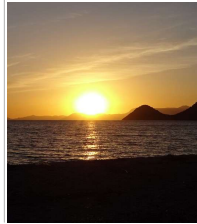
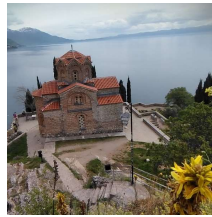


2022 - Balkan Round-Trip

Ipsach – Greece and Return
32 Days from 11th April to 12th May 2022
7'300 km – by our Caddy Hotel



Itinerary Map

1 Background

Although I was very skeptical at first to undertake one more big Caddy-Tour, Peggy kept insisting that this may be our last chance to do it in view of my 77 and my dwindling abilities to cope with challenges. In the end I gave in, as our last big Caddy Trip was the Iberia Tour in 2015 and I also was quite keen for a come back after 2 years of Covid nuisance. There were 2 factors which encouraged me:

- With the Caddy we were free to go anywhere and to turn back if difficulties would occur.
- April and May were still far-off the start of the travel season with its congestions

2 Former Visits to the Region

1967 July, 3 weeks Durbrovnik, travelling in a school colleagues VW Beetle (Max joined us there)
2005 June, Coach Trip with Castell Reisen to Crikvenica – 6 days / 5 nights
2006 March/April, Coach Trip with Bossart Reisen to Greece - 9 days / 2 nights on ferry, 6 nights hotel
2008 July/August, Travel back from Turkey by Hotel Berlingo via Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Slovenia
2010 May, Coach Trip with Castell Reisen to Krk – 5 days / 4 nights

3 Plans and Strategy

We decided to take it easy towards Albania (our minimum target) and just follow normal roads and improvise every day with the actual route, the meals and finding a place for the night. We had envisaged to make a unspecified turn into Greece and then to take the Ferry to Italy (Bari or Brindisi) for coming back. We had the idea to be 5 to 7 weeks on the way.

4 Objectives

Just to enjoy living under the open sky at random, eat simple local food and enjoy casual sightseeing just as we go and pass by.

5 Results (for details: see Diary)

We did more than planned and in only 4½ weeks. At the start we felt a bit cold sometimes but as we got more South and the days grew longer the weather was mostly good to perfect .
Now the Hotel Caddy is not a Camper Van and so we did not feel like hanging around in Campings and never spent more than one night at the same place. With a few exceptions we found perfect overnight spots mostly at the sea with great sunset sceneries. Even the pragmatic locations were very acceptable for sleeping. So the everyday survival effort soon became routine but it drained on my (old) mental resources perhaps preventing us from extra ventures. Form earlier trips we realised that it is better to visit simple resturants for lunch, as you can make your choice as you walk or drive by between 11.30 and even up to 15.00.
We have only made casual visits to Culture Sites as our brains are already overloaded by year long travel.

We enjoyed the trip for the great every-day entertainment!
Thank you Peggy for pushing me and for all the logistics on the way!

Diary of Balkan Trip 2022

Note: At each day's destination I have added the exact coordinates for the location where we slept in the car! I did this because we really managed to find attractive places most nights as we were there off-season!

Diary Part 1 – Home to Albania

April 11	Start: Ipsach, 12.00	End: Coldrerio/A2, 18.30	330 km / 330 km 45°51'0.30"N, 8°58'52.98"E
We decided to take it easy the first day and to stop at the A2-Rest-Area Coldrerio near Chiasso, near the Italian border. In this way we had time to finish packing in the morning and to enjoy the drive. We took the way along the lakes Thun and Brienz then over the Brünig Pass to stop for a beer with nice view on the terrace of the Gasthaus Brünig Kulm! Then easy drive to Stans to join the A2 through the Gotthard to Ticino. We enjoyed the Picnic at the Rest Area and the little evening walk to a hill-top near Novazzano. The night was rather cold with below 10°. I put my jacket over the duvet:-)			
		Ready to start!	Brünig Kulm
April 12	Start: Coldrerio/A2, 8.30	End: Duna Verde, near Caorle, 19.00	470 km / 800 km 45°33'58.00"N, 12°48'23.88"E
Good sleep, cold morning. Easy border crossing to Como, then continuing slowly on main roads, by-passing Bergamo, Brescia, Verona (Lunch near Verona: 2 x Pranzo di Lavoro with 1st & 2nd plate, beer, white wine and coffee, all included for 10 Euro each!), then Vicenza, Treviso to Lido di Jesolo. I was getting tired as I was no more used to drive long stretches. We had been in Lido di Jesolo in 1974 and hoped to find a spot for the night..... but everything had changed in 48 years and there was no chance for a good place. So we continued towards Caorle and found a lonely (off season) car park at the Duna Verde beside the beach (50m to walk there). Evening picnic.			
		Pic from Google: we were alone here at Duna Verde	
April 13	Start: Duna Verde, 8.30	End: Poreč / CRO, 18.00	184 km / 984 km 45°13'11.92"N, 13°35'40.23"E
Peggy made her Tai Chi on the beach in Sunrise before breakfast. Then easy drive on main roads through Trieste and Kopper/SLO and after border-crossing to Croatia to the NW-tip of Istrian Peninsula enjoying a rest at Savudria.			
Then continued towards Poreč, visiting Umag and then had to make a 40km detour at Novigrad due to a blocked bridge. We found quickly a suitable place (imagination on a wild car park under trees beside nice promenade and 10 minutes walk from historical center of Poreč. Peggy decided to fry steaks using the shelter of small cliffs. Yammie picnic. I had a little accident stumbling over a wire at 25cm level which was invisible in the twilight of the evening. A 2cm small wound with strong bleeding which took 2 weeks to heal properly.			
		Night near Poreč	Nice walk to Poreč
April 14	Start: Poreč, 10.00	End: Pula, 14.00	80 km / 1064 km 44°53'3.61"N, 13°50'53.75"E
Morning walk to Poreč, visit till 10am, then on to visit Rovinji with a network of old narrow streets. At 2pm we reached Pula and stopped at a car park at 10 min walk to the impressive Roman Arena and many other old monuments and a citadelle. Had 2 big wraps for lunch which we munched while overlooking the arena. Got back to the parking at 6 pm and decided to stay for the night. After picnic we made another nice shore walk in sunset!			
		Charming Rovinji	Pula: Roman Arena ...
			.. & gate
April 15	Start: Pula, 8.00	End: Lukovo 16.30	196 km/ 1260 km 44°51'22.24"N, 14°53'32.99"E
On the way out of Pula we stopped at a Lidl to get some local food and drinks for our reserve. Then had a pleasant drive across the Istrian Peninsula and on to and through Opatia and Rijeka with view to the well-known Islands Cres and Krk. At Crikvenica we stopped for Lunch at a restaurant we remembered from former visits (with Castell Reisen). We had delicious deep fried sardines and ink fish and then went for a nice stroll along the sea-side in warm spring weather! At 3 pm we continued down the attractive coast road passing Senj....			
		Lunch and...	.. rest at Crikvenica

