



Heritage

at the crossroads

A year ago in *Locum Destination Review*, the question was asked: ‘World Heritage Sites. Who Really Cares?’ The following three pieces, together with the internationally acclaimed photography of Damir Fabijanić, explore answers to that question in the World Heritage city of Dubrovnik, Croatia.

In this first piece, Locum non-executive director, **Tony Hodges**, observes those who are bringing Dubrovnik’s heritage back to life, in very different ways. Second, Director of Museums and Collections at English Heritage, Julius Bryant, introduces the first *Best In Heritage* event, held in Dubrovnik this September, with a clarion call: on the role of heritage in resisting the monocultural march of the global (or American) brand. Finally, we review the *Best In Heritage* event itself, contrasting the various means by which award-winning heritage projects keep the flame alive.



The Feast of St Blaise, 3 February 1991. BEFORE THE BOMBING

The story behind this feature began in March 2002. A mission to Croatia had been organised by the British Embassy's remarkably efficient commercial office in Zagreb, in concert with Trade Partners UK. Various designers and cultural heritage experts, together with your scribe, travelled to Varaždin in northern Croatia for a seminar on cultural tourism. Typically British, part diplomat, part commercial traveller, part gentleman; very John le Carré. Everyone was intrigued by Croatia's heritage. And, to our surprise, everyone we met in Croatia drank deeply of what we had to say about the benefits and practices of cultural tourism.

Some of us were invited back in September, this time to Dubrovnik, to participate in a remarkable event - the first of many, we trust - called Best In Heritage. Julius Bryant returned to provide the keynote paper. Your scribe chaired the final session of this event and drew sketches of the various faces of cultural heritage that popped up over the parapet.

Since Best In Heritage was established as a forum for the exchange of award-winning ideas and best practice, across a wide definition of 'heritage projects', Locum Destination Review decided

to share the vision, indeed the visions, more widely and so support a laudable initiative in the destination marketplace.

The story does not end with these Best In Heritage contributions, however. Just as 'the Varaždin gang' had all been intrigued by the Austro-Hungarian heritage of northern Croatia last March, so, come September, everyone involved in the Dubrovnik event came away smitten by this jewel-like city of the south.

Dubrovnik proved a perfect venue for Best In Heritage precisely because the city itself brought together so many important heritage themes. Art and architecture; politics and economics; man and his environment; and, most obvious of all, war and peace. (Serendipitously, we even had the privilege of Leo Tolstoy's great great grandson at the event.) As back-packers of yesteryear may remember, Dubrovnik stands at the southern extreme of northern Europe and the eastern end of western Europe. It is at the crossroads: of civilisation and strife, for merchants and warriors, builders and bombers, ancient and modern. As you walk the flagstones and the cloisters of old Dubrovnik, you cannot fail to ponder the true role of heritage in today's world.