

Project co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund From crisis
to new opportunities
for the future
of the tourism industry

7 March 2022



Tanja Polegubic

Designing Destinations for Digital Nomads: Sustainable Growth & Co-Creation Strategies

Organised by





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Partners

















2020...2021...2022...

venywhere work from venice



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Our mission is to become the glue between remote workers and the city of Venice, offering the best experience possible in a totally sustainable way and in line with the Venetian ecosystem



ENRICH THE CITY OF VENICE WITH NEW AND **BRIGHT TALENTS**



INTEGRATE REMOTE WORKERS WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



CONTRIBUTE TRANSFORMING VENICE INTO A CITY OF CONTEMPORARY WORK



2020...2021...2022...

BEHIND THE SCENES



CONTEXT: CROATIA & DIGITAL NOMADS CASE STUDIES: DUBROVNIK, ZAGREB & MORE

DEFINING SUSTAINABILITY for TOURISM



planet

protect & restore natural environment, conserve natural wonders and cultures enjoyed today and by future generations

profit

a profitable industry

employment opportunities, economic benefits for communities

people

improve the tourism experience - travellers quality of life - citizens



2020...2021...2022...





Croatia's Digital Nomad Visa: Everything You Need To Know

2020: DN VISA announced 2nd in Europe; 7th in World.











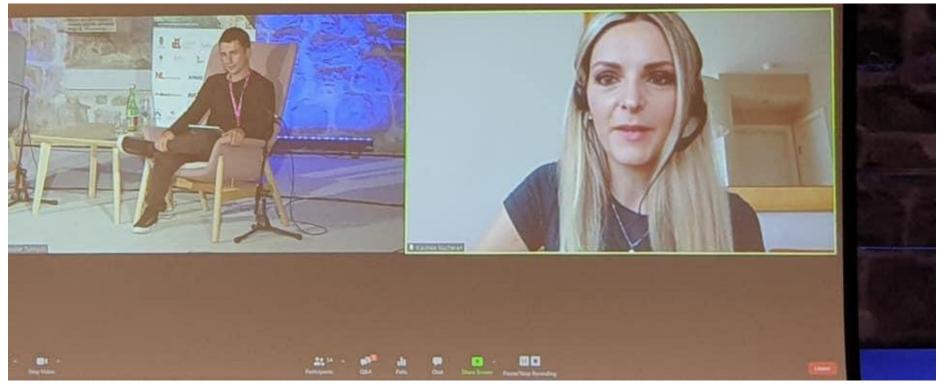












CASE STUDY 1

2020 DUBROVNIK DIGITAL NOMAD CONFERENCE



The pandemic saw Dubrovnik's tourism numbers drop by 90%.

It needed to reinvent itself, and build in new mechanisms to reach a new audience - in this case, digital nomads or 'slowmads'; a more sustainable visitor.

Croatia's first Digital Nomad conference, *Dubrovnik for Digital Nomads*, was the start of our uplifting journey with the city. We got national media coverage, new champions for Croatia and a mention in *The Washington Post!*

It was our breakthrough event - even in the middle of Covid.

FEATURED BY:





FORMATION OF DNA CROATIA

CO-FOUNDER DIGITAL NOMAD ASSOCIATION (DNA) CROATIA

We have over 4,000 members on our LinkedIn group (and counting).



SPONSORS:







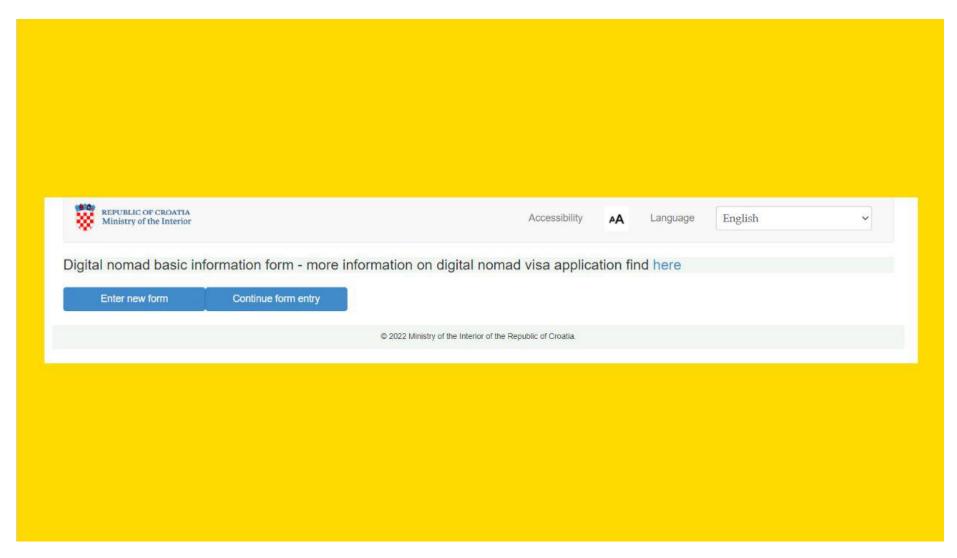




Our 5 priorities

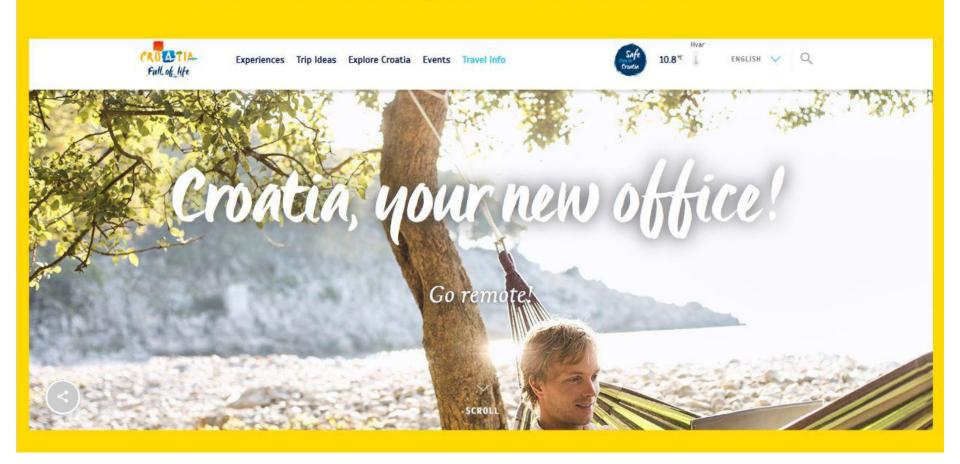
- Community
- Information
- Representation
- Education
- Certification







CROATIA WELCOMES DNS





2021 IN NUMBERS

403 Applications 206 Approved Biggest interest from: USA, UK, Russia (MUP Statistics, 01.01.22.)

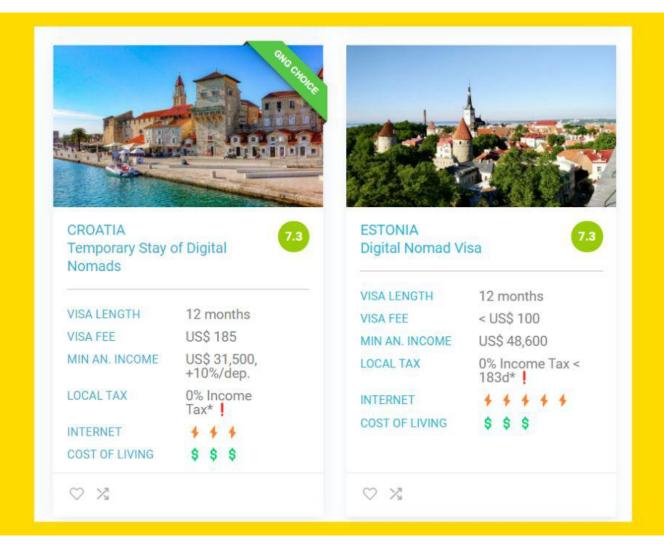
Average visits monthly -Nomadlist.com Zagreb - 550 Split - 934 Dubrovnik - 317 Zadar - 150

