



FALCO TOURS
 everything except a tourist experience!



Reportage by **Ante Ribičić**

**Our Adriatic by sea kayak -
 from Dubrovnik to Opatija
 “Who can do it? We can!”**

Humanitarian action “Falco tours” and “RTL Helps Children”
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Read an article from the diary of Ante about interesting recent “Falco tours” expedition „Who can do it? We can!” – 550 km long sea kayaking expedition in Adriatic, from Dubrovnik to Opatija.

Here, our tour was finished almost two months ago. What to say?!

I still have in mind, heart and veins! We passed our Adriatic by sea kayak from the beautiful Dubrovnik to the magic Opatija! And I would again!

During preparation period for our 550 kilometres long Dubrovnik – Opatija paddling tour, practically whole Croatian coast, by the end of last year, I was convinced that I would have to organize serious preparations, both physical and psychological. But, I had lot of other work to do, so I couldn't afford to spend much time in training. Mike and I should paddle this tour. However, Mike could not go in that period because of his professional obligations. We decided that I would paddle the whole route with the help of kayakers Miso Buric, Gvido Piasevoli and Tomo Runtic, who would participate as much as their family, occupational and physical capabilities permit. For land escort we were indebted a friend Mišo Todorovic- Pile.

As the moment of the start was approaching, my self-confidence was lower and lower. I knew what efforts were expected. Or I thought I had known. One was for sure – I was not ready. Not a single training on the sea, just several jogging trainings. I was really afraid of a failure of the whole project, but I already went too far and it was impossible to go back. Media were already involved, and sponsors, too. Thinking what to do, I suddenly got the idea of construction of sails. Just to help at least a little. That's not anything new, I know, but my masts and sails and the whole system of handling were really unique. And I felt a little better. Before the start of the tour I had only one „maiden voyage“ of about half an hour.



Through Trogir with sails!



With sails much easier and faster!

I was still not convinced of my abilities, but the D day came, the day of departure from Dubrovnik. We left Dubrovnik by kayaks and Pile was in the car, as escort. I was afraid of that moment, but that first day with 43 kilometres behind us, gave me an answer. I will do that, I was sure, perhaps not with my physical strength, but with the strength of my will. I will go beyond my limits.



The first setup: Mišo, Gvido and me



Departure from Dubrovnik

Weather was not good for us during the major part of the journey. First five days were more-less good, although we thought they were not too good.



Hodilje – Pelješac (oyster farm)



Split (Mišo, Tomo and me)

Later we realized that first days were excellent, compared with what we faced with later. Sails were not used too much first days, only few times. After five days we reached Split, our home town. The rest of the tour we had six days of stormy weather, which forced us to stop and wait. Today, with this experience, I am sure that four days of stormy south-eastern wind were good for sailing. Very fast sailing, although a little risky. But generally, despite relatively bad weather, I am sure that the part of the year was chosen well.

That part of the year is generally free of north-western wind, which direction is bad for this tour. South-eastern and north-eastern winds, which are convenient (except too strong), are much frequent. Temperatures of water and especially air are just ideal for long paddling. My experience from this journey is enormous. Among others, I am considering the idea of creating ideal rain coats for paddling.



After rain



Krk Bridge

Among many people I met and various events, good and bad ones, I especially remember one. I met several local people on the beach where I stopped for rest. It was relatively cold, so I had warm clothes, with rain coat, life jacket, gloves and many other pieces of equipment for long distance kayaking. One of locals asked me: "Where are you coming from?" I asked. "Today or..." He just repeated his question. I said: "I left Dubrovnik four days ago." Then he told his friends: "Didn't I tell you this man was travelling from far away?"

I remember some forty years ago people from my village used to say that traveller was travelling “from far away”. Travelling was very slow in that time. If that man saw me on the road, he wouldn’t have said that I was travelling “from far away”, because it was not long journey by car. Generally, I realized that nowadays travelling is just driving from point A to point B, and that’s not it. Real travelling is long, slow journey, during which you have an opportunity for meeting new people, enjoying the natural environment and local customs. Or simply – that’s sea kayak.



Wista view of Opatija with Kantrida ... so we come to the end - Opatija!

And just one thing more. Despite my great kayak experience, I made several mistakes, because of hurry. I paddled during the night on the rough sea, in the area where both the coast and dominant weather could be dangerous and where there are no settlements. And I was fully aware of all those threats. Only one small mistake in those conditions was enough to endanger my life at the moment. I will do such things never more, because that can erase all the beauty of the word “travelling”.

We passed 550 km of maybe the most beautiful coastline in the world, from Dubrovnik to Opatija! The experience of a lifetime! We get a sail with which we will paddle faster in future and we get another great guide - triathlete Toma Runtic. The whole time, before starting and during times we encouraged people with the need for humanitarian assistance to children who need it. We still do it.

Thank you everyone who gave us support, which meant us a lot in those moments.

On this trip I wrote diary which I have to edit and add photos. For now, I can only tell you - you just travel!

And with Falco!!!