Then at 5 pm, just being curious, we turned to a steep narrow road to a small village deep down at the wild shore. Beautiful, very quiet and tiny fishing harbour. I asked an old fisherman, who was just going to start his boat if we would be allowed to park here. No problem, he said. Little walk, picnic, little walk, sunset at 7.30 pm Then suddenly wind started and we asked an old lady if it will rain. No just strong wind 3 days, she answered – the Bora! (Minimum 3 days like Tramontana!)



Fishing Harbour, Apéro



Good night beer!

April 16 Start: Lukovo, 8.30

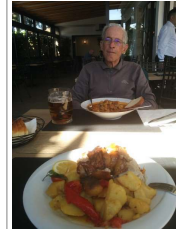
End: Srima, between 18.00-19.00

224 km / 1484 km
43°44'38.59"N, 15°48'14.25"E

Breakfast with nice view over stormy bay, then windy drive with spectacular storm views with flying waters. Just at start of Zadar we saw whole pigs on skewer. We could not resist and had roasted pork and tripe soup. Huge portion and enough for sandwiches for evening! Walk to Zadar and visit the old town behind a big Venetian Gate with a winged Lion. There are also Roman columns and other ruins to see.



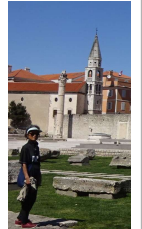
Pig on skewer:



.. pork in dish!



Zadar: Old city Gate



Ancient ruins

At 16.30 we continued driving down the coast and it was soon time to look for a stop before having to turn off from the seaside into the narrow bay of Šibenik. After trying a few places, also crossing Vodice, we ended up at Srima which seemed the last opportunity along the shore..... so we just parked our Gray Mouse beside the promenade, then had a walk and picnic, watched sunset, soon followed by moon rise. Now nobody would suspect that we were sleeping inside



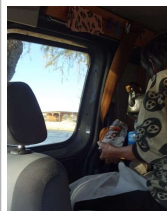
In Caddy at Srima with moon rise!

April 17 Start: Srima, 8.00

End: Split (14.30)

116 km / 1600 km
43°30'13.07"N, 16°24'57.66"E

Easter and a great day ahead with 4 famous touristic highlights! For us it started as a normal day with Peggy preparing breakfast in the Caddy Kitchen and the day ended with a marvellous evening!



Breakfast first

We reached Šibenik at 8.30 am. Hardly anybody around! Started the old city turn with St. James Cathedral and ended with the Madonna de Lourdes...



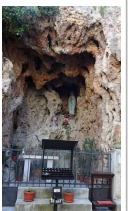
Šibenik in the Bay



St. James Cathedral (UNESCO)



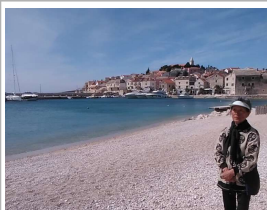
Šibenik from top



Madonna

The 2nd town was Primosten (10.45 am) with a church on top of the peninsula. The Easter mass was relayed by loudspeakers to the park overlooking the sea!

At 12.30 am we parked outside Trogir, the 3rd town today and walked over a small bridge to enter the old town through the old city gate. Another attractive small town where one could easily spend a day hanging around!



Primosten



Primosten: Easter mass



Gate to Trogir



Trogir Promenade



Trogir Fort

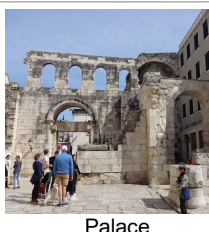


Trogir City Wall

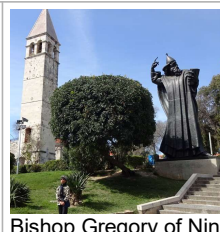
We then arrived at Split at 2.30 pm and parked at first at 10' walk (over sea-side promenade) from historical center. We had visited Split in 2008 in a rush and wanted to take it easy this time. Split has a rich historical heritage, e.g. because around 305 AD the Roman Emperor Diocletian had built a palace for his old age retirement and lived there until he died 312 AD.



Diocletian's..

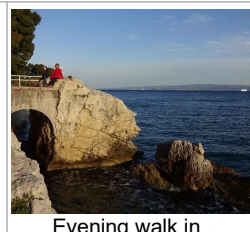


...Palace

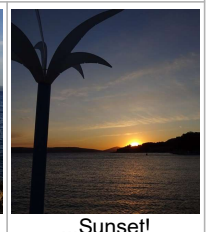


Bishop Gregory of Nin


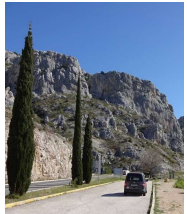
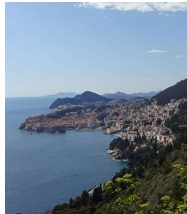

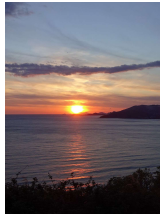






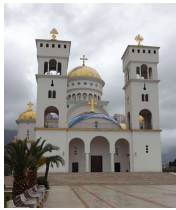



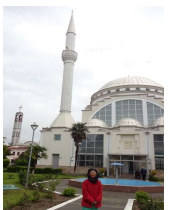



We ended the very enjoyable tour at 4.30 pm and found a perfect place to stop for the night at a little beach just 500m round the corner! Beautiful evening with picnic, walk and sunset !



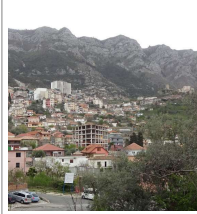
Evening walk in...



...Sunset!