Digital Nomads Croatia Facebook - 8.6k DNA Croatia LinkedIn - 4.2k

EVENTS & NEWS

DNIR - Dubrovnik DN Week + Ambassadors - Zagreb DN Conference - Opatija DN Valley Launch - Zadar DN Valley Hikes + More - Zadar DN Meetups - Zagreb DN Jolly Wrap up - Zagreb Locals'n'nomads, Nomad Table, UNWIRED, EFW - Split DNA Croatia @ Rijeka, Pula, Zagreb, Split, Zadar, Osijek, Bjelovar and many more...







A SURVEY BY NOMADLIST

W Most liked countries Rating Country # JP Japan 4.9 4.85 HR Croatia RS Serbia 3 4.8



Workmotion researched The Cities Best Facilitating Remote Work

Zagreb is 8th in the world

		REMOTE WORKING COMPLIANCE		COST OF LIVING		ì	CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE				LIVEABILITY									
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8	Zagreb	Croatia	60.50	73.60	Digital nomad visa	59.09	91.84	97.84	88.43	75.40	86.60	94.35	92.80	96.89	90.55	80.19	72.35	62.82	99.05	89.17



A LITTLE BIT MORE FROM NOMADLIST

Croatia has 3 destinations receiving kudos (Portugal only has 2, but Thailand has 6)

Top remote work hubs by visits in 2021

			5-Year growth 2016 to 2020	2021 growth Based on 12mo of data + (!) COVID	2020 growth (!) COVID	2019 growth	2018 growth	2017 growth	2016 growth	NL rank	All green (except 2020 COVID)
#52	Zagreb	Croatia	+109%	+39%	+7%	+14%	+3%	+30%	+42%	#38	2
#61	Split	Croatia	+26%	+85%	-40%	+5%	+19%	+6%	+96%	#117	

Most consistently growing remote work hubs

#9 Zadar Croatia	+129% +50%	-47% +27%	+25% +33%	+200% #162
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CITY ANALYSIS



Place	Coworking	Events	Local community	Public buy- in	Promotion
Split	Good	Excellent	Excellent	Growing	Good
Zagreb	Excellent	Excellent	Great	Great	Excellent
Dubrovnik	Growing	Growing	Growing	Excellent	Excellent
Zadar	Growing	Good	Good	Growing	Growing
Osijek	Growing	Growing	Excellent	Excellent	Growing
Rijeka	Growing	Growing	Growing	Growing	Growing
Pula	Growing	Growing	Growing	Good	Growing

COLLABORATION, KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE & SUPPORT







Associazione Italiana Nomadi Digitali



TIMELINE

Coworking spaces

Since 2017, I've opened up 4 coworking spaces. One (the year-round one) had to move a few times due to ... unsupportive landlords. Sigh.

Then - we got selected to be in the Chamber of Commerce's Women's Incubator. We now do seasonal spaces in Winter and Summer.

Panel Speaker

Invited to speak at events for the Croatian diaspora, women in the Ionian Adria Region, Start Up Europe Regatta, Australian-New Zealand Croatian Women's Leadership forum.. And a few digital nomad events.



in Biograd. The start of more sustainable

projects...

DESIGN THINKING CHALLENGE

2021 DIGITAL NOMADS-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM





A global competition.

Design Thinking Workshops.

A co-created strategy and roadmap for the city of Dubrovnik to implement and build a sustainable future - all with the help of 10 digital nomads, and their +1s, one dog and one cat.

Featured in:

Fast Company Cities Today Skift

One of the most fun projects. Ever.

