

Holy Week

On the Hvar island



**DISCOVER,
FOLLOW AND
BE THE LIGHT**

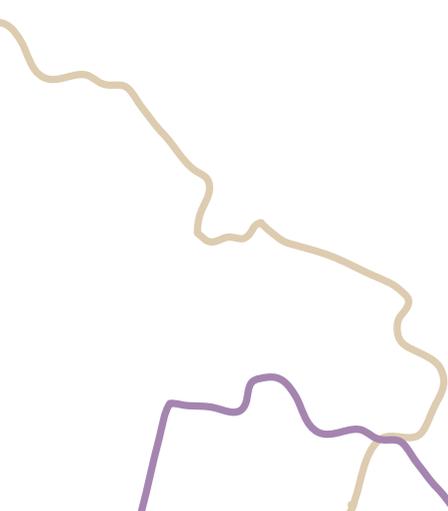
Following The Cross Procession | **GUIDE**

2 INTRODUCTION

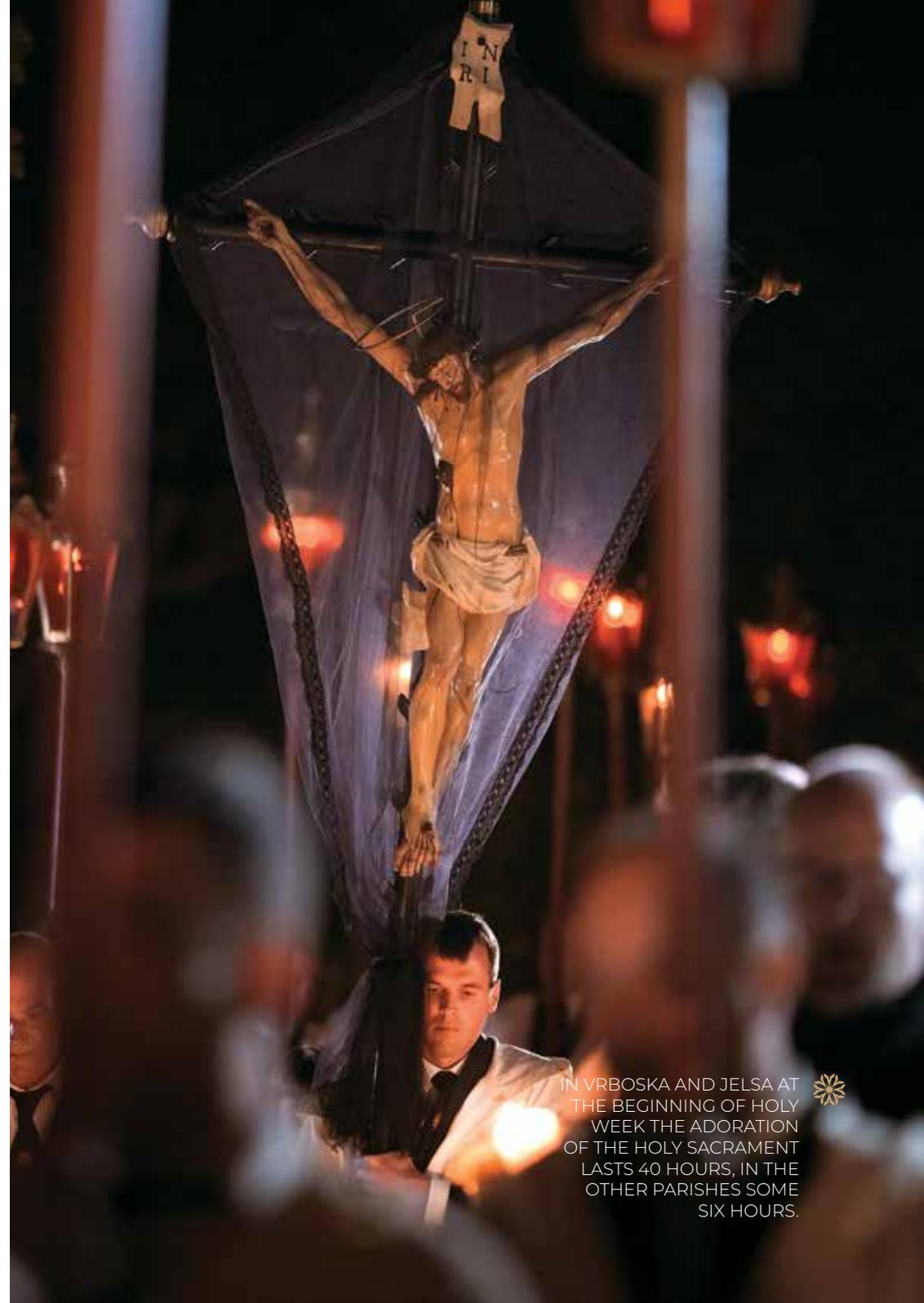
On Hvar Island the past is always part of the present, carrying within itself the seeds of the future. The island teems with rich traditions, and in the period through Lent leading up to Easter there are poignant demonstrations of the depth of local religious beliefs expressed in music and pageantry.

Processions are a significant part of religious celebrations throughout the year, and never more so than during Holy Week. In the run-up to Easter there are two types of procession: **the Theophoric processions**, and **the 'people's processions'**. In the former, the first of which takes place on Palm Sunday, the parish priest carries a monstrance holding the Host, which represents the body of Christ. The 'people's processions', in which a chosen volunteer carrying a large cross is leader, are organized by the lay confraternities without intervention from priests.

