

Remember to Take It Easy: The Day of the Final Storm

All quiet on the Croatian front . . .



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Every year when August 5th rolls around, I think back to August 5, 2021: our first summer after moving to Croatia almost complete. We woke up that Saturday morning to the sound of steady, pattering rain, the smell of the sea coming in through our cracked windows (no fear of *propuh* or cross-breeze in this expat house). Looking outside, the sea was a deep gray-blue with (impressive) waves visible from our balcony. It felt so perfectly calm, it could have been the opening to a famous novel . . .

But there was no sign of the celebrations that would come later in the day, either because of the weather or continued pandemic restrictions.

You see, August 5th is a major holiday in Croatia, marking the end of the Yugoslav Wars in Croatia.

On August 5, 1995, the Croatian Army overthrew Serbian forces in the city of Knin, finally replanting their flag & claiming the city & their people as their own once more. The Croatian Army used an offensive called "Operation Storm," which forced the Republic of Serbian Krajina to fall.

The War of Independence later ended on November 12, 1995, including the establishment of the Erdut Agreement between Croatia & their neighbors, including local Serbian forces, Baranja, Eastern Slavonia, & Western Sirmia.

August 5th, declared a national (& yes, office-closing) holiday, was called "Dan Pobjede i Domovinske Zahvalnosti i Dan Hrvatskih Branitelja," or "Victory and Homeland Thanksgiving Day and the Day of Croatian Defenders."

My husband also refers to it as "the day of the final storm."

In typical celebration, the day centers around the liberation of the city of Knin, the last city in Croatia to be freed.

Most of the celebrating in the country *physically* takes place in Knin, where a special Mass is followed by a laying of large wreaths throughout the city where members of the Croatian Army were said to have lost their lives. After the streets are decorated with wreaths, thousands of people gather on the sidewalks as a parade places through, ultimately hoisting a large Croatian flag at the medieval fortress that still overlooks Knin.

Our first Day of the Final Storm proved to be incredibly quiet on the island of Krk, between the continued pandemic restrictions & the rain,

leaving everyone cozied up in their homes throughout that day. I remember my family & I ended up spending the day relaxing while the rain rumbled on, cuddling on the couch, & making good food.

But as it turned out, August 5th is a naturally quiet day, no matter the weather, the day of the week, or pandemic restrictions. All of the stores & businesses are closed, encouraging people to spend quiet, quality time with their families, cook at home, & do slow activities.

This year, my husband took our three kiddos swimming after work—the first time Grayson has been out of the house in over a week since he and I have been sick—while I write to you & continue my work for *Lit Shark Magazine*.

August 5th has become a day where we take our time, cuddle up, appreciate each other, & simply take care of each other.

Moments in history like this remind us of how important that is: to be grateful and to take things slow.

Probably Your Third Croatian Lesson

Unless you're like me or have Croatian family or friends, you more than likely didn't choose Croatian as your next language study! Most language learning apps, like Duolingo & Rosetta Stone, do not offer Croatian, but some lesser-known ones like Mondly & Drops both do, & I **just found an in-depth college course online!!** A1 & A2 levels are free to complete, & B1 - C2 are fairly affordable. ONWARD.

Here's a little Croatian for you, just for the fun of it!

- Oluja (oh-loo-yah) - Storm

- Praznik (prrrahz-neek) - Holiday (like Bank Holiday)
- Mirno (meer-no) - Peaceful
- (This one is for my best friend, who I miss terribly) Svidjet će ti se (svee-djet chay tee say) - You're going to LOVE it!

Thank you for joining me! I know I took a little bit of a break, but I'm so excited to share more stories, recipes, & tips/trivia with you.

Until next time! Želim vam prekrasan tjedan! (Have a wonderful week!)

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