

An Ode to our Holiday in Italy and Yugoslavia by John Broadhurst.

We set off at 5.30 am on the 29th of July;
We had a long way to drive, and that is why,
To reach the coach by half past ten.
We arrived quite early, and then
We waited and waited till the others came,
Which really was an awful shame,
'Cause by then the ferry, it had gone.
So we had to wait for another one
To take us to our holiday resort.
The crossing was rough, but seemed quite short.
The rest of the journey dragged slowly by,
In different positions we did try
To get some sleep
On the reclining seat.
The coach was the very latest I've seen,
With a toilet, a video and a coffee machine.

The mountains of Switzerland greeted the dawn,
And although many of us looked quite forlorn,
Our faces changed as we saw the view,
As slowly the sun came shining through.
The heat grew stronger by the hour
We all could have done with a refreshing shower;
Instead we sat in the increasing heat
Until Mum noticed her swollen feet.
First panic; but gradually relief came
On realising, everyone else was the same.

After breakfast, refreshed once more
We journeyed on to the Adriatic shore.
Duna Verde is the Italian name,
And full of hope to it we came;
Only to find the mosquitoes bite
If ever you open the window at night.
A free 'Welcome' drink at first we had,
For which we all were extremely glad,
And with it a talk on the rules of the site
By the diminutive Una, our courier so bright.
'Go to Venice,' she said, 'That's the trip,
First by coach and then by ship.
With a gondola ride
Whatever the tide.
And while you are there,
You must visit St Mark's Square.
50p will buy a bag of golden corn
For which pigeons will rest on your arm.'
All that we did several days later
An excursion that could not possibly have been greater.

'Why not visit the Yugoslavian caves,
Or go on the beach and plunge in the waves.
But,' continued Una, 'Wherever you go and whatever you do.'
And this warning unfortunately rang oh so true;
'Have your Autan cream always near,
Or the mosquitoes will get you, have no fear.'
Many of them finished up squashed on the awning.
We went to Caorle Market early one morning.
There was leather and lace and the usual fare,
It seemed as though the world and his wife was there.
Mum bought a handbag and some other things;
Tony, a giant plastic tube which bounced as if on springs.

We sat in the caravan each night
Covered in lotion, and then we set a light
To the Volcano, which gave off a smell,
Guaranteed to make all insects unwell.

The showers and toilets, although far away
Were clean and fresh I'm glad to say.
The shop was full, with plenty of booze,
The only problem being, which one to choose.
The fruit and veg were lovely and cheap,
I wish the same could be said for the meat.
So we ate very well during the day;
Then in the evening made our way
To the Pizza Parlour for our favourite food.
Whatever the mixture the flavour was good.
We rounded this off with sparkling wine,
Which together with the endless sunshine
Proved the highlight of our stay in Duna
Cared for by the tiny Una.

One morning when we were wide awake
Towards the end of our Italian break,
We noticed Mum covered from head to toe
In tiny spots; we did not know
What they were, the vicious lumps
We came to the conclusion they were just heat bumps.
So you see, believe it or not,
Even for Mum, it was too hot!

Doreen the courier at our second site
Held out the hope that we all just might
Enjoy ourselves as never before,
So we boarded the air-conditioned coach once more.
Yugoslavia was our new destination,
On route we were given useful information
About our home for the coming week;
So, would our holiday reach a fresh peak?

First glance, on arrival told a different tale,
To find the loos we could not fail;
And when we did what a shock we had
I didn't think they could possibly be that bad;
'Continental,' they were called,
But, by evening, we were appalled
To find that they were not properly used,
More true to say, they'd been badly abused.
They might have been better with some water,
I really think the Yugoslavs oughta
Get their priorities right,
If they did we just might
Have more enjoyed our stay,
Instead of wishing we could go away.
When, occasionally, there was water to spare
As like or not we were no there;
But if we chanced to catch it right,
Either early morning or late at night,
The shower was most likely very cold,
And if you looked up you would behold
Instead of the normal sprinkling rose,
Just a cut off pipe; so that those
Who manage to get there before the pushy Krouts,
Were heard issuing the most bloodcurdling shouts
As water drilled them to the floor,
So not many people ventured back for more.

The boys went snorkelling in the sea;
They caught some fish, but too small for tea.
Sea urchins, prickly and black,
Most of which they threw straight back.

Steven's birthday was looming large,
So we went to Porec, with Mum in charge.
To find a card was our intent,
We already had the one Gran had sent.
The Department Store, like a cash and carry.
No luck there so we didn't tarry;
Off to the old town with its cobbled street,
As we longed to rest our aching feet.
At last a small book shop we spied
And there, as we both hurried inside
Were two birthday cards, and only two,
Totally unsuitable, but they'd have to do.
For Yugoslavs, it sure is hard;
They must have birthdays, yet without a card!

On Sunday Doreen said, 'I have a treat for you,
Tomorrow we're having a barbecue;

Chops, sausages and plenty to drink,
Plus one or two games to make you think.'
So we gathered expectantly at eight o'clock,
For some it turned out to be quite a shock.
The innocent looking punch had quite a kick;
Making most of us either drunk or sick.
But for Joe and Sylvia it was not funny,
For, as we played they lost their money;
Stolen by some foreign thief.
Sadly, the police offered no relief.

Steven's birthday came and went,
We had a meal out to mark the event;
In fact, eating out was our daily treat,
With the local Mish-mash and plenty to eat.
The days were hot as the sun shone down,
So by the end of our stay at least we were all nice and brown.

On our last morning
As day was dawning
Long before daybreak,
Everyone was awake.
I wondered why this could be,
But soon it all came clear to me,
Most of us were homeward bound,
The air was full of a happy sound.
The coach came slowly round the bend,
Bringing our brief stay to an end.

Once back in Duna, we all made a dash
For the shower-block and a refreshing splash,
Then back on the bus with our cases and bags,
Bottles of wine and two hundred fags.
The journey home was less of a bore,
As very soon we were safe ashore.
Carting our treasures through the customs post,
We needed two trolleys as we had the most
Enormous pile of boxes and cases,
As the customs officials looked at our faces.
Arthur and Mary were taken aside
To see what goods they were trying to hide.
Nine pounds eighty they had to pay
For the extra spirits they had stashed away.

Now we're home and very glad,
As we reflect on the holiday we'd had;
And think of all the things we've seen,
And what, oh what it might have been.