April 18	Start: Split, 8.15	End: near Plat (after Dubrovnik)	272 km / 1872 km 42°36'5.47"N, 18°13'53.54"E
Breakfast with nice view and then along coast with view on stormy sea again. We passed Neum (Bosnia) at around 1 pm and reached Dubrovnik at about 3 pm. I tried to get near the old city but did not find a suitable place to park and so we drove off again. We had visited Dubrovnik in 2008 (me also for 3 weeks in 1967) so we skipped it easily. Scenic coast drive again until we reached a rest area with a irresistible view and it was at 6.30 pm, so we stayed.			
<div>       </div> <div> My seaside breakfast at Split Lunch stop nr Pisak Dubrovnik Roadside night stop near Plat.. ... good night! </div>			
April 19	Start: near Plat, 8.30	End: Canj / MNE, 18.00	161 km / 2033 km 42° 9'33.81"N, 19° 0'6.21"E
Nice drive into fascinating Kotor Bay to Kotor (Montenegro), an old town with impressive fortifications, which was nice to visit again after 2008.			
<div>      </div> <div> Kotor Lunch at a butcher/roisserie's Terrace for a huge XL-Mixed Grill. Pearl Beach, off-season! </div>			
After completing the Kotor Bay route we followed the coast again trying several places to stop for the night. After almost losing hope, we found the Pearl Beach Resort, which off-season, was totally deserted but perfect for us for another night at water front. The sky got covered and the sunny weather was over. Had picnic enjoying our lunch leftovers. It rained that night, for the 1st time since we left home.			
April 20	Start: Canj, 8.30	End: Utjeha (Camping), 11.00	28 km / 2061 km 42° 0'35.38"N, 19° 9'4.35"E
On the way towards Albania we stopped at Bar to admire a new magnificent mosque. Amazing that the community spends that money nowadays! Taking a side road to the shore and feeling ready for a shower we stopped at a small auto camp at Utjeha just for a shower. But then we decided to take a rest and stayed. In the afternoon the sun came back and we managed to go for a stroll and have picnic outside!			
<div>    </div> <div> New Cathedral... ... in Bar with amazing interior! Small camping at Utjeha </div>			
April 21	Start: Utjeha, 9.00	End: Shengjin / ALB (Ntl Park), 16.00	107 km / 2168 km 41°45'52.46"N, 19°35'45.20"E
Rain in the morning again but once on the way it stopped. Before Shkodar, at 11am, we visited the 'Silver Mosque', the only mosque which had not been stripped by the communist Hodja regime. We reached Shkodar at 12.00 and visited for a good hour after which we found a simple local restaurant with excellent veal tongue (Gjuhë) and cassoulet soup, also a good rice dish with 2 beers and a great Turk coffee Albanien Style for 1150 Lek (CHF 10.-). Tribute to Nene Theresa considered Albanian....then we left at 2.30 pm.			
<div>   </div> <div> Silver Mosque near Skodar Mosque & Church </div>			
Due to weather we did not make a turn to the Albanian Alps and after a short stop in Lezhe, just looking at ruins with a fort behind we drove to the nearby sea/lagoon and found a lonely place for the night beside the remarkable Kune-Vain-Tale Nature Park. Went for a stroll on a path leading to the park over a ramshackle bridge and through the lagoon, but we returned as the path was flooded. Short scare late in night when a few cars turned up and did strange things...mounting floodlights for night fishing! Relax!			
<div>    </div> <div> Local home cooking Mother Theresa Bridge to Ntl Park </div>			
April 22	Start: Shengjin, 8.15	End: Stausee Banjes, 18.30	144 km / 2332 km 40°57'15.61"N, 20° 5'52.17"E

Our next target on the way to Tirana was Kruje, a small town located on the slope of a mountain range offering nice views over the plain. It's renowned for its memorial of the Albanian national hero, Skanderbeg (15th century). We walked up to the castle of Kruje, then, at the restaurant above it (Merlika), we were told that George W. Bush had been sitting at one of the tables in 2007. Walked down through a souvenir street to the Skanderbeg Memorial and left Kruje at 11 am.



Touristic town Kruje



Kruje souvenirs



Skanderbeg

We reached the outskirts of Tirana after 30 mins but then got stuck in heavy traffic congestions until we found a car park on the way out at 1.5km from center (2 x 20 minutes walk for 45 minutes sight seeing). It was good to visit the center although there is not much of great importance to see, but to get an idea of the place.

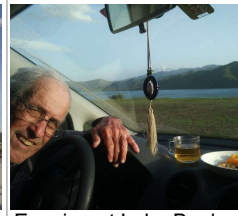
Easy drive to Elbasan (with a castle). Looking for a parking we spotted a beer place with draft beer! Bingo... that was the right moment ... soon 5pm! Relaxed now, looking at map I saw a big artificial lake. ... There we went and at 6.30 pm found a nice lonely parking beside Lake Banjes with view to the snow-covered Mt. Tomorr (2415m) at 40km.



Center Square Tirana



City Wall Elbasan



Evening at Lake Banjes



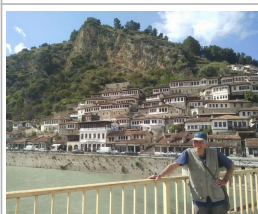
Tomorr

April 23 Start: Stausee Banjes, 8.30

End: Zvernec, 19.15

146 km / 2478 km
40°30'58.72"N, 19°24'24.62"E

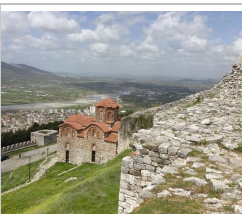
Peaceful night. Nice hilly drive until 10.30 pm to Berat, a small town along a river, dominated by a huge fort on the hill. On the slope beneath the fort, a beautiful grouping of osman-style houses. We walked up and around the fort for 2.5h. At 3pm we had lunch at simple traditional restaurant. Delicious lemon-flavoured soup with a mix of tripe and soup meat (Siedfleisch) and a dish of very tasty crumbed mince-steaks. At 16.30 we decided to head on to Vlores



Berat, Osman Houses



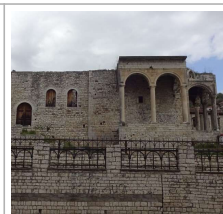
Berat Fort...



