for a stroll there's scented rosemary everywhere to rub between your fingers."



Fishing at sea

### **The Yacht**

"We took a 42-foot yacht out of Dubrovnik, which was perfectly comfortable with parents in the fore cabin and the three kids a little reluctantly sharing the two back double cabins. With sunny days you spend all your time on deck, so you have a marvellous sense of space and the rest of the interior becomes more irrelevant. But [Latesail.com](https://www.latesail.com), which we sailed with, keep a good fleet of yachts, all well maintained, clean and comfortable and there's always a little more luxury to be had for a price. For the most 'up to the minute' facilities, choose a yacht with a recent year of build. For the most privacy consider a catamaran, which gives you two separate wings."



Going for a ride

### **What we did**

"The Adriatic is clear and irresistible; the second the anchor hit the sandy bottom all five of us leapt in after it and chased each other around the yacht's hull. Then we clambered into the dinghy for the first of many island explorations, with seven year old Marie manning the outboard.

Each day was filled with fresh fun; the kids learnt to sail with the wind, manage and moor-up the dinghy and secure fenders with a clove hitch. There were diving and bombing competitions off the side of the yacht and we tied up an inflatable donut for rides behind the dinghy with the outboard on full throttle. Most exhilarating was swooshing in the wake of the yacht clinging to a rope, like horizontal water-skiers. Although the boat is going at less than two knots, it feels a lot faster in the water than on the water, and a primal sense of vulnerability in the sea adds to the thrill. On our third day we arrived on the west coast of Mljet at Polace. Here, we hired bikes and cycled past pine forests to the brow of a hill where we admired our yacht in the blue bay below, feeling original and independent, then free-wheeled back to the harbour."



Bombs away!

### **What we ate**

"There were plenty of small grocery shops to pop into and stock up with fruit, yoghurts, charcuterie and salads for lunch. Each morning Michael would take one of the children to explore whichever bay we had moored up in to search for fresh bread for breakfast. On all the five islands we visited, we ate and drank like rich Ragusans; seafood was abundant, cuisine sophisticated and local wine light and delicious. At the isolated bay of Okuklje on Mljet Island, we dined al fresco on black ink risotto and finished with a vodka lemon sorbet watching the night slowly envelop our floating home.

On our last day we moored alongside a jetty in Slano. Unexpectedly, we were greeted by a bow-tie clad waiter bearing a silver tray of slivovitz brandy and fruit juice. Standing in swimsuits, with salty skin and tousled hair our delighted family toasted him and Illyria, promising to return.

We handed the boat back on Saturday morning and after some lavishly long showers at the marina headed over to the old town of Dubrovnik where we had booked an apartment for one night. We were able to pass the hot afternoon in our cool rooms, then take a leisurely stroll around the 16th century ramparts after the crowds of tourists had left on their cruise ships and coaches. Views over the red tiled roofs and across the lovely blue bays were wonderful, half way round we were surprised and refreshed by a juice bar in a turret. Dinner on the pristine white marbled square finished our holiday in high style."





Dubrovnik at Sunset

### **Junior Credentials**

"The kids really appreciated the great outdoors and became brave swimmers, in fact more confident all round as they proudly struck up the outboard or helmed the 42 foot yacht. Sailing is also a great lesson in ecology as you try not to waste water or electricity, which you have to generate yourself by running the engine. A popular option for family-focussed sailing is to join a flotilla, which can have a great social aspect for the children, and a certain level of support for parent skippers."

### **Essential information**

A 42 foot bareboat charter for a week in the summer is approximately £1,800, with a skipper add around £150/day. [www.latesail.com](http://www.latesail.com) has a good range of yachts and a reliable base service.

**Read more...**

- **Summer holidays ahoy! How to go sailing in Europe with your family** Writer Emma Oxley discusses her family's experiences in frequent sailing holidays - what to do and what to avoid...