FEATURED BY:









DUBROVNIK

DIGITAL NOMADS-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM 23 APRIL - 23 MAY 2021

Case Study

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Prepared by Tanja Polegubic



DUBROVNIK

DIGITAL NOMADS-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM 23 APRIL - 23 MAY 2021

How Dubrovnik co-created a strategy to attract digital nomads year-round.

Dubrovnik now has a roadmap for success

The City of Dubrovnik and Dubrovnik Tourist Board were looking to continue their work from 2020 to position the city as a destination for digital nomads. Through the Dubrovnik Digital Nomads-in-Residence (DN-I-R) program, they invited remote professionals to shape a strategy for a year-round offer using design thinking workshops.

Using a 'lived experience' model, the selected digital nomads lived in Dubrovnik for a month and explored the region. They co-created an informed and actionable roadmap with the local community.

The program gained global attention in policy, travel and business publications. As a result, Dubrovnik is becoming a growing hub with new coworking spaces, services and over 1,000 digital nomads in 2021.

https://saltwaternomads.com/events/dubrovnik-digital-nomads-in-residence/

INTRODUCTION

Dubrovnik has been famous for many things; a hub for digital nomads had not been one of them.

The Covid19 pandemic has impacted many aspects of business and life. This case study of the Dubrovnik *Digital Nomads-in-Residence* program looks at the multi-stage approach Dubrovnik is taking to address three key factors arising from the pandemic:

- 1. Measures to safeguard against Dubrovnik's drastic drop in tourism in 2020.
- 2. Global lockdowns resulting in millions able to work from home or, anywhere.
- 3. The largest rise in history of vacation rentals for stays of over 28 days.

FIRST MOVERS IN CROATIA

The first step the City and Tourist Board of Dubrovnik took to attract remote professionals was in October 2020, holding the *Dubrovnik for Digital Nomads*¹ conference. It gained international attention and built on the momentum of Croatia becoming one of the first countries in the world with a 'digital nomad visa' ².

This case study covers the next initiative taken by Dubrovnik; a co-creation model to deliver the world's first *Digital Nomads-in-Residence (DN-I-R)* program, held 23 April to 23 May 2021. It was delivered in partnership with the Saltwater program team, media partner Total Croatia News, local residents and a select group of digital nomads, the DN-I-Rs.

"After only one workshop, I see how I need to adjust my tourism product to this audience..."

-Vesna Celebic, tour guide and DN-I-R workshop participant

IMAGE: Vesna Celebić

¹ The Dubrovnik for Digital Nomads conference was Croatia's first such conference, and was held 16-17 October 2020.

² Croatia's Digital Nomad Permit (referred to as a visa) grants a one year stay for eligible third country nationals.

SOLUTION

The City and Tourist Board of Dubrovnik engaged the 2020 conference team, Saltwater Nomads³ and Total Croatia News⁴ (TCN), to design and promote the Dubrovnik Digital Nomads-in-Residence (DN-I-R) program.

Concept

The DN-I-R program was inspired by other residencies; i.e. bringing together international experts to a new location to reflect, research and produce work.

Competition

A global competition was launched in February 2021, attracting over 100 highly skilled applicants⁵. The prize included a free one month stay in Dubrovnik and local experiences in exchange for input into a strategy for the city.

First-Hand, 'Lived' Experiences

The DN-I-Rs stayed in a variety of locations, from private apartments, hotels, to a new facility tested as a coliving option. Neighbouring tourist boards and parks hosted a range of tours for the DN-I-Rs during the four week program.

Design Thinking Workshops

The Saltwater program team, design thinking experts and a placemaking strategist, designed workshops attended by DN-I-Rs, the City, Tourist Board and local community representatives. Design thinking activities were used to research, ideate, prototype and evaluate solutions for the city.