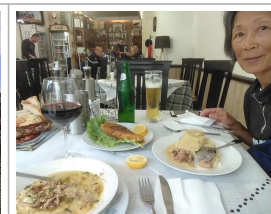
... great round views



...heavy fortifications



Berat: Pasha's Palace



Local Cuisine

As we had hoped for we found a nice place 'in-extremis' near Zvernec overlooking the lagoon. There was a wooden bridge of 250m leading over to a small island with a small old and very holy monastery (St Mary). Beautiful sunset atmosphere with the sun appearing for the last 2' beside the island. At night we saw glowworms swarming around!



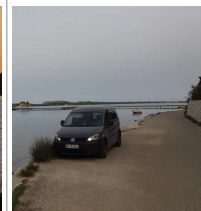
Bridge to Monastery



St. Mary Monastery



Short glimpse



Lonely night

April 24 Start: Zvernec, 7.30

End: Ksamil, 16.30

166 km / 2644 km
39°45'56.61"N, 19°59'46.08"E

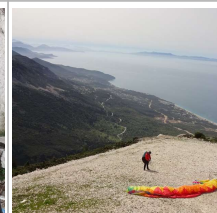
Short drive to Vlores, mainly to find out about ferry to Brindisi (up to now we had in mind to drive back through Italy). But for now we continued along the coast leaving out Gjirokaster for the return journey. After Orikum I noticed that we could run out of fuel over the Llogara Pass (1040m)! We still enjoyed the scenery and were also thrilled to find a road-side fountain for refilling our drinking water reserves!



Up to the Llogara Pass

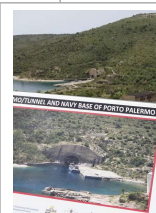


Cool fresh water!



Top of Llogara Pass

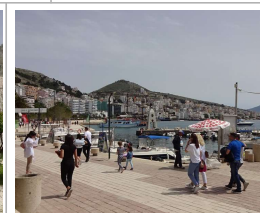
After 40 km of suspense, in Dherma, I could refill fuel at last! Passing Porto Palermo we saw an old military submarine tunnel (built by Enver Hoxha during cold war) and nearby also visited the triangular Tepelena Fort built by Ali Pasha on a small peninsula. We then had Lunch at Sarande with some creative kind of meat pie.



Porto Palermo



Ali Pasha Fort



Sarande

Looking at the map for a place to stay for the night I headed to the peninsula near Ksamil right opposite Korfu. After a while the track got to rough and we turned back to Ksamil. Soon we saw a little bay/beach with a meadow behind and 2 camping cars. We paid the 5 Euro and had a rest and good wash and much fun with 2 the East Germans, Rüdiger und Manfred. A nice last day and good night in Albania!



Sheeps welcome us



and 2 Germans



Rest & Fun

April 25

Start: Ksamil, 11.00

.... to Sagiada GR, 14.30(+1)

Easy morning with 1st time breakfast outside! Then little walk before leaving. Nice drive and crossing a river near Butrint with small ferry. We did not visit the Roman town Butrint and after visiting the little fort we went for the borders where it took us 45' to pass over to Greece.....
..... continued in Part 2



Morning turn...



Butrint crossing...



.. by mini-ferry



Fort beside Butrint

Diary Part 2 – Greece Round trip

Note: Greek Time +1h: Tablet ok, forgot to change Sony camera time. Peggy's smartphone was even 1h more behind.

April 25	.....continued from Ksamil		Sagiada GR, 14.30(+1)		134 km / 2678 km 39°37'36.90"N, 20°10'44.41"E	
..... after the Border to Greece, we stopped at the 1st village at Sagiada and noticed a promising fish restaurant and a good place on the beach to rest. We had delicious fish and ink fish (Peggy could chose which to fry) ... then it was already 4 pm and we decided to stay and enjoy strolling around. Nice sunset!						
...						
April 26	Start: Sagiada, 10.00		Porto Katsiki, 17.30		248 km / 2926 km 38°36'10.38"N, 20°32'56.56"E	
Had a good night. I was in bed 22.30-8.30 and mostly sleeping!!!!. Beautiful outdoor Breakfast! Originally I had thought of driving directly to the Peloponnes, but now decided to take it easy and and make a turn to Lefkada Island first!. On the way after Ingumenitsa and Parga, we got sidetracked looking for a Monastery! In the end we found a hidden old monastery, Ayios Georgios near Kipseli (GE says wrongly Saint Demetrius).						
After saving a tortoise from the road we continued to Prevesa (visit to Lidl), passed a road tunnel and then turned off to Lefkada Island. On the way to the light tower at the end of the island we ended up at a beautiful cliff with view to open sea: Porto Katsiki. We arrived at 6pm, had a long picnic with superb scenery until spectacular sunset!						
			Old St George Monastery		Tortoise	
			Evening at Porto Katsiki		....
.....						
April 27	Start: Porto Katsiki, 10.00		End: Aitoliko 18.00		204 Km / 3130 km 38°26'5.92"N, 21°21'23.31"E	
Beautiful morning and exciting walk to the beach below the cliff. Short drive to light-tower then continued around the wild island. Passing Kallithea we saw a promising restaurant and had Fish Mese - fried king prawns, anchovies, chips with open red wine (Restaurant Valentina). Then a Brit who lives there in his sailing boat joined us and we had a good chat. Peggy even got a small dish of lamb wastes for free! We left at 14.30.						
			Porto Katsiki Beach		Cape Lefkada	
			Kallithea			
Slow drive leaving Lefkada and on a scenic coast drive via Mystika to Aitoliko where we arrived at around 6pm. We stayed near this little island town for picnic and night on the bay promenade!						
Then we noticed a path leading into the bay and made a beautiful Sunset walk over 2x2 km right into the bay! There was kind of religious site at the end of the path.						
			Aitoliko picnic ....		....
			Start of walk....		....
			
			....end of walk			
.....						
April 28	Start: Aitoliko, 7.30		End: Pylos 18.00		356 km / 3486 km 36°54'56.02"N, 21°41'41.60"E	
On the way to Patras we were forced to join the motorway for a short section, because the main road was blocked without any detour signs..... In any case we had to cross the Gulf of Korinth to Patras over the spectacular Rio-Antirrio Bridge. We then passed Patras on seaside (Lidl on the way) and then once more on the hillside...as I had unintentionally taken the motorway + in the wrong direction..... then continued via Lake Asteri with view to snow-covered Mt.Erimantos 2224m towards Pyrgos.						
			Rio Antirrio Brigde		Mt Erimanthos	

At the Beach at Kiparissia we took a good wash (cold shower...brhh) but then at 16.15 we decided to continue, hoping for a better place to stopafter checking several places we reached Pylos.