The 'people's processions' are known as 'Za križen' ('Following the Cross'), and take place all round Hvar, although the term is mostly associated with the all-night procession from Maundy Thursday evening to Good Friday morning in the central part of the island: six parishes take part, combining to form one great Procession experience out of six separate processions led by six Cross-Bearers. The one year when no 'Za križen' procession could be held on Hvar, in during World War II, it was held instead in the refugee camp at El Shatt in Egypt, where many people of Hvar had been evacuated.



UNESCO, RECOGNIZING THE SPECIAL VALUE OF THE SIX-PART 'ZA KRIŽEN' ('FOLLOWING THE CROSS') PROCESSION, HAS ENTERED IT INTO THE REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY. ✨



IN VRBOSKA AND JELSA AT THE BEGINNING OF HOLY WEEK THE ADORATION OF THE HOLY SACRAMENT LASTS 40 HOURS, IN THE OTHER PARISHES SOME SIX HOURS. ✨



IN FRONT OF JELSA'S PARISH CHURCH OF THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY, A BRONZE SCULPTURE BY WELL-KNOWN ACADEMICIAN KUZMA KOVAČIĆ STANDS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CROSS-BEARER'S SQUARE IN HONOUR OF ALL THE CROSS-BEARERS. THE SCULPTURE REPRESENTS THE CROSS AS A MAST PLANTED IN A STONY ISLAND, TIED TO ITS BOAT WITH ROPES, AND COVERED BY A MANTLE, JUST AS THE SIX CROSSES ARE DURING THE PROCESSION.



ABOUT THE ALL-NIGHT 'ZA KRIŽEN' PROCESSION

The all-night 'Za križen' Procession is a unique tradition which takes place every year during the night from Maundy Thursday to Good Friday, linking the settlements of Jelsa, Pitve, Vrisnik, Svirče, Vrbanj and Vrboska on Hvar Island.

In the course of its extended history the Procession has defied wars, illnesses and pestilence, preserved by the faith and strength of the people of Hvar. The continuity of this tradition is testament to the bond between this island's inhabitants with their family, cultural and religious inheritance, as well as to their deep hopes for the times to come.

The 'Za križen' Procession is **highly picturesque, with the lay brothers of the confraternities in their robes carrying lanterns and torches under the moonlight as they make their way along the winding paths from village to village to each parish stop.** It captures the soul of everyone who takes part.

Powerful spiritual events are not easy to describe in words. They carry within themselves a spiritual identity which is both visible and invisible, and which stretches across centuries. The spiritual experience transmitted by such events into the human soul lasts forever. The 'Za Križen' Procession is like a 'living film', in which six island settlements form an unbroken chain of prayer, piety and vows through the all-night pilgrimage. When it takes place, a special energy permeates the whole island. It is a fact that powerful spiritual traditions like the 'Za Križen' Procession are somehow magically unforgettable.

The Cross-Bearer from each parish is the central figure: each one of the six will have made a personal vow before taking up and carrying the holy cross, just as his forebears did before him over the centuries. All the six crosses go round the central area of Hvar Island in a heart-shaped route, spreading love, peace and blessings over each settlement and the island itself. The 'Za križen' procession tradition on Hvar is extra special in that it has been taking place annually for more than 500 years.

It is for all these reasons that it included this invaluable tradition in the Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

From as far back as the Middle Ages the church confraternities took care of the people's religious devotions, and they have continued to play a key part in organizing the 'Za križen' Procession up to the present day. The tradition is linked into Holy Week as part of the Passion. **The six processions set off simultaneously from each parish.** As night falls, at 10 pm the pilgrims set off on their 24-kilometre walk from the parish

6 churches in Jelsa, Vrboska, Vrbanj, Svirče, Vrisnik and Pitve. The route is circular, leading clockwise to each stop in the parish churches and chapels along the way, finishing at about 7 am in the home parish. The details of the route vary, as each parish has the right to choose which paths they take and which chapels they visit along the way.

Jesus' suffering is reflected symbolically in the Cross-Bearer, whose cross, which he carries round the whole route, weighs between **10 and 20 kg**. It is a demanding task, but at the same time an enormous honour, for which there is a long waiting list nowadays, in some parishes **up to 20 years**. It is often the case that the Cross-Bearers in any given year are following in the footsteps of their fathers or grandfathers who carried the Cross before them.

The start of the ritual send-off for each procession is signalled by a rattle, as no bells are rung from Maundy Thursday until the Vigil on Holy Saturday evening. The Cross-Bearers from the six settlements in the heart of Hvar Island set off barefoot or in socks. If socks are chosen, they are specially knitted in lambswool for the occasion: afterwards they are kept as a memento, and at the end of his life the Cross-Bearer is buried wearing them. Those who choose to carry the cross barefoot often do so as a mark of pushing their boundaries, or as part of their personal vow. The motivation behind each Cross-Bearer's decision to take on the task is known only to the individual who has felt the invitation in his heart. The spur might be family tradition, a vow, **an expression of gratitude or a prayer as a sign of unseen faith**.

The Cross-Bearer is accompanied by a large group of selected supporters, predominantly friends and family. They are arranged in groups mainly according to their singing ability, the lead group walking in front of him, the others behind. They carry a variety of lanterns and candlesticks, the tallest red lanterns being at the front of the Procession. Two companions, often wearing dark suits rather than the confraternity robes, walk alongside the Cross-Bearer, ready to give a helping hand if needed. They are normally men who have previously carried the cross.

