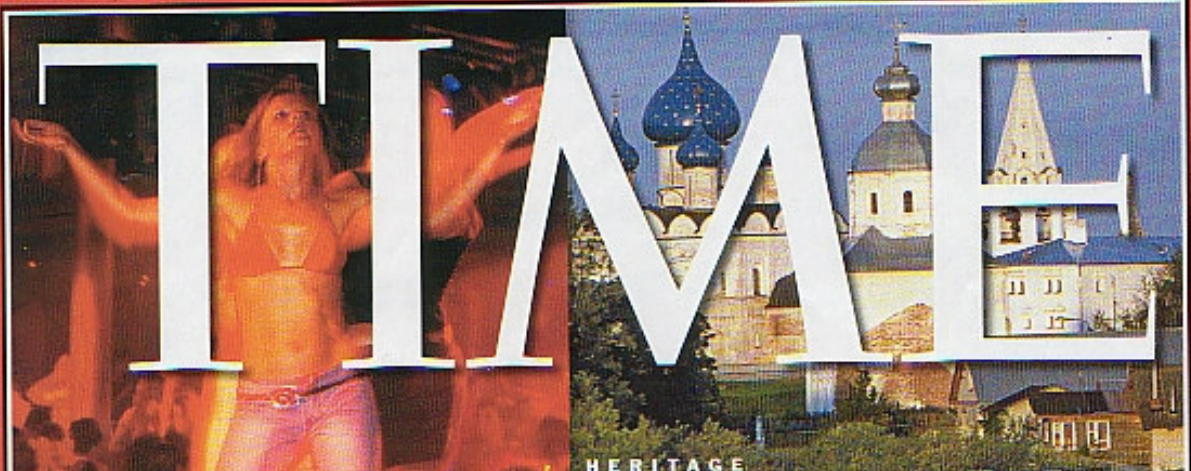
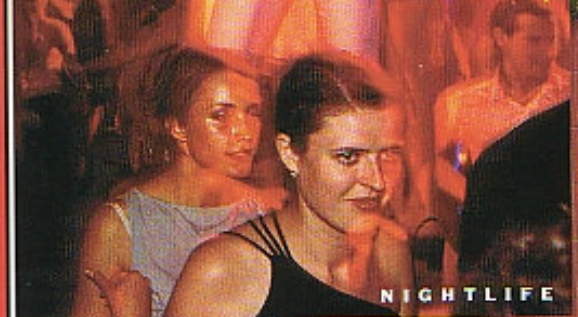


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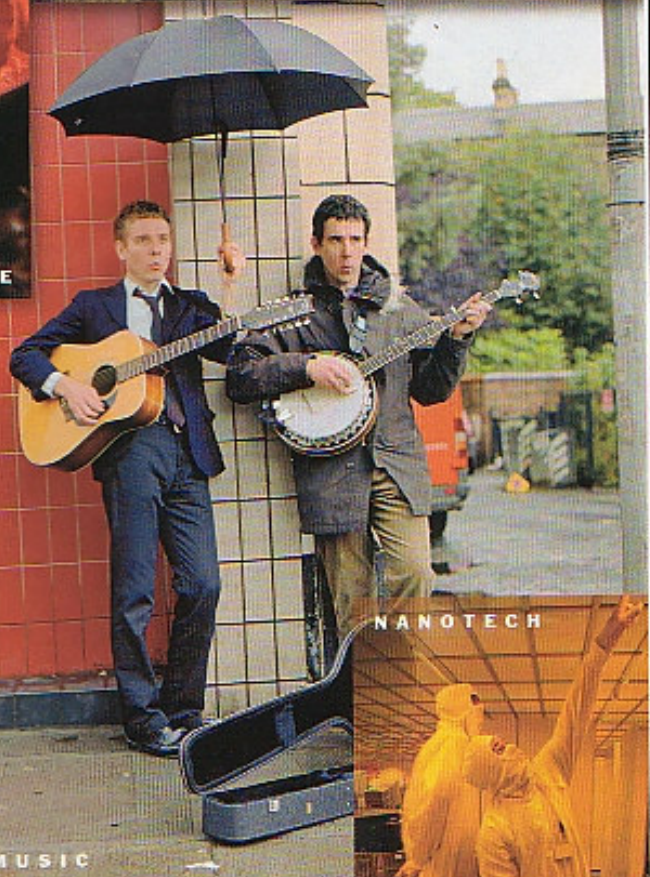