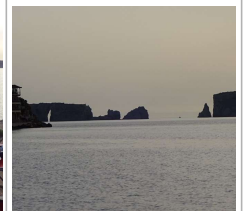
Bingo! Perfect place at the harbour pier with view to Sfaktiria Island and the caved rock island beside. Picnic dinner and short stroll to town and the old fortifications .



Pylos Harbour....





















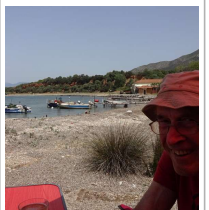
...at the Pier



... the Rocks

It seems that here I had adjusted the clock of the camera

April 29	Start: Pylos, 8.30	End: Cape Tenaron, 18.45	161 km / 3652 km 36.385453,22.483042
In early morning a big cruise ship anchored at just a few meters from us and it was good to see the passengers getting off and board the tourist buses (that may be our future perspective;-) The Weather was rather gray but felt comfortable. Now started the long drive to Cape Tenaron. Not far from Pylos we discovered the very impressive Methoni Fort (originally Venetian, 13th c.). Then crossed over to Nea Koroni at the Messenian Gulf and passing-by Kalamata, we had to fetch (steal;-) a bunch of oranges along the road!			
		Cruise Ship arrives	Huge Methoni Fort
At a small village Kampos (at 300m), we saw a very simple restaurant. Home cooking, no other choice: Lovely ragout on yammie thick spaghetti! Then we visited the little ancient Byzantine Church (13th century) nearby. Soon we reached Kardamili, squeezed between shore and mountains with patches of snow.			
		Delicious Ragout	Lovely Lady
			
		St Theodori Church	Byzantine 13th century
Following the scenic winding road we eventually passed Vathia with a group of ancient defence towers and shortly later came the turn-off to a non-sign-posted small road towards Cape Tenaron. The road ended in a small bay with a little lonely car park, with a couple of camping cars. We did not see the cape, but as it was only 5pm we decided to walk right away!			
		Start of walk...	...Light tower at the Cape
			
			South tip of East Europe
It was a nice walk of 45 mins each way over rough terrain between high cliffs. We had reached the most southern tip of Eastern Europe, 36°23'. In the West, Punta Tarifa (E) is slightly more south at 36°00' (23' = 42 km). After also having a close look at the Greek/Spartan mosaics, we got back timely to enjoy picnic and a chat with a Bernese couple. Toni Rindlisbacher lives in Innerberg near Wohlen (BE 239 386)			
		Way back to car...	.... the mosaics
			
			Car park – off season;-)

April 30	Start: Cape Tenaron, 8.30	End: Monemvasia, 16.00	174 km / 3826 km 36°40'56.17"N, 23° 2'21.82"E
Nice morning! I took a closer look at the small ancient stone sanctuary of legendary Greek origin. It was believed that the entrance to Hades' underworld was at Cape Tenaron! BTW: We realised now that we were about to start our long return journey We took the small winding roads, passing Lagia (400m) with a nice little church (crossing Rindlisbacher on his bike) and continued the 1001 bends along the Laconian Gulf to Skoutari.			
		Legendary...	.... Sanctuary
			
		Lagia Church...	....Murals all over!
Then easy drive to Skala with a visit to Lidl and then on to other side of bay when Peggy saw this spot beside the water at Kokkinias Beach near Elaea to cook the meat (kind of Gyros) she had just bought. We enjoyed the 2 h rest! In the afternoon we continued along the other side of the Gulf for a detour to cross the peninsula to Monemvasia via Foutia (to confirm). Arriving at Monemvasia we immediately found the perfect spot for the night on a unused pier with view to the hill with the castle and easy to walk to the walled city!			
		Cooking ...	... eating...
			
			.....resting!

It was 4pm and we immediately walked over the dam to the island with old town on the hill's slope and then up to the very impressive fort on top with breath-taking views in the evening sun!



We spent over 3 hours enjoying the narrow pedestrian streets, walking up to the castle with great views and got back to the car at 19.30 at sunset. Nice picnic while still enjoying the view over the bay to the hill.

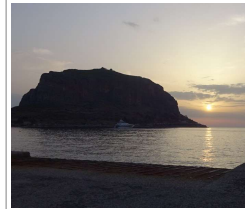
May 1

Start: Micronesia, 8.30

End: Isthmian 18.30

305 km / 4131 km
37°54'59.85"N, 23° 0'29.76"E

Breakfast with sunrise for a change.... We had to drive back to Scala to continue our journey. ... at Scala we noticed an old chapel from 10th century. It was closed and we were about to leave when the preacher, just leaving, saw us and made us have a look. Lovely St. Georgios Chapel, lovely preacher. Now we crossed the peninsula towards the Argolian Gulf over wild mountains when we suddenly saw a side road leading to a monastery.



Monemvasia sunrise



Scala. St Georgios-

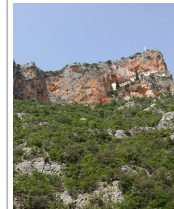


Chapel & Priest

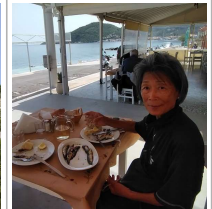
The Elonas Monastery, built under a huge cliff and located high above a gorge is spectacular and worth a visit! Eventually we reached the Gulf and after a while, at Tyros, we saw a promising restaurant and had very nice sardines and white wine. Here we met a young Chinese couple with some connections to Hongkong. We then continued before 2pm just along the coast to Nafplion (3pm) and on to ancient Epidaurus. There are several historical sites under that Label. We only stopped at the theatre and just walked around it, seeing a few ancient pillars.



Elonas....

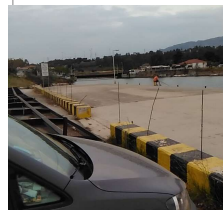


Monastery



Sardines at Tyros

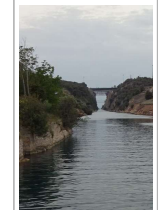
At 4pm we started to look for a good place to stop and actually found an acceptable spot near Kalamaki Beach. Then I mentioned that the Korinth Canal is just a couple of km further. Peggy: Go for it! That sounded like an order - That canal was one of her 2 must-targets; we had been there years ago!. At 6.30 pm we settled at the canal's pier at Isthmia! Walking over the submersible bridge to look into the canal then picnic etc.....