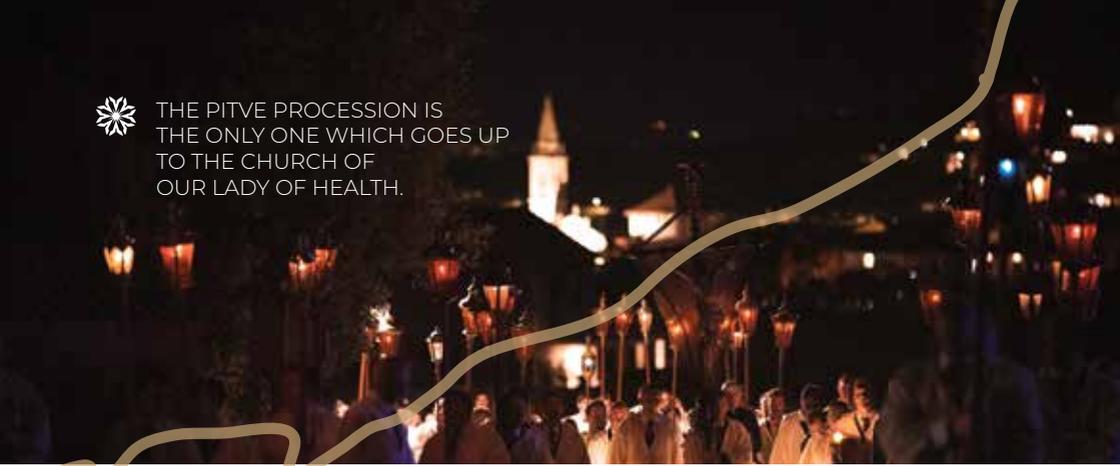


JUST FOR THE OCCASION, IN EACH PARISH CHURCH THE CHANCEL IS FILLED WITH A DEPICTION OF JESUS' GRAVE, LAVISHLY DECORATED WITH FLOWERS AND CANDLES.





THE PITVE PROCESSION IS THE ONLY ONE WHICH GOES UP TO THE CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF HEALTH.



The Cross-Bearer is also responsible for choosing the singers of **'Gospin plač' ('Our Lady's Lament')**, who may walk round with the Procession, or go between stops by car. Two singers chant the main part of the lament, with three or four singing the response. They carry candles in their hands, which are lit or unlit according to parish custom. Although the Procession is organized by the laity, and is outside the normal Catholic rites, it is customary for each parish priest (if possible) to see off and welcome back his parishioners at the beginning and end of the Procession.

Many people join in the Procession, usually following the generally accepted convention that the males go first, followed by the females. At the beginning, the atmosphere is solemn, a feeling heightened by the darkness of the night and the sonorous harmonies of the 'Gospin Plač' lament in the churches and the chants and prayers which are sung along the route. As each Procession nears its destination the mood lightens as the dawn turns into day, bringing happiness and relief coupled with an almost cathartic sensation. At the end of the all-night pilgrimage in each parish church there is a final recital of the lament, prayers and concluding hymn, after which it is customary for everyone present to congratulate the Cross-Bearer. When all is concluded, the Cross-Bearer and his entourage go for breakfast followed by a rest, in preparation for the normal Catholic Good Friday rituals later in the day.

Uniquely, the Jelsan Cross-Bearer's return to his home parish is dramatic, differing from all the others. After spending the whole night carrying one of the heaviest Crosses, he summons his last reserves of energy to sprint the thirty metres into Jelsa's main square, where the parish priest is waiting to greet and embrace him. The Cross-Bearer falls on to his knees to receive the priest's blessing, a touching scene which is always witnessed by a large crowd. When the Procession finally reaches the church, the parish choir puts on a concert of old Jelsan chants.



THE 'ZA KRIŽEN' PROCESSION IS AN EXCEPTIONALLY PIOUS EVENT, BOTH FOR THE 8 HOURS OR SO IT TAKES AND FOR ITS EXPRESSION OF THE PASSION.

WHY THE 'ZA KRIŽEN' PROCESSIONS CAME INTO BEING

I. THE MIRACULOUS EVENT WHICH PRECEDED THE PEOPLE'S PROCESSIONS

Veneration of the cross has a long tradition on Hvar and the 'Za Križen' Processions are linked to the Hvar Uprising and the miraculous event which took place back in 1510. **The Hvar Uprising** was a people's rebellion led by one Matij Ivanić against the nobility in an attempt to give ordinary people a share in the power of the Hvar Commune. The rebellion spread across the whole island and lasted for four years (1510-1514).

In the 16th century the commoners and the socially and politically privileged nobility were the two main social classes on the island. In some individual cases the differences between the two in terms of property and finance were negligible, but even rich commoners were unable to rise out of their lower social class to enter the ruling council. It was especially galling that the commoners' assembly had no control over the decisions of the noblemen's council. The social divide between the two groups was irreconcilable. Another cause for anger was the fact that the Venetian government used to impose its own noblemen as their rulers, which significantly undermined the autonomy of the Dalmatian Communes. So the commoners prepared themselves to fight for a share in the local power structure and decision-making processes.



10 The leaders of the commoners conspired to put an end to the oppression and humiliations they were being subjected to. Their plan was to kill off some of the Hvar noblemen. To seal their conspiratorial agreement, they knelt before a small wooden crucifix in the house of one Toma Bevilaqua. About three months after they forged their plan, on February 6th 1510, grey clouds came down over the rooftops, rain poured down and a fierce storm battered Hvar. At about 7 pm, there were three earth tremors, which brought down the roof of the church of the church of Our Lady of the Annunciation, which was under construction. About twenty metres from the church in Toma Bevilaqua's house, his daughter was about to take the washing out of its basket, when she noticed blood trickling down the wall from the little crucifix. In terror she called her mother to see, and the local house-painter was summoned, who confirmed that **it was real blood**. On the same evening the crucifix was transferred to Hvar Cathedral. The news of the happening spread rapidly around the island, causing fishermen to leave their boats, farmers to come out of the fields: the whole population, young and old, crowded into the church. During the following days many holy crosses arrived, brought in by a never-ending stream of people from across the whole island. The atmosphere was tense, because the miracle was seen as the portent of a great evil. Hvar Town was gripped by palpable fear that ruin was about to strike. Although the islanders believed that Heaven was angry with those who had committed to the conspiracy in front of the little cross, the plan was not abandoned. The commoners were well organized right across the island, and with the coming of spring the memory of the prior events gradually faded, opening the door to the long-awaited conflict. One can say that the incident with the little cross caused a delay but did not prevent the inevitable rebellion, which broke out in May 1510. **The commoners from the central area of the island went into battle under the leadership of Matij Ivanić from Vrbanj.** After four years the rebellion was crushed with much bloodshed, leaving the commoners' struggle for equality as an unfulfilled dream.