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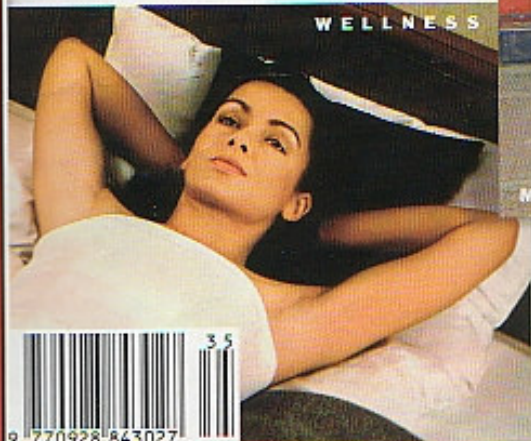


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reatment centers cater to around 900,000 overnight visitors a year—up by 100,000 since 1999



REJUVENATED: Extensively rebuilt after the shelling of 1991, Dubrovnik has most everything you'll find on the French and Italian coasts—but at half the price

DUBROVNIK (the riviera, circa 1960)

An Old Pearl Gets A NEW SHINE

Croatia's jewel on the Adriatic is becoming Europe's trendiest tourist destination. Turning back the clock on St. Tropez

By **ANDREW PURVIS**

THE FIRST VIEW most of the world had of Dubrovnik was of its red-tiled roofs disappearing behind clouds of black smoke during shelling by Serb and Montenegrin artillery in the fall of 1991. The threat to this

walled medieval city on the Dalmatian coast, with its Renaissance palaces, Titian masterpieces and lemon-scented cloisters, brought home the pointlessness and savagery of the Balkan wars. Carla del Ponte, chief prosecu-

tor at the International War Crimes Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, recalls being horrified by the attack. "I could not believe," she says, "that someone—anyone—could have fired a single shot or shell or mortar anywhere in its vicinity."

If she went back now, Del Ponte might have a hard time believing anybody did shoot. Not only has the Croatian city survived the bombardment, it has been repaired so meticulously that the only visual reminder of those terrible months is a patchwork of bright orange tiles where faded roofing splintered by the shelling has been replaced. Residents have repainted their homes, filled the bullet holes in their walls, and paved over craters in the streets. Walk

down the Stradun, Dubrovnik's polished-limestone pedestrian thoroughfare, lined with open-air cafés and designer shops, and you wouldn't know that it was only a few years ago covered by the fog of war. "We have arisen from the ashes,"

says Maja Miloveic of the Dubrovnik Tourist Board.

That's great news for tourists as well as locals. In the prewar years, Dubrovnik was known to the European cognoscenti as a low-cost alternative to the ritzy Riviera. Now, its charms are fast becoming an open secret. Flights arrive almost daily from Madrid, Paris, Rome and Vienna, together with budget services from Bratislava, London Gatwick and Dublin. In all, more than 320,000 foreigners holidayed in



SECRET CAPITAL

Dubrovnik (pop. 37,000) last year, up from 250,000 in 2002. "Dubrovnik is a jewel," says Ed Serotta, a Viennese historian and frequent visitor. He recommends a stroll on the 2-km medieval wall encircling the city: on one side is a bird's eye view of white stone architectural treasures and on the other a panorama of unspoiled coastline and open sea. "It will make your jaw drop," Serotta says.

Dubrovnik has had that effect on visitors for more than a millennium. Byzantine Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus wrote of "the city ... on the cliffs" to his son in the 10th century. The poet Lord Byron called it "the Pearl of the Adriatic" in the early 19th century. In the early 1930s, the British King Edward and Wallis Simpson sunbathed naked on a nearby island. (The current crop of celebrities drawn to the city include Steven Spielberg, Sharon Stone and John Malkovich.)

Whether or not you're famous, Dubrovnik promises fine swimming in sheltered coves, sweet shellfish and the quiet pleasures of nearby islands. On Lopud and Sipan, picnickers stroll side by side with amateur archaeologists looking for Greek and Roman ruins. On Lokrum, the pine-covered outcropping that faces the old town, peacocks strut among the ruins of an abandoned monastery and bathers lounge in rock pools warmed by the Mediterranean sun. But perhaps the best moments are at the end of the day, as the sun sets behind the roofs of the old town, and an evening meal of fresh fish and white wine beckons. Let the glitterati have their St. Tropez. Dubrovnik does quite nicely, indeed. ■

