CROATIA: Exploring the Dalmatian Islands with Yvonne Gordon

‘DING, ding, ding...’ The bells from the church tower resound all along the waterfront. They sound like real bells rather than a recording, but they are slightly out of sync, as if someone might be practising.

We’ve just arrived in Trogir, near Split on the Croatian coast, to board a traditional wooden boat and explore the Dalmatian Islands for the next eight days. Our tour leader Davor welcomes us on board, and we gather on deck with the 16 others who are taking the trip.

‘Welcome on board Sretan, which means “happy”,’ he says, before running through the boat rules – things such as ‘no diving off the top deck’.

‘We ring the bell for something really important,’ he says, ‘like a meal or we have to go somewhere.’ I start to like bells again.

Once we’ve put our belongings into our cabin (and tossed for the top bunk), we have the evening to explore the historic town of Trogir, which is on its own tiny island. Much of Trogir dates back to the Middle Ages and it’s on the Unesco World Heritage list.

There’s an old city gate, a cathedral and sea cucumbers on the sea bed. It’s crystal clear, and through my tiny open-air cinema. Restaurant Lola, which has statues and lavender bushes between tables, is more like a garden than a restaurant.

On the last day, we arrive back to Trogir in the early evening to hear the bells ringing furiously from the church tower. They’re still out of sync, but it’s a welcome sound – like they are welcoming us back.

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