Tradition has it that it was in memory of this event that penitential processions began to take place across the island. In times long past, the processions happened before dawn on Good Friday, **visiting 'Jesus' grave'** in the neighbouring settlement. This is still the case in settlements outside the parishes included in the 'Za Križen' all-night Procession, which is said to have been extended into its current form about 200 years ago.

II. RECONCILIATION BETWEEN THE PARISHES

Neighbouring parishes during those troubled times were often in dispute and quarreling with each other. The desire to make peace between the parishes was another factor which may have contributed to the introduction of the processions.

III. VISITING 'GOD'S GRAVES'

11 A third theory holds that the 'Za Križen' processions came into being as a typical expression of Medieval piety: concentrated reflection on Christ's suffering and death could be best realised by visiting 'God's grave' ('Božji greb'), which is the place on the altar displaying Christ's tomb, first with his body visible, then empty following the miracle of the Resurrection at the end of Holy Week. For the all-night 'Za Križen' Procession, the chancel in front of the altar in each of the participating parish churches is lavishly decorated as a mark of veneration for Christ's grave. The decorations are removed immediately after the Procession ends to make way for the normal Good Friday rituals later in the day.



✿ LOCAL TRADITION HAS IT THAT IT BRINGS BAD LUCK IF ANY OF THE SIX PROCESSIONS MEET ALONG THE ROUTE, SO THEIR MOVEMENTS ARE CAREFULLY COORDINATED.



IN 1944 THE 'ZA KRIŽEN' PROCESSION TOOK PLACE IN EL SHATT IN EGYPT, BECAUSE MANY OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE HAD FLED THERE AS REFUGEES FROM THE NAZI OCCUPATION. THAT YEAR THE PROCESSION DID NOT TAKE PLACE ON THE ISLAND, BUT STILL THE TRADITION REMAINED UNBROKEN.



IN VRBANJ ONLY, EACH NEW PRIEST HAS THE RIGHT TO BE THE CROSS-BEARER, IF HE SO WISHES.

THE HVAR PROCESSION 'VISITING GOD'S GRAVES'

Hvar Town is the only other place on the island besides the six settlements in the 'Za Križen' Procession to have preserved the tradition of '**visiting God's graves**'. Some say that this Hvar procession, which lasts about an hour and a half, was the original influence for the 'Za Križen' procession in the central part of the island, with the concept expanding later to include more churches depicting 'God's grave', and therefore extending into an all-night pilgrimage.

The Hvar procession starts at 3 pm on Good Friday afternoon, in honour of the time when Jesus is said to have died. It is organized exclusively by the laity. Up until it was stopped in the early 1950s, the procession was organized in two separate parts on Maundy Thursday and Good Friday by the two Hvar confraternities of St. Nicholas and the Holy Cross. Historical records show that in past times when the procession was in two parts, more churches were visited, which are now disused or have disappeared. When the procession resumed in 1990, it was organized as a single event on Good Friday afternoon. **Starting from St. Stephen's Cathedral, the procession goes first to the Church of the Holy Spirit, then on to the Benedictine Convent, the Franciscan Monastery and up the steps to the Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation in Burak, before returning to the Cathedral.** In each church there is a decorated depiction of Jesus' grave, complete with a cross formed from unripe wheat, similar to those of the all-night procession. In the centre of the procession one of the brotherhood carries a simple wooden cross on his back; he is barefoot or in woollen socks, and dressed in his confraternity robe with his head fully hidden under his hood, so that his identity is kept secret (like the Cross-Bearer who leads the Theophoric procession in Sućuraj at the other end of the island).

THE 'PEOPLE'S PROCESSION' IN VELO GRABLJE

Marija Jurić from Grablje recalls: "On Good Friday at 6 o'clock in the morning the procession would set out from the parish church across the village to St. Vitus's Church. There we would recite five 'Our Fathers' and sing 'Smiluj se meni Bože' ('Have mercy on me, Lord'). From St. Vitus's church the procession went on to the church of St. Anthony repeating the five 'Our Fathers' and the hymn 'Smiluj se meni Bože' and doing the same when we returned to the parish church. Along the whole route, we would pray the Rosary and Litanies and the Golden Rosary of the Sacred Heart of Jesus; we sang 'Ja se kajem Bože mili' ('Dear God, I repent'), 'Isuse ufanje naše' ('Oh Jesus, our hope') and 'Prosti moj Bože' ('Forgive me, my God'). In those days, the reading of the Passion, kissing the Cross and all the prayers which are now in the evening of Good Friday used to take place after this early-morning procession"[which has not been held since the early 1960s].

