

October 25, 2005

Dear fellow adventurer,

I'm putting a little adventure together next May for special people such as yourself—it's a guy's trip—and would be honored if you'd join our merry band. It will be a hoot!

Our destination is Croatia's spectacular Dalmatian Coast, where we'll be among the first to experience this brand new bike trip for Backroads. We start in Dubrovnik and end in Split, with the islands of Mljet, Korcula, Hvar and Brac in between. You can expect plenty of biking, laughing, cool towns, beautiful scenery, water, boats, Renaissance architecture, camaraderie, wine, history, hills, *tavernas*, culture, wrong turns, medieval hamlets, swimming in the Adriatic, fortified towns...and a one-of-a-kind adventure.

The biking terrain? Very hilly and primarily paved. The countryside we'll be pedaling through ranges from forests of pine and cypress to endless beaches and villages built from locally mined white stone. I'm told it's a toss-up about what's bluer—the sea or the sky. You'll be riding one of Backroads' fabulous Titanium road bikes, perfect for the conditions. Don't even think about toting your own bike over there.

The accommodations? Casual, which for Backroads means clean, comfortable, characterful and well located. Or, as the Backroads Casual Inn Trips catalog says, "Each is comfortably informal and in tune with its surroundings, a perfect venue for exploring local culture and visiting spectacular natural sights." Brilliant! I would have just said, "Four Season's hasn't exactly found its way to the Dalmatian Coast."

The food? I'm told that we will eat a lot of squid. And if you don't like squid, there'll be plenty of other tasty morsels, like fresh sea bass, mussels, shrimp and spit-roasted lamb. Great red wine from local grapes is big here (though I'm hoping they don't have some Croatian equivalent to *grappa*).

Did I say we'll be on boats pretty much every day? Since we bike more or less from one end of each of these narrow islands to the other, we'll take a private boat across to the next and do it all over again. Lots of logistics, but our Trip Leaders have those nailed. So we'll have plenty of time for some great biking, then hang out on the water for as much as 2 to 3 hours per crossing. We'll bring cards and books and whatever else one does on board boats. I'm kind of a land guy, so you tell me. I'll probably take a nap in order to stay up later than everyone else and redeem my long-standing reputation of going to bed before the last kid does!

You have over 6 months to get your act together, but you have precious little time to get your hall pass. You might want to mention to the appropriate individuals that this

adventure had to be scheduled over Mother's Day. Sorry about that. First ones to make a deposit rule. Since some of the hotels we are staying at are on the small side, two per room would be good. I'd imagine there will be a maximum of about 20 fun-loving souls along for the ride, plus leaders.

The details? The trip is officially from **May 13 to 19, 2006**. (That's a Saturday through Friday.) You'll want to arrive in Dubrovnik the day before. You can catch a flight out of Split anytime after 2:00 p.m. on May 19th. Sorry, there's no arriving late or leaving early—you're either in or you're not. The Backroads trip is \$3,298. Please send \$ to Eve Mezvinsky, the Private Trips Manager at Backroads to save a space, or call Eve (510-527-1889 ext 128) or anyone in sales to make a reservation.

What else? Hopefully the attached should answer most of your questions. We may diverge from the stated routes to accommodate what I would expect to be a more than enthusiastic average level of fitness. But don't worry, it's not a race.

A word about biker's remorse. If you sign up now, some of you will make grand promises to yourself to get in shape the likes of which has not been seen for decades. Come about mid-March you may realize how miserably you have fallen short. Not to worry. I'll probably be right there with you. We have a van. Or two? Because it is important to have an advance team get to chic Hvar early to reserve the most appropriate venue for pre-dining libations. So, **no excuses after February 13**.

I hope you can make it. With a little luck, we just might have some fun.

Happy trails,