Finale Presentation and Roadmap

The DN-I-R program culminated in a presentation to stakeholders of a long term roadmap based on the co-created findings for shaping Dubrovnik into a *Digital Nomad Friendly* city, with media and panelists invited to speak.



"Cities are reinventing
themselves post-pandemic,
elevating new priorities for
residents and visitors:
wellbeing (physical and
mental), human
connection and
hyperlocalism."

- Jenni Carbins, MARK London -Placemaking Strategists

³ Saltwater specialise in services for remote professionals, working with cities and companies to deliver projects and curated events as mechanisms to meet co-created strategic objectives.

⁴ TCN is the most read English language news resource about Croatia, and has pioneered raising awareness about digital nomads in Croatia. TCN and its founder Paul Bradbury are cited as inspiring a champion of digital nomads in Croatia, Jan de Jong - author of a successful open letter to the government to introduce a digital nomad permit. ⁵ 115 applications were received, a positive result given travel bans, even in key markets (i.e. UK, Australia, New Zealand).

CHALLENGE

Dubrovnik gained global attention in 2020 for leading with its efforts to host digital nomads. With Croatia positioned to attract more remote professionals than ever, Dubrovnik needed to continue the momentum. The challenge was to find a way to identify and address the key weaknesses related to attracting a digital nomad audience. There were several known barriers already, including:

• Promotion: A Reputation for Over-Tourism

Dubrovnik's popularity in peak season has led to overcrowding and higher prices. The city has implemented several initiatives to address this. It needed to extend, and where possible incorporate, measures to share the broader story of a welcoming, viable and livable city.

Suitability: Accommodation, Amenities and Activities

Digital nomads combine travel with working, and though they may vary, have a set of expectations for accommodation, amenities and activities. An analysis by subject matter experts was required, in consultation with locals and decision makers, to assess the suitability of the current offer, and arrive at ways which could improve the offer to attract digital nomads in a sustainable manner.

• Engagement: Community and Local Awareness

Dubrovnik did not have an established or cohesive digital nomad community. Local engagement and awareness also needed addressing through education and community buy-in.



"A nice place to visit, but only for a few days..."

- NomadList User Forum comment on Dubrovnik as a destination (2017)

KEY LEARNINGS

- Key recommendations from the residency and program team:
 - o Co-creation in reaching recommendations is the key to success.
 - Building and supporting a digital nomad community is vital.
 - Local institution support and city infrastructure is required.
 - Continue to build partnerships and offer innovative, ongoing programs to position Dubrovnik as a digital nomad destination.
 - The strategy to best deliver the recommendations in the roadmap is an ongoing cycle: 'attract, accommodate and amaze' digital nomads. Then, ensure they 'amplify' their experience by sharing content to reach a new audience; creating a sustainable model.
- The competition delivered many insights.
 - More than a third of applicants to the DN-I-R program came from one age range and geographic location.
 - Six of the selected DN-I-Rs were joined by their partners, bringing extra expertise and insights.
 - Some DN-I-Rs and locals expected the winners would be social media 'influencers'; a negative connotation and misconception. The selection of 'regular' people built credibility and trust.
- Local Engagement, Expertise and Nomad Community Ambassadors
 Over 40 stakeholders participated in the program, with more locals
 involved than digital nomads. Along with the insights into the roadmap,
 the DN-I-Rs can continue their input and even engage in other projects,
 such as Dubrovnik's Respect The City initiative. The selected digital
 nomads serve as ambassadors of the program and the city's efforts.



Workshop
Participation
Numbers:

19: city, tourist board and local community members

16: digital nomads-in-residence and their partners

6: program team members

PROGRAM RESULTS

Rise in Interest and Number of Digital Nomads in Dubrovnik
 Dubrovnik welcomed a record number of digital nomads since the DN-I-R, with over 2,000 recorded by NomadList and other forums.