14 **THE 'ZA KRIŽEN' PROCESSION IN SVETA NEDJELJA**

This 'people's procession' was transferred from Svirče, the inland village whose inhabitants were the settlers who founded today's Sveta Nedjelja village on the south side of Hvar. The procession takes place early on Good Friday morning, setting off from the parish Church of St. Spyridon at about 4am, heading uphill to the cave with the remains of the former Augustinian church; from there the procession moves on to the settlement of Jagodna before heading back to the Sveta Nedjelja parish church.

THE 'ZA KRIŽEN' PROCESSION FROM DOL TO STARI GRAD

Like other 'people's processions', the Dol procession sets off early on Good Friday morning, in this case between 3am and 4am at the latest. Uniquely, apart from the main cross carried by the chosen Cross-Bearer, four other crucifixes are carried behind the leader in line, in strict formation, and none is covered by the black veil common to the other 'Za križen' processions. In Dol the custom of the 'crux vellata' ('veiled cross') was abandoned after the Second Vatican Council. Up to the 1950s, the Cross-Bearers were chosen by drawing lots in the church yard on Palm Sunday, but after that the custom of signing up for the honour was introduced, as in all the other parishes nowadays.

The procession sets off from the parish church of St. Michael (Sv. Mihovil), heading along often narrow and steep paths to the other churches in their extended village, then on down to Stari Grad, going from the churches of St. Nicholas (Sv. Nikola), St. Peter (Sv. Petar), St. Rocco (Sv. Rok) to the main church of St. Stephen (Sv. Stjepan). From there the procession goes on out of Stari Grad to the churches of St. Jelena and St. Anne on the way back to completing the circular route at St. Michael's Church.

In former times, the citizens of Stari Grad used to go to Dol in a 'people's procession', but this custom, died out many years ago, some say at the time of a cholera epidemic.

THE 'ZA KRIŽEN' PROCESSIONS IN ZASTRAŽIŠĆE AND POLJICA

In principle, the Holy Week 'Za Križen' processions in Zastrazišće and Poljica are paired. However, they are divided into two parts: in the evening of Maundy Thursday, the processions operate separately. Starting at about 5pm after the church liturgy, each so-called 'little' procession sets off from the parish church to visit the chapels and shrines around their own village. As darkness falls, fires are lit along the route back to the home church, creating a beautiful mystical glow around the pilgrims.

Then at about 6am on Good Friday morning, the so-called 'big' processions start out on the circular route which will take them into the neighbouring village and down to the sea shore at Vela Stiniva. The route is planned in a clockwise direction so that the two processions never meet. **The Zastrazišće procession** sets off from the parish church of St. Nicholas, heading along the road towards Poljica, while the people of Poljica go



THE CROSS-BEARER WALKS BAREFOOT OR IN SOCKS ACCORDING TO HIS CHOICE; HE WALKS THE ROUTE, KNEELS DOWN IN THE CHURCHES, BUT NEVER SITS DOWN DURING THE PROCESSION.





from the parish church of St. John the Baptist down towards the sea shore. When each procession arrives in Vela Stiniva, the Cross-Bearer dips the handle of the cross in the sea: the people of Zastrazišće dedicate this symbolic act as homage to all the people of Zastrazišće who are living far away from their home village; for the people of Poljica it is a blessing for their fishermen. Refreshments may be provided at Vela Stiniva or elsewhere along the route, if the Cross-Bearer so chooses. When each procession has returned to their parish church, they will have completed a route of some 13 kilometres.

Timing in line with daylight is the reason why these processions are in two parts: the path down to Vela Stiniva is very steep, narrow, and covered in pine needles, making it too dangerous for the walkers once night falls.

THE 'ZA KRIŽEN' PROCESSIONS IN GDINJ AND BOGOMOLJE

These are also paired processions, but with one unique feature: for some 40 years, it has been customary for women to carry the cross, as there were not enough men left in the settlements to fulfil the task year on year. The processions start in the early morning of Good Friday, with the circular route covering some five kilometres. From Bogomolje the procession sets off from the parish Church of Our Lady of the Annunciation, turns to pass through the Bonkovići village between Gdinj and Bogomolje, and then on to Gdinj. From the Gdinj parish Church of St. George the Martyr the route heads more directly towards Bogomolje, so that the two processions do not meet. The local parish priest in each village sees off and welcomes the processions as they leave and arrive.

THE MARCH FRIDAYS (MARAČKI PETCI)

While in standard Croatian the word for the month of March is 'ožujak', in Hvar dialect it is 'marač'. The tradition of **celebrating 'March Fridays' in the run-up to Holy Week dates**, so far as we know, from the 17th century. The liturgy of the Passion was divided into five more or less equal parts, with one section being recited each Friday. This tradition was not particular to Hvar, but developed across the whole of Dalmatia. Nowadays on Hvar **it is only continued in Vrboska**, possibly because it ties in with the veneration of Vrboska's miraculous little crucifix, which is usually celebrated on the first Friday in March.

THE HOLY LITTLE CRUCIFIX IN VRBOSKA

The miraculous little cross in Vrboska is said to have wept tears of blood on April 11th 1614, when it was hanging on a wall in the house of one Petar Ordinanović. This happened when a fierce quarrel was raging between two confraternities over the plan for Vrboska to separate from the Vrbanj parish to become a parish in its own right. The happening was interpreted as a sign from God that the conflicting sides should make peace and repent.



✿ IN HVAR TOWN AT THE END OF THE 40-HOUR EUCHARISTIC ADORATION ON PALM SUNDAY, HOLY MONDAY AND HOLY TUESDAY, A PENITENTIAL PSALM IS SUNG BY A TWO-VOICE MALE CHOIR WITH ORGAN. THE PSALM WAS ARRANGED AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 19TH CENTURY BY HVAR COMPOSER JOSIP RAFFAELLI, AND ITS RICH VIRTUOSO SOLO AND CHORAL SECTIONS ATTRACT LARGE NUMBERS OF LISTENERS.