Entrance of Canal



On first canal bridge, to look



... into Canal

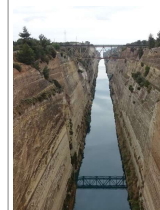
May 2

Start: Isthmia, 9.00

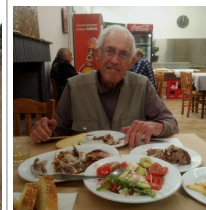
End: Kastri Loutro 20.00

434 km / 4565 km
39°57'57.56"N, 22°40'59.46"E

Rain most of the night. We drove along the Canal to catch a good view from a foot bridge which was barred unfortunately, so we went to the road bridge nearby. Then we by-passed Korinth (visited in 2006) for a scenic detour via Loutraki and over the peninsula, via Pissa to Vilia to join the main road towards Thiva. After Vilia, just after joining the main road we saw a road-side tavern with a lamb roasting on a skewer and immediately stopped for a feast of the lambs meat and a combination of inner organs etc.



Korinth Canal



Roast Lamb from...

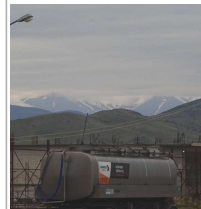


.....Skewer!

Then continued main road via Thiva, Lamia to Larissa from where we saw Mt. Olympus, mostly hidden in clouds. I had carefully tried to avoid getting on the motorway to Tessaloniki, yet I got trapped, stressed and could only leave 3 exits further at Paleopirgos. It was almost 7pm when we reached the targeted area...then it took almost a frustrating hour to find a spot for the night. In the end, at Kastri Loutro, we parked on a small street between two houses beside the beach at 8pm.



Cave beside road



Olympus covered



Night at Kastri Loutro

The aged owner of the house beside had no objections and so we had it relaxed! We were now close to Peggy's 2nd target, the Mt. Olympus!

May 3

Start: Kastri Loutro, 7.30

End: Litchoro Port, 17.15

65 km / 4630 km
40° 9'12.13"N, 22°32'55.94"E

Although it was very cloudy we went for our planned Olymp-venture. Easy drive to Litochoro then up to Prionia in a small valley at 1100m. In spite of low clouds hanging around the steep slopes we gave it a try and at 8.45 started to walk with moderate hope to get far...and so we had not taken any food nor water and only light shoes. On the way up we had met to young Brits, Marco & James from York, who had insisted to give us a chocolate-bar for just in case! Very nice of them! In the end we had still walked up for almost 3 hours to 1900m getting near the 1st refuge (2100m). Note that Mt. Olympos peaks at 2914m. We had known before that we would be stopped by snow at some stage!

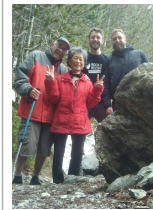
There we stopped as we were told by a returning couple that we would get soon to very tricky steep snow fields (we had already crossed some slippery patches of snow) and it would not be worth-while to continue in this thick fog anyway! We also enjoyed the way back taking it easy!



Start walk at Prionia



Various Obstacles



Marco & James



Returning point



Start & End

We got back to Prionia at 14.50. We had not drunk or eaten anything for 5½ hours! We had enjoyed the walk and were very satisfied that we had done it! At 6pm we found a perfect spot for the night on the beach at the tiny Litochoro-Port and also enjoyed the picnic (beer and wine included)! We parked with head turned to Olympos but it remained covered....



Through snow again



Add 1 stone!



Waiting for Olympos to show!

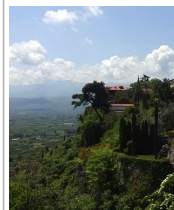
May 4 Start: Litochoro Port, 8.30

End: Agios Panteleimon, 17.00

190 km / 4820 km (115'905)
40°43'20.61"N, 21°45'6.97"E

We took it easy and decided follow the direction to North Macedonia (the Olympos was still covered) via Katerini (Lidl on the way), Kipseli, Gianitsa, then we made a turn uphill to visit Edessa.

Nice view to the plain, a little waterfall, the remarkable church of Koimisis (14th century) and some attractive old osman-type houses. Now was time for lunch. After looking around we saw a small public canteen When Peggy saw the yammie Moussaka we went for it, along with a dish of gyros and potatoes.



Edessa look-out



Church of...



....Koimisis



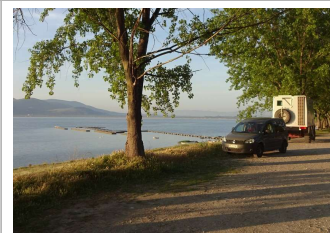
Osmanic Houses



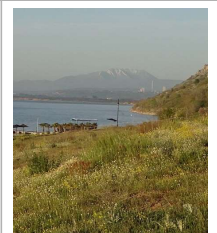
Mousaka & Gyros

Driving out of Edessa I was so sure to head in the right direction and did not look at the map...until I was forced to in a village (Flamoura) when I had noticed that I kept driving South instead of West. The Google GPS showed me how wrong I was! So I drove back 10 km to the center of Edessa where I had gone the wrong way (getting old)!

But this time we reached Lake Vegoritida where I hoped to find a good place to spend the rest of the day.....Arnissa was not the right place, so we went to the opposite side of the big lake to Agios Panteleimon. Bingo! At the 2nd try Peggy saw the perfect spot right at the lake and in the shade of big trees! One could even see the Olympos in its splendour at 85km! It was 4.30 pm...time to take it easy! A stroll, a picnic, a chat with an Austrian couple and also a German* couple who live in their truck for already 10 years and now heading for Iran. What a great end for the last night in Greece!



Ag. Panteleimon / Lake Vegoritida



View to Olympos

*They have a sophisticated homepage (www.mantoco.com) and have published a book about their 4½ years journey in Africa (Sehnsucht Afrika).