• Raising of Local Awareness and Education

The first project of its kind to directly engage and facilitate an exchange between locals and digital nomads, resulting in broader awareness and understanding of this audience within a four week period. On a wider level, Dubrovnik's leading efforts have contributed to 'digital nomad' entering the local vernacular.

• A Roadmap with Phased Implementation

In an intensive four week period, over 40 people co-created a long term roadmap for Dubrovnik to shape itself into a digital nomad friendly city.

Participants identified:

- "Quick wins" i.e. immediate changes at low or no cost (by end 2021)
- Mid term plans (2022-2025)
- o Long term plans (2026-2030).

The findings in the roadmap were presented to the city and accepted. These were then presented to the public and a series of panel discussions were held on the themes of regenerative tourism, the role of business and specific digital nomad groups.

Several initiatives are already being implemented and the city is already planning its next steps to further propel the momentum created.



Half the DN-I-Rs
had been to
Dubrovnik before,
albeit for a few days.

At the end of the DN-I-R program, the feedback was clear: "30 days wasn't enough".

PROGRAM RESULTS (continued)

Global Media Coverage

- Several global media outlets have featured the program. The DN-I-R program has been covered by well-known global publications across diverse industries including city policy, travel and industry trends, business and national news. These include:
 - Cities Today
 - Skift
 - The Mayor EU
 - Travel Off Path
 - Fast Company
 - numerous local and national Croatian news outlets and
 - extensive coverage on Total Croatia News.

Best Practice Example

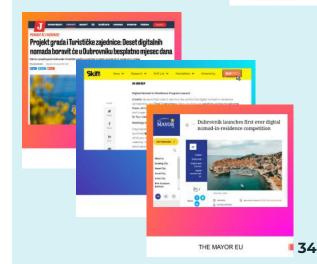
Dubrovnik Tourist Board director Ana Hrnić joined as a panelist for Zagreb Digital Nomad Week. The city is the best practice example at the 2021 Cross Border Coworking Conference in Budva.

Awards

Winner - Audience Award; 3rd place - Crossover category (B2B/B2C) at the 2021 Conventa Crossover Best Event Awards.



CITIES TODAY



TIMELINE

The multi-stage approach Dubrovnik has taken to cater to digital nomads

The DN-I-R program is not a stand-alone effort, it is part of a wider strategy commenced by the city of Dubrovnik in 2020. It demonstrates the city's commitment to following the direction proposed in the DN-I-R roadmap.

Conference Dubrovnik is host to Croatia's first conference dedicated to the topic of digital nomads, held 16-17 October 2020 in hybrid format.

Design Thinking Residency Program

A 4 week co-creation model of collaboration to work with digital nomads and representatives from the city and community to deliver the Dubrovnik Digital Nomads-in-Residence Program.

OCT 2020 APR 2021

DUBROVNIK for DIGITAL NOMADS An online conference for digital nomads worldwide

Competition

Dubrovnik
Digital Nomads-in-Residence

115 applicants from around the world apply to participate in the world's first digital nomads-in-residence program.



MAY 2021-2030

Roadmap Implementation

The first set of 'quick wins' include:

- Announcement of a new coworking space.
- A 30 day digital nomad card
- Information hubs: a website and physical info points at tourist board centres/kiosks.

The long term roadmap recommendations include initiatives which attract and accommodate digital nomads and their varying needs - and ensuring relevant content is created to continue to promote the destination, lifestyle and community.

ROADMAP

The roadmap developed during the Dubrovnik DN-I-R program was informed by the customer journey of a digital nomad. It includes the typical sequence of how various digital nomads might discover, choose and experience Dubrovnik and the phased implementation of these findings and recommendations.

The strategy for delivering the roadmap (fig. 1) is to use an ongoing, cyclical process to 'attract, accommodate and amaze' digital nomads. These experiences must then be amplified; sharing engaging content to ensure the cycle continues. It is important to note, this model only succeeds by nurturing an engaged, active digital nomad community and the ongoing support from local institutions.