THE GOOD FRIDAY THEOPHORIC PROCESSIONS

On Good Friday evening after the liturgical rituals inside the parish churches, the Holy Eucharist is carried in ceremonial procession under a baldaquin around the parishes across the whole of Hvar Island.

The Holy Sacrament is accompanied by the members of the local confraternity in their robes with their Cross-Bearer. This is a rich symbolic tradition representing the Passion, enhanced by the sonorous Passion chants, especially the haunting 'Puče moj' ('Oh my people').

The Theophoric processions in Hvar Town and Stari Grad are particularly impressive as they unfold after dark on Good Friday evening. Between the resonant chants, the light of the lanterns and candles and the flowing confraternity robes, the atmosphere is deeply moving and mystical. In Hvar the procession starts from the Cathedral of St. Stephen I, Pope and Martyr, to make its way round the large stone square to the harbour before turning back towards the cathedral. In Stari Grad the procession starts from the main Church, also dedicated to St. Stephen, but, unlike the Hvar procession, it then proceeds round the whole town. The echo of the chants across the harbour as the procession passes along the waterfront is uniquely memorable.

Velo Grablje now has very few inhabitants, but despite dwindling numbers the Good Friday Theophoric tradition has survived as best it can. These are the happy memories of Marija Jurić from Grablje: "Psalms were sung and there were readings, when the procession set off for St. Anthony's Church it was already dark. It was a joyful procession. At the front a youngster would carry a small cross, with children following behind and this was called **the School Crucifix**; behind them came the large cross and two lantern-bearers, followed by young and older men; then came a robe-clad Cross-Bearer carrying the cross which was used for the Stations of the Cross in the church, with members of the brotherhood behind him; next there were the singers, 6 large candles and two altar-boys with censers; following them was the baldaquin flanked by 4 lanterns, with **the priest**

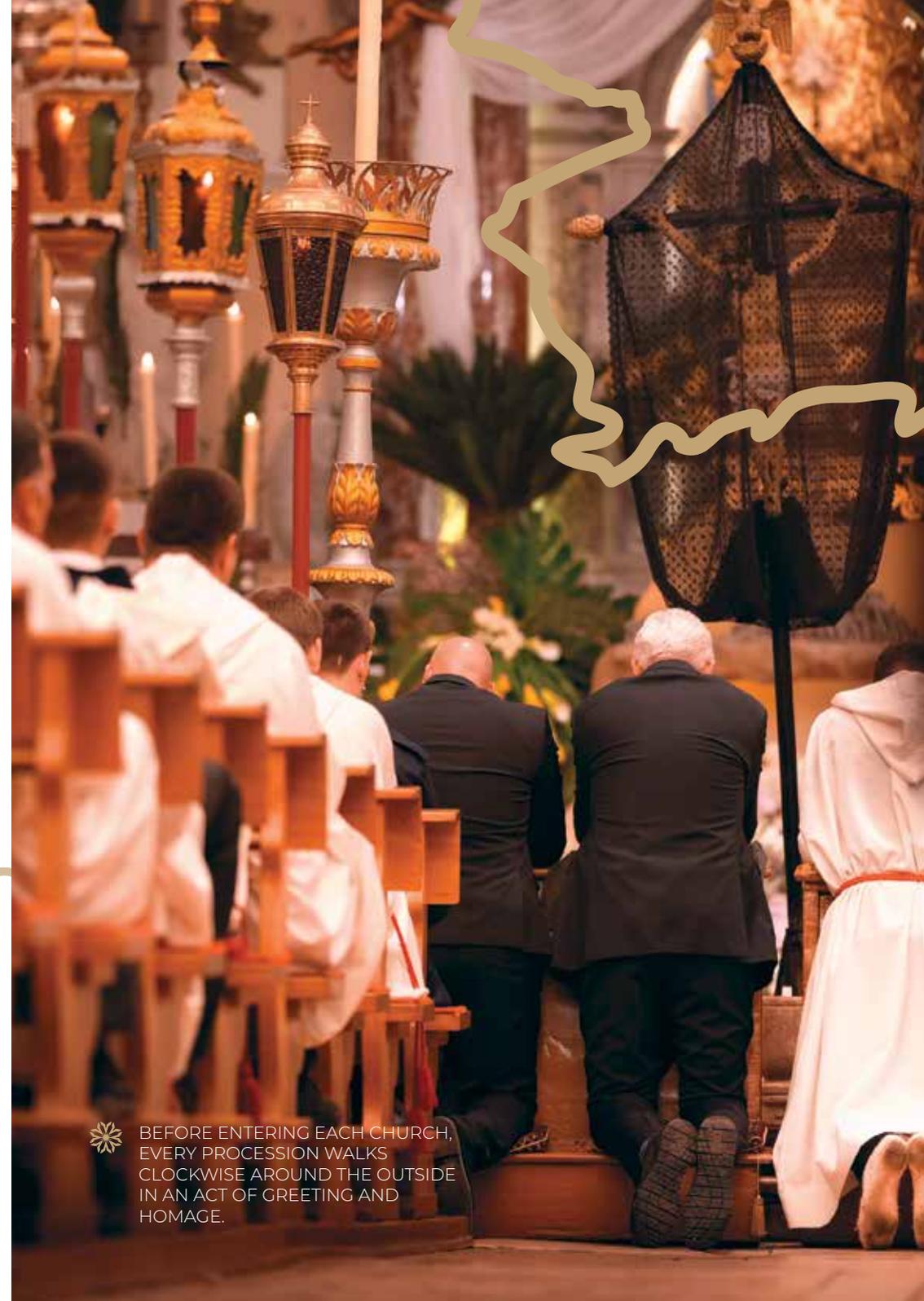


THE CROSSES WEIGH BETWEEN 10 AND 20 KG, THE WAY OF THE CROSS EXTENDS OVER SOME 25 KM; THE WALK TAKES THE WHOLE NIGHT, STOPPING AT EACH PARISH CHURCH AND SOME CHAPELS IN BETWEEN, ENDING AT ABOUT 7AM ON GOOD FRIDAY MORNING.