May 5 Start: Agios Panteleimon, 8.30





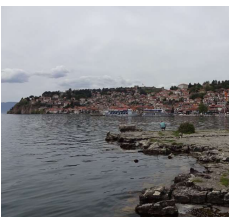


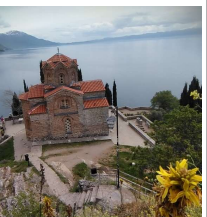


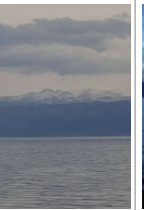



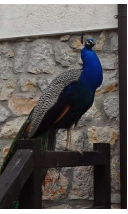

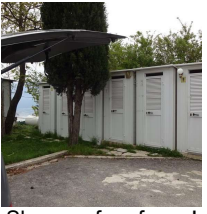


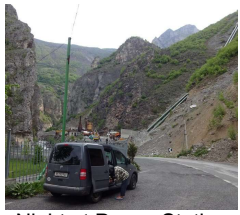
..... Ohrid (Nth. Mac.) 13.00 (-1)

342 km / 4962 km

Easy drive to the North Macedonian border passing smoothly..... continue Part 3

Diary Part 3 – North Macedonia – Home

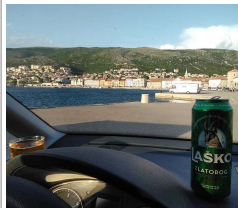
Note: My Sony camera was still set to Greek time (so 1 hour ahead)

May 5	.....cont'd from Agios Panteleimon, 8.30	Ohrid (Nth. Mac.) 13.00 (-1)	342 km / 4962 km 41° 6'9.88"N, 20°48'26.25"E	
Short drive to Eraclea and, at 9am, made a quick turn to the ancient Greek Theatre. Then we visited Bitola and walked around the quite nice town center with a few churches and mosques and monuments. We did not withdraw local cash as we planned to stay only one night in NMK (having decided to skip the detour via Kruševo through the mountains ..) So we continued to Ohrid and found a good place to park at the lake promenade. We strolled around for over 3.5h,				
		Ancient Eraclea	Bitola Main Street	Mosques & Churches
First we walked along the bay to the photogenic, small St. John Church guarding the end of the peninsula. On the way we had also visited the unique St Sophia Church with a rich 1000 years of history. Sadly we then missed out the famous Church of Saints Clement and Panteleimon (I had not known about it. The pic below is from Wikipedia). There were many other things to see: the Roman Theatre, an old city wall, a church above the city and all dominated by a huge fortified castle on top of the hill. Attractive houses, some Osman-style and small and large pedestrian streets.... One could spend a good whole day in Ohrid!				
				
Easy parking in May	Walking along the Bay	Famous St Sophia Church	To St John Church	St John Church
At 5 pm we started with apéro followed by picnic on one of the public benches.... and then before 8pm we made a little walk in the other direction and discovered a 1.5km long broad sports promenade for fast walking, jogging or whatever... all along the bay! Very attractive with playgrounds etc etc and it ends at the Golden Beach Resort. Of course we went for it and also noticed a big lonely car park just beside. As parking rules in town were unclear, we moved to this quiet place for the night (settled after sunset at 7.30 pm).				
		St C&P Church	Apéro and Picnic	Mt Tomorr at 80km
				Waiting to sleep
May 6	Start: Ohrid, 8.30	End: Power Station (before Lusen) 19.30	155 km / 5119 km 41°53'39.72"N, 20°25'0.96"E	
Idyllic morning. Then easy drive along the lake and soon reached Sv. Naum, the major excursion target from Ohrid with old monastery and all sorts of assets for tourists, such as souvenir shops, peacocks etc. Next we reached Albania but did not stop at Pogradec.				
		Ohrid in the morning	Sv. Naum Monastery....	....
				
				..turning us the ass!
Then we continued along the lake, looking for a camp site to get a shower....and so stopped at the small campsite Peshku. There the manager told me that we may take a free shower just like that..... many THANKS! Now we continued our way to Librazhd with the idea to have a simple meal with remaining Leks and then turn North towards Kukës through the Albanian mountains. The meal and the socializing were successful but we had ordered 1 steak and 1 salad but then they served 1 portions for each which strained our budget of remaining Leks				
		Showers free for us!	Lunch at Librazhd	
At 3 pm we were on the road again when after a few km towards Shupense, we were surprised when the road turned into a piste. Endless 60 km winding road over mountains with hardly a village and pot holes all over for 2.5 hours..... changing between 2nd, 3rd and even 1st gear and changing side of the road every few seconds..... I had sore arms when we reached normal road conditions.....now followed another 2h drive via Peshkopi with road winding up up up and eventually down and nowhere a chance to stop for the night. It was 7.30 pm and almost dark and raining when we saw a small lonely parking lot beside the entrance of a power station at the Bushtrica River near Lusen.				
		Google Earth: near Fushë Studë	Night at Power Station at Bushtrica River	

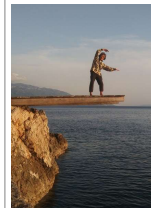
May 7	Start: Power Station (before Lusen), 8.00	End: Road Side (after Kovren) 19.15	392 km / 5511 km 43°12'8.41"N, 19°28'51.88"E			
After a quiet night we noticed that the entrance to the power station was also the portal with access to a Hotel (Gjoka). Scenic, winding but easy road to Kukes where at 9.30 am we spent the last few Leks in a small Kiti Supermarket, e.g. 3 kg fig-jam, sausages etc. Easy 60 km to Gjakova (old bridge) in Kososvo. Had to pay 12 Euro insurance fee (as Kosovo is not included in green insurance card).						
		Mountain resort Kukës	Medieval bridge at Gjakova (Peggy on top in the middle)	Yammie Goulash Soup		
On the way to Peja, in Deçan, we saw a simple restaurant (Iliria) with workers having lunch. Today's: Goulash soup – great stuff! We left at 1pm and had just crossed Peja when I stopped for fuel. When I grabbed for my wallet..... sh..! I had left my handbag at the restaurant 15km back to Deçan they had kept my Handbag in a drawer (THANKS), 15km back to Peja (both ways very slow traffic).... but I had all my ID, drivers license and bankcards back!!!! Ouff!						
Now we drove up into the still snow-covered mountains crossing at nearly 4pm into Montenegro at 1800m! Then descended to Berane to continue through lovely country-side to Bjelo Polje, where I had hoped to find a spot to stay for the night! No way and it was well after 6pm! Well then! Just continued driving.. and look out for a place, trying this and that!						
		Snow at 1800m	Chapel with..	manual Bell	...Murals	Night beside road
It was almost 8 pm and almost dark when, in a narrow valley we parked on a very lonely stump of the old road. No problem and very quiet night!						
.....						
May 8	Start: Road Side (a. Kovren), 7.45	End: Church Queen of Peace (Posusje), 19.30	380 km / 5891 km 43°26'39.33"N, 17°24'3.99"E			
Long mountain drive (snow rests) via Pljevlja with a big surface coal mine. Then over to Bosnia with a lonely 1-man border station. Here was the only place we were asked for a Covid Vaccine Certificate. Later we stopped at Gorazde for cash & shopping at Bingo Then lonely driving via Princici (nice chapel with golden roof) to Sarajevo. Suddenly: big city... Sunday visitors all over! I just could not muster the mental energy to look for a car park to visit the city. So we just crossed the big city in heavy traffic and then continued towards Mostar, passing a big lake and a spectacular gorge.						
		Coal Mine	Chapel Princici	Gorge near Mostar		
						