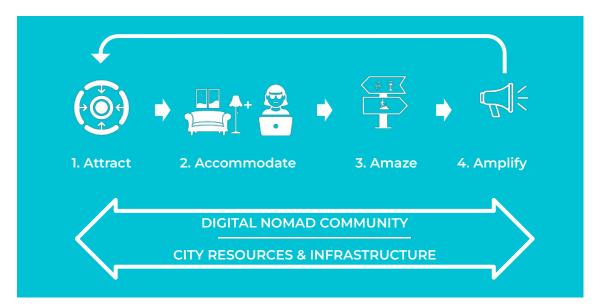


Fig 1. The strategy to deliver the roadmap: an ongoing, cyclical process to create solutions for digital nomads in Dubrovnik, and the foundations key to supporting the entire cycle.



"Digitalni nomad is now a term ordinary people throughout Dalmatia now understand."

- Carolyn Zelikow, Dubrovnik Digital Nomad-in-Residence



"Croatia is serious about developing a sustainable economy/society where digital nomads are warmly welcomed" - Rob Schubert, Dubrovnik Digital Nomad-in-Residence

Rob Schubert, the Netherlands, based in Estonia, is the CEO and co-founder of an eHealth startup aimed at advancing in the diagnosis of autism. The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) awarded the business as the most efficient health startup in 2020.

PROGRAM FEEDBACK - Rob Schubert

Why did you apply?

I enjoy being part of innovative environments and/or programs (why I went to Estonia). That the Dubrovnik Tourist Board, City of Dubrovnik, Saltwater Nomads, and Total Croatia News combined ways to think about future-ready attraction was very intriguing to me. The innovation appeal and my international lifestyle convinced me that this was the right program for me. That conviction plus the opportunity to spend a month in the beautiful environment and climate of Dubrovnik made the decision to apply very easy.

Was the program what you expected?

Actually, no. The program surpassed all my expectations! In my wildest dreams, I wouldn't have expected such a well organised and warm welcoming program. Every moment was organized for the best outcomes. This organisation together with the participation of the local community provided for encouraging environment for the service design process. This resulted in innovation outcomes we can be proud of.

Additionally, I didn't expect to create strong bonds with the other participants. We have all different backgrounds and expertise but formed a homogenous group. I believe this is partly due to the great organisation.

What were your main takeaways?

- 1. Croatia is serious about developing a sustainable economy/society where digital nomads are warmly welcomed. This is seen by the high level of interest by the community and policymakers.
- Dubrovnik and more areas of Croatia aren't just tourist hotspots (which I
 normally avoid). There is so much opportunity and existing facilities to create a
 perfect environment for middle/long term stays.

What do you expect to have the most impact / other insight into the findings.

Croatia created a great buzz with the introduction of a digital nomad visa. The eyes of digital nomads are aimed at Croatia and locals start to understand what these new types of travellers are. To have a significant impact and create an attractive environment it's key to keep the momentum of this program going. With follow-up programs like Zagreb Digital Nomad Week, it's reassuring to see that outcomes keep 37 developing. P.S. if you want to have the most impact you should invite this great group of DNIR's again;)



Especially this part!

SALTWORKS GUY, STON



CASE STUDY

ZAGREB 2021



Next up, the capital!

Coming from Canberra, I can't emphasise what an honour it is work in the capital of a country - especially one you're relatively new to.

This event was held less than 1 month after the second Dubrovnik - a 7 day marathon series of events in person, and online. We had in-person and online presenters. And the food. INCREDIBLE FOOD by KAI STREET FOOD - so important for an event. Probably why we won so many awards;)

But seriously, the format was a 'nomadic' conference moving from morning cafe sessions, lunchtime cowork spaces and evening bars and restaurants to bring in much-needed business to covid and earthquake affected entrepreneurs.

It's back on for 2022.

Bigger. Brighter. Better? Come along and find out!