in the centre displaying the Holy Sacrament, another 6 large candles, and an altar-boy with a lantern close to the priest under the baldaquin; behind the candle-bearers a young girl carried the standard of the Sacred Heart, followed by the women and girls. When electricity came [in 1960] it was much nicer because there were lights outside and in the windows of the houses. Before there was electricity, some light would be created by burning ashes and paraffin. One year when there were more cars in the village they were arranged so that their headlights lit the whole village. The priest gave his blessing at the Church of St. Anthony and the village was so beautiful on our return, it's a sight I'll never forget.

[Unlike other processions in the village] This procession and the one on All-Saints was never banned, although a request had to be made for permission to hold it. When the bells are silent from Maundy Thursday to Easter, the sacristan walks around with the rattle so that all the residents hear him announcing the happenings in **the parish church of Saints Cosmas and Damian**, from the first to the fourth. There were quite a lot of people in the village at that time, and many good singers."

In Sućuraj, uniquely on Hvar, **the Theophoric procession** on Good Friday evening is led by a Cross-Bearer carrying a wooden cross on his back. He wears a black robe and a balaclava, so only his eyes are visible. His identity is kept secret. After him follow others bearing the church's other crucifixes, leading **the parish priest under the baldaquin holding the monstrance with the host**, flanked by lantern-bearers on either side. The congregation follow, and the procession makes its way from the parish Church of St. George around the harbour, singing solemn chants and reciting prayers. The procession stops three times before returning to the parish church. At each stop the priest gives a blessing, marked by the sounding of a rattle.



BEFORE ENTERING EACH CHURCH,
EVERY PROCESSION WALKS
CLOCKWISE AROUND THE OUTSIDE
IN AN ACT OF GREETING AND
HOMAGE.

22 **MUSIC AND THE PEOPLE'S PROCESSIONS**

The processions are visually impressive, and the haunting singing which accompanies them completes a profound spiritual experience for participants and observers who join in having prepared themselves in a pious frame of mind.

Each settlement has its own versions of the chants which are sung during their 'Za Križen' processions. Prayers are usually sung by the people following the cross along the route, while the leaders around each Cross-Bearer sing supplications in ancient harmonies. In the all-night Procession, for each stop there are different chants when approaching and leaving the churches. **Inside the churches the central focus is the singing of the 'Gospin Plač'** ('Our Lady's Lament'). This is divided into three parts, the first and last sung by two lead tenors, with the response in between by three or four. The tradition of 'Our Lady's Lament', in the original Latin the 'Stabat Mater', is said to date back to the end of the 13th and beginning of the 14th centuries, based on a poetic text by Jacopone da Todi (1233-1306). In the Hvar version only a few words at a time are sung in each part of the lament: they are drawn out into a prolonged stream, with a pause for breath in between the lines. The singers coordinate to create an almost palpable vibration during the chant, which gives the effect of a female wailing over the top of their deep male voices. The correct breathing technique is essential to producing the phenomenon. **Traditionally, sons of the singers learn the technique from puberty, as soon as their voices break, so that later on they can be chosen for the honour of singing this essential part of the procession rituals.**

All the most important chants during the Holy Week events are sung by males producing sonorous and resonant harmonies. In the Theophoric processions, a key part is the singing of 'Puče moj' ('Oh my People'). The 'Muke Gospodina' ('Passion of Christ') is sung several times during the week: in the churches members of the choir take on the parts of the various people involved in the unfolding of the events.

✿ 'BARABON' IS A RITUAL ON HOLY WEDNESDAY, AT THE END OF WHICH THE CONGREGATION BEATS THE PEWS WITH FLEXIBLE WOODEN SWITCHES TO RECALL CHRIST'S FLAGELLATION.



✿ IN JELSA THE ARRIVAL OF THE CROSS ON GOOD FRIDAY MORNING IS ESPECIALLY MOVING. AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MAIN SQUARE, WHERE THERE IS A MEMORIAL TO THE PROCESSION CARVED INTO THE PAVING, THE CROSS-BEARER BREAKS INTO A RUN TO REACH THE PARISH PRIEST WHO IS WAITING TO GREET HIM AT THE OTHER END OF THE SQUARE.

Everyone is of course welcome to take part in any of the processions, to share in the profound spiritual experience. Although the all-night procession has been popularized because of its uniqueness, it is not to be treated as a tourist spectacle. Visitors can choose which procession to join, of all those on the island.

Those wanting to take part in the all-night central Procession need to decide which of the six settlements to start from: you can walk the whole way, or just part. Another option is to remain in one of the churches to see the successive visiting processions and appreciate the variations in their music.

For those intending to take part in the all-night Procession, we have prepared an online map: <https://www.plotaroute.com/route/1839847>.

If you cannot attend in person, you can still follow the Procession during the night of Maundy Thursday and Good Friday on our live webcam: https://www.livecamcroatia.com/hr/lokacija/jelsa-hvar?scrollTo=tabs_list

During Holy Week a limited number of hotels, apartments and campsites are open, so it is advisable to book accommodation well in advance. Hvar can be reached from the mainland by catamaran (weather permitting) and ferry: timetables are available in English on the Jadrolinija website www.jadrolinija.hr (catamaran and ferries), or the Krilo website: <https://krilo.hr/en/sailing-schedule/> (catamaran only).

