

KVARNER, THE GULF OF WELLBEING

The Griffon's Tale

The Kvarner griffon takes leave of his mate in their cliffside nest on Cres to spend another day wheeling free above his Adriatic Gulf. For over 10,000 years his ancestors have guarded this space, since before the ice melted and the Gulf filled with water. Back then his islands were still mountain peaks and joined the land from Istria to Dalmatia, before man arrived to discover the pure, clean air of the Kvarner Gulf. The griffon had been a symbol of wellness for the ancients, which may be why his home would be called the Gulf of Wellbeing. No other griffon had ever lived so close to the sea as here, and only the Kvarner griffon would see every offspring migrate, far and wide. Which is why this griffon flies the clear Kvarner skies today: to watch for his son and await his flight home to Croatia.

First he soars high up to Mount Ucka, at the north western boundary of Kvarner. Seeing for miles, he surveys below the elegant parks and grand hotels of Opatija, Princess of the Adriatic. This is where Isadora Duncan danced and Mahler composed, where Europe's elite found thalassotherapy and wellbeing in the waters. Where enlightened physicians created the original wellness centre of the Adriatic. Thus, emperors bathed, others followed suit and the Opatija Riviera began to wind around the gulf's western shore like a jewelled necklace.

The griffon's eye follows its *lungomare* south from Volosko, past the sails in Ici marina to Lovran, St George's town: a promenade for legends and lovers, past trophy homes and elegant spas. Etched by cypress and palm trees, the shoreline keeps a microclimate, rarely chill, embracing visitors since Habsburg days. Here they escape the cold and breathe freely, pampered with the finest that nature can offer: from essential oils to the most famous scampi of all – sweet, plump Kvarner scampi, washed in Ucka's spring waters. Everywhere is the scent of the sea and laurel: tree of transformation and emblem of Apollo, God of health and music.

The complete story is coming soon...