RUDI WITKOWSKY



DEAN KUCHEL





ANDRAE SMITH



RAX SUEN



ANNA MARIA KOCHANSKA



STEVE TSENTSERENSKY











DIGITAL NOMAD AMBASSADORS



2 HIGHLIGHTS

4 INTERNATIONAL AWARDS CONVENTA BEST EVENT AWARDS 2021 Ljubljana, 27 August 2021



Winner - Zagreb Digital Nomad Week B2B/B2C CROSSOVER EVENT CATEGORY



Third Place - Dubrovnik Digital Nomads-in-Residence B2B/B2C CROSSOVER EVENT CATEGORY



Winner - Zagreb Digital Nomad Week SUSTAINABILITY (judged against *all* entries)



Winner - Dubrovnik Digital Nomads-in-Residence AUDIENCE AWARD (judged against *all* entries)



& MORE.... REGIONAL

BRAČ - WORLD OLIVE PICKING CHAMPIONSHIPS, 2021



Team Manager, First Ever Digital Nomad Team

We came 5th in the world, won the quiz.. And we like to think also won over the hearts and minds of the Postira locals.

We even made it on Dutch national television.

(Team captain is Dutch)

We'll be back to contest the title again in 2022.

Check out our entry on **YouTube!**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YNypeWbRqPY

REGULAR MEET UPS

NOMAD TABLE and other meetups.



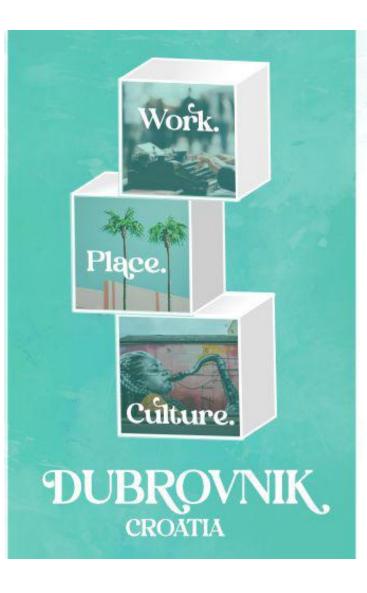
We partner with local restaurants to bring on "off-season" visitors, and create an in-person platform for digital nomads, locals, expats and anyone new-in-town to come and connect.

A whole range of other weekly meetups have now kicked off.

We started in a pandemic, packed out restaurants which are normally empty in November, and helped hospitality businesses stay open.

4 LINKS

Saltwaternomads.com 2021 Zagreb event - <u>saltwaternomads.com/zagreb/</u> and https://www.crossover.si/2021/07/22/dubrovnik-digital-nomads-in-residence/ 2021 Dubrovnik event https://saltwaternomads.com/events/dubrovnik-digital-nomads-in-residence/ and https://www.crossover.si/2021/07/22/zagreb-digital-nomad-week/ 2020 Dubrovnik event https://saltwaternomads.com/events/dubrovnik-2020/ dnacroatia.com (co-founder) Digital Nomad Association Croatia LinkedIn (4.3K followers) Meetups Saltwater Nomads https://www.meetup.com/saltwater-nomads/ 121 members SplitBiz (co-host) https://www.meetup.com/splitbiz/ 266 members SOCIAL Instagram: @saltwater.nomads Facebook: Saltwater and Digital Nomad Split Croatia (founder) 1.4K members YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSrAugBbYcfZxZ6q1L1Pd9A LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/tanjapolegubic/ Let's connect!



Work. Place. Culture. CONFERENCE

5,6,7 MAY 2022 REMOTE WORK

DUBROVNIK TOURS

HYBRID

COLLABORATION

DIGITAL NOMAD VISAS SUSTAINABILITY

WORK/LIFE DESIGN

TRENDS

POLICY

BUSINESS TRAVEL

DESTINATIONS

+ WIN A WORKATION

WORKPLACECULTURECONFERENCE.COM













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LinkedIn - let's connect!



Culture.