Physical preparation: make sure you are fit enough for a long walk; choose comfortable shoes for walking, including on rough ground; dress appropriately, with extra layers in case of rain; carry plain drinking water - we do not recommend fizzy drinks, energy drinks or alcohol; carry some food provisions if you think you will need sustenance.

Respect the occasion: it is generally customary, where possible, for the procession to advance in two orderly lines, with men in front and women taking up the rear. Apart from singing or reciting prayers, the processions should proceed in silence.

Respect the environment: please keep any rubbish with you until you can discard it in the bins provided. There are toilets beside the churches along the route, although you may have to ask those supervising inside the church for access.

CONCLUSION

Through the combination of physical effort and piety the processions offer all participants **a unique experience of sacrifice, penitence, acceptance, forgiveness and ultimate happiness** for those who approach them in the right state of physical and mental preparedness. Hvar has preserved the traditions of pious processions over many centuries, and they are as powerful today as they were at the start.

To finish, a little saying from Hvar Island:
'Here no-one asks "when's Easter?", but "when's the Procession?!"'

For all further information, we are at your service, so feel free to contact the Hvar Island Tourist Board offices.

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

- Palm Sunday -

09:00 am | Jelsa: Blessing of the olive branches, Holy Mass

10:00 am | Hvar: blessing of the 'palms' and start of the 40-hour adoration of the Holy Sacrament

10:00 am | Vrboska: Holy Mass

10:30 am | Stari Grad: Holy Mass

11:15 am | Jelsa: Start of the 40-hour adoration of the Holy Sacrament

6:00 pm | Jelsa: Mass with sermon, end of the 40-hour adoration

08:00 pm | Stari Grad: Start of the 40-hour adoration of the Holy Sacrament

- Monday -

07:00 am | Jelsa: Holy Mass and continuation of the adoration

07:00 am | Hvar: Holy Mass and exposition of the Holy Sacrament

08:30 am | Stari Grad: Holy Mass

06:30 pm | Jelsa: Mass with sermon, end of the 40-hour adoration

08:00 pm | Hvar: Erubescant and sermon

- Tuesday -

07:00 am | Jelsa: Holy Mass and continuation of the adoration

07:00 am | Hvar: Holy Mass and exposition of the Holy Sacrament

08:30 am | Stari Grad: Holy Mass

06:30 pm | Jelsa: Holy Mass, procession, conclusion of the adoration

08:00 pm | Hvar: Erubescant and sermon

- Wednesday -

06:00 am | Hvar: Mass, exposition of the Holy Sacrament for adoration

10:30 am | Hvar: Eucharistic Procession, end of the 40-hour adoration

11:00 am | Hvar: Holy Chrism Mass

06:30 pm | Jelsa: Holy Mass "Barabon"

07:00 pm | Hvar: Penitential liturgy and 'Barabon'

- Maundy Thursday -

03:00 pm | Jelsa: Afternoon Procession, 'For Our Lady in Mourning'

05:30 pm | Vrboska: Holy Mass

06:00 pm | Jelsa: Mass 'in coena Domini'; Washing of the Feet

07:00 pm | Stari Grad: Mass 'in coena Domini'

07:00 pm | Hvar: Mass 'in coena Domini'

10:00 pm | UNESCO 'Za križen' Procession: Departure of the Cross (Jelsa, Pitve, Vrsinik, Svirče, Vrbanj and Vrboska)

- Good Friday -

06:00 am | Procession: Dol – Stari Grad – Dol

06:00 am | Procession: Sv. Nedjelja –Špilja / Cave – Jagodna – Sv. Nedjelja

06:00 am | Processions: Zastrazišće – Poljica – V. Stiniva – Zastrazišće and Poljica - Zastrazišće - Vela Stiniva - Poljica

06:00 am | Processions: Bogomolje – Gdinj - Bogomolje and Gdinj - Bogomolje - Gdinj

06:45 am | UNESCO 'Za križen' Procession: Arrival of the Jelsa Procession on the main square (Pjaca)

03:00 pm | Hvar: Procession, Visiting God's Graves'

06:00 pm | Jelsa: Ritual of the Lord's Passion, Procession around Jelsa

07:00 pm | Hvar: Rituals of the Passion and Death of the Lord

08:00 pm | Stari Grad: Holy Mass and Procession

08:00 pm | Procession in Sućuraj

08:30 pm | Hvar: Holy Mass and Procession

09:00 pm | Jelsa: Easter Vigil

- Holy Saturday -

07:00 pm | Hvar: Easter Vigil

09:00 pm | Jelsa: Easter Vigil

10:00 pm | Stari Grad: Mass, Easter Vigil

- Easter Sunday -

10:00 am | Jelsa: Holy Mass

10:00 am | Hvar: Holy Mass

10:30 am | Stari Grad: Holy Mass

11:00 am | Hvar: Holy Mass

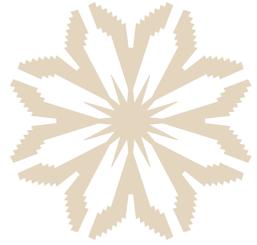
06:00 pm | Jelsa: Holy Mass

07:00 pm | Hvar: Holy Mass

- Easter Monday -

10:00 am | Jelsa: Holy Mass and Procession 'For Our Lady Rejoicing'

10:30 am | Stari Grad: Holy Mass



Vrboska



Vrbanj



Svirče



Jelsa



Vrisnik



Pitve



HVAR ISLAND

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WWW.VISITJELSA.HR

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