

Diary of a Festival Lover: A Week at Outlook in Croatia

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The pristine Croatian coast is bustling with music festivals luring decadent young partygoers from across the world. **Outlook**, the UK-based festival that just ended its sixth edition, was also an end of summer celebration. We delved into the rhythm of a festival junkie – with a few beach escapes and delectable meals to balance things out.



Day One: The Preliminaries

In the morning I left Zagreb and took in the lush, rolling hills of the countryside while listening to dub legend Lee "Scratch" Perry. I finally arrived to the coast, its abrupt white cliffs and shimmering green sea. I checked into the Histria resort, a cluster of hotels, villas, tennis courts, childrens' amusement areas, restaurants, lounges, shops and pools. It's overwhelming, like a small city. But once I reached my room and opened the blinds onto the perfect view of the pine and olive trees and sea, I was in instant holiday mode. I promptly headed to the Roman Amphitheater, built from 27-BC to 68 AD in Pula. It's an impressive sight at sunset, the golden stone arcades shining in the soft red light. Girls in bras and butt-bearing mini shorts (the official festival uniform), green, pink or blue hair or dreadlocks, massive glitter clouds around their eyes were getting ready for the party. "This is amazing," said Joey Bada\$\$, who was toting a pendant with good luck stones and a camouflage-print fisherman's hat. Girls were already all over him, and he didn't seem to mind. Grandmaster Flash spun his classic mix of hits as everyone got increasingly animated. "I like to go from pop to rap to jazz," said the master. "That's my thing."



Day Two: Action Time

I felt the urge to get out of the resort, so I rented a bike and drove through the winding road, breathing in the pine-scented air, down to the town of Pula. At the market – a stunning Art Deco building erected by the Austrians – I bought figs sweet as honey, Istrian prosciutto, slightly funky sheep's cheese, corn ciabatta and a slice of melting hot burek (cheese pastry). I sat on the antique Roman fountain and enjoyed my lunch in the sun. Then I biked back to the hotel and took a plunge in the clear, fresh water. At Outlook that night everyone was excited about Joey Bada\$\$! The kid (he's 18) killed it on stage with his energy and rhythm. We wandered from stage to stage, past the hundreds of tents planted in the forest like mushrooms. New couples were forming, walking hand in hand under the bright full moon. Fun times!





Day Three: Hip-Hop

Today I visited the city with a guide and discovered its Roman and Austro-Hungarian landmarks. After a long lazy lunch of fresh fish and Malvasia (local white wine), I headed back to the hotel to get ready for the big night. Mos Def and Jay Electronica! I started the evening with some real funky hip-hop with the High Focus crew from the UK – a bunch of guys jumping up and down frantically and rhyming as the DJ scratched and mixed madly. Very cool. At about midnight Mos Def showed up in a white robe – “We’re not allowed to call him Mos Def. He’s Yassin Bey. He’s Muslim,” a festival volunteer told me. His set was a little strange, wandering from mellow songs to the hard beats that his fans crave. We headed up the narrow dark dirt road to Jay Electronica’s set, where the crowd awaited him anxiously. He showed up, courting his fans and eventually inviting people on stage, which obviously caused a riot. Suddenly there were a hundred kids on stage and no one knew why, next thing they were off and Jay was talking to them again. The set ended and he hadn’t even played much music. Time for this reporter to head back to bed.



Day Four: The Good Life

Our friend Didi from Croatia organized a boat expedition to the Brijuni islands, which she kept referring to as a “trip.” A “trip” sounded good to me. Our driver – a former metal musician who fought during the war – drove us to the ferry, on which we merrily boarded. We crossed over to the island and sat on a tiny white train, which slowly took us through the wild reserve, past Tito’s house where he entertained Elizabeth Taylor, and to the zebras and horses of the safari park. We finally got to a perfect stone beach and lay in the evening sun, listening to the gentle rocking of the waves. On our way back we watched the sunset: a huge red ball melting into the horizon. Just enough time to change again and head to the stage, where The Pharcyde was playing – everyone was stoked! Then it was Pharoahe Monch, who brought on stage a young singer with a beautiful deep voice named Mila Michiko. I love my fucking hip-hop,” he shouted to the crowd. “It’s a culture, it’s graffiti, it’s breakdancing, it’s B-boy shit, but it wouldn’t be fucking shit without the DJ.” We couldn’t agree more.



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