Mostar Stari Most....	.....	.....	Jumping for money	Albanian Sausage	Holy Night
Mostar became famous during the Bosnian War, when its 16th century bridge was destroyed. The bridge was rebuilt from 1996 to 2004 and Mostar seems to have recovered its touristic status! We stayed around for 1.5 hours and left at 4.30 pm (1km against one-way traffic:-) along the Croation border in direction of Bihac at the very NW of Bosnia. Soon it was time to look for a place for the night and 50 km later, after several tries, at 7.30 pm we stopped at the hidden car park of a big church near Posusje in the middle of nowhere – perfect. The Church of the Queen of Peace was built after the Bosnian War as a memorial for reconciliation... we had a very peaceful night!						
.....						
May 9	Start: Church Queen of Peace, 7.45	End: Senj, 18.00	386 km / 6277 km 44°59'22.39"N, 14°53'49.44"E			
Lovely, lonely and easy 260 km drive to Bihać over an elevated plateau between nice mountain ranges. We noticed a high number of abandoned houses in ruins. We arrived in Bihać before 1pm and made a turn in town, looking (me desperately) for a restaurant in the unexciting center. Apart for a few fast food places we found nothing appealing to us.						
		Near Lake Busko	Bihac...	... Center	Yammie....happy!

1h later we gave up and drove off and ... Bingo! Just after the first bend of the main road to the left, we saw a lamb rotating on a skewer, it was 2pm. Lovely meal with some very special home-made kebab bread (almost Yai Jia Guai texture!).... Next door was a supermarket to spend the last Bosnian Marks! Now we turned towards the Croatian Coast and drove through the attractive, mountainous Plitvice Natl Park. We did not enter to see the famous falls.

After a scenic drive through the mountains we reached the shore at Senj at 6.30 pm and immediately found the perfect spot in the port beside the beach and with view to the town and both sides of the coast along the mountain chain. We made a stroll into town and back in sunset! Bora had just started... Never mind, we were back at the sea!



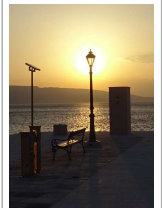
Senji: back to Life -Style



.....



.....



....

May 10 Start: Senj, 8.00

End: Caorle, 16.30

351 km / 6592 km
45°36'27.87"N, 12°52'23.82"E

Very nice drive back along the coast to Rijeka, then on to Trieste (where I got lost again because of a one way road (I suddenly noticed the sun in the front!). We had a succulent Italian Pizza at Sistiana...then got lost again after Monfalcone taking a turn to Grado well.... we had plenty of time!

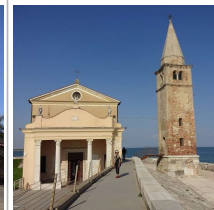
We decided to take it easy when we reached Caorle at 4.30pm and having found a big free car park open for camping cars. Nice walk to town along the canal with fishing boats and then also along the sea promenade and the interminable beach. Getting back to the car at 6.30pm we had a lovely picknick with sausage from Albania and Greek wine. We still had 24 degrees at 8.30pm.



Caorle along Canal



... at center



... at Beach



... at Parking

May 11 Start: Caorle, 7.30

End: Claro A2 (CH), 20.30

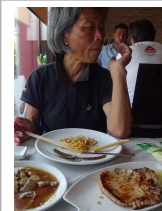
464 km / 7038 km
46°16'50.77"N, 8°59'46.39"E

At 10pm I woke up finding myself at the steering wheel re-parking the car while dreaming!!!! After a good sleep and breakfast we dove off heading for home. Main roads again via Treviso and Vicenza.

Getting close to Verona, we started looking for a lunch opportunity, when near Villabellia, we suddenly noticed an Asian restaurant with big panels: Sushi/Cuccina Chinese! We had a superb meal! 2 lunch menus with 3 dishes on choice and drink included! We had 2 beers and ½l white wine. All that for 32 Euro!. It was the highlight of the day!



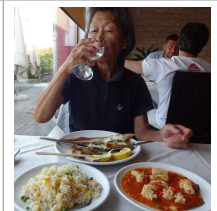
Pork, China Noodles



Huge Veal Chop

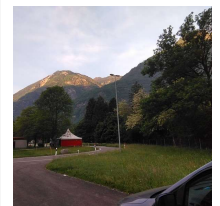


Fried Fish



Fried Rice, Ink Fish

Satisfied, I had the idea to spend the rest of the day along lake Iseo. But zero chance to find a good spot for the night near the water. As it was already past 4 pm, I decided to head on for the long drive to Bellinzona. I guessed 4 h or more driving depending on rush hour traffic. The roads were congested for the first 2 hours but we still managed to reach the A2 rest area near Claro/TI at 8.30 pm. The rest area was very crowded with 22 large trucks and 2 camping cars but we found a place aside on a service lane. Relaxed evening between snow-patched mountains with their tips still glowing in the setting sun.....



Rest Area near Claro

May 12 Start: Claro A2, 8.00

End: Ipsach 12.30 (1h shopping in Lidl)

267 km / 7306 km (118390)
41° 6'9.88"N, 20°48'26.25"E

Good sleep again as we had enjoyed the whole way for a month time. (note: I am deaf!) Easy journey home past Schwyz to look for walk to the Grosser Mythen..... The road up to the Holzegg, which I had in mind is not available for cars! Then easy drive home via Emmen and Aegerten (Lidl). Arriving early makes thing easier.....