

Trip Planning and Systems Integration

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**For Horizons Unlimited
Cambria, CA**

The Planning Slide Ruler

We do a lot of planning for our trips, some do very little. This is where there is a trade-off on simplicity and complexity, essentially a sliding rule.

Planning is more complex

- But simplifies the travel communications at time during execution,
- no planning creates the complexity and need for more communication, often times in a foreign language when entering an unfamiliar place.
- GPS with planning makes getting around a new city the same as driving in a more familiar setting. This will dictate what you find helpful. Sandra and I research what to see (i.e. World Heritage Sites) and places to stay and I input them as waypoints (POIs) into the GPS, or find them in the directory.

Planning can be half the fun, gives you control and removes most feelings of disorientation.

- We save time and are efficient travellers
- When we are arriving in a place we can select the place we have researched, and know it is suitable to stay in.

We don't however do much reserving, since we want the freedom to go where we want.

Conversely, **using a GPS without planning**

- is like getting out a Swiss army knife tweezers to remove a sliver after the fact instead of wearing work gloves, in other words it gets you unlost.

The impact is:

- You will spend more time looking for a place, or will settle on something less, or not using the GPS for that activity at all. On our trips we've had comments on excellent accommodations.
- You may miss important places to see because you haven't taken them into consideration when allotting time. Missing a WHO that is only 5 kms. off in another direction (Tomar).
- You may be impacted by language barriers or incomplete and confusing directions by people who may not understand where you want to go, or where a location is.

This goes with personality type. Some just would not travel that way so their complexity is on the back end, when arriving in a foreign place, and where to go the next day. **We don't miss the spontaneous travel opportunities** when they present themselves, **we just know what to compare them to.**

Planning the trip can be half the fun.

It's true. Studies indicate that couples and families who take trips together, share time, trip plan, have more stable relationships and keep their marriage alive. The time you spend together on these trips is probably the most romantic time you spend together.

For us, it is always the carrot for working, the reward. So when you begin to trip plan, you begin to build up expectations about what you are going to see and develop 'trip energy'. We end up with this ritual that has us put on Espresso coffee and muffins on a Saturday morning in the winter surround ourselves with books, the internet references and a spreadsheet and begin to plan.

BrainStorming Questions

Our trip planning starts with the usual questions, "So where do you want to go?" or "We talked about doing this what do you think?" or, "I'd like to see this".

Once we brainstorm these types of ideas or destinations we try to bring together common themes or try to connect the dots between destinations.

TV and Library Videos

Pilot Guides or Globe Trekker are Adventure Travel TV programs.

Rick Steve's TV program is on the PBS channels and his focus is on Europe. He isn't as adventure oriented but he does what's called "Thru the Backdoor". Places that haven't been discovered that are worth seeing. That is how the Cinque Terre region of Italy has become overrun with Americans.

His website is even better with tons of free information on travel, car rentals, Eurorail passes, peoples experiences, places to stay, and general "Heads Up". Sometimes we have watched one of his TV programs on repeats because he covers the exact same area we went to. And he has some really good places to stay recommendations. See it in his Resources area for a link.

Connecting the Dots

For instance on our 2006 trip we decided we wanted to see Croatia and Slovenia before they became heavy tourist areas. We had enjoyed the parts of Italy we had visited before and wanted to get to Greece. We had missed Pompeii in 1991 and if we were going to be there then we should visit the Amalfi coast again.

Determine Where to Start the Trip from and Finish

Of course we wanted to travel by motorcycle and didn't have the time to either ship ours over to Europe nor prepared to incur the cost for a shorter period.

First the Big Picture then Get into the Detail

We always start with a planning Map of Europe to connect the dots. The unfortunate thing about the planning map is it shows only the more major routes including Autobahns. While we will use an autobahn to save time, we generally will use them as part of the point A to B discussion. But the map scale is the best for first pass planning. Remember you could take an autobahn A35/61 specifically down the Rhine and never see the scenery we saw on route 9.

Use a Spreadsheet to collect detail.

Open up a spreadsheet to begin collecting the detail.

First column mark out every day (Tuesday) and Date (March 6th.) of your trip (each row becomes a day). By doing this you will account for every day. Then in the **second** and **third** column show the **place from** and **place to** destinations. Then use Via Michelin or Google maps which helps us in determining mileage (in **column 4**). Mark this stuff down.

	Day of Week	Date	From	To	Kms	Hrs.
	Friday	April 26, 2013	Flight from Nanaimo to Frankfurt			
	Saturday	April 27, 2013	Arrive Frankfurt			
	Sunday	April 28, 2013	Prepping in Frankfurt			
	Monday	April 29, 2013	Frankfurt	Fussen	444	4:16:00
	Tuesday	April 30, 2013	Fussen	Fussen		
	Wednesday	May 1, 2013	Fussen	Venice	463	7:38:00
	Thursday	May 2, 2013	Venice	Venice		
	Friday	May 3, 2013	Venice	Rovinj	262	4:46:00
Ferry travel day	Saturday	May 4, 2013	Rovinj	Motovun and Porec		
	Sunday	May 5, 2013	Rovinj	Pula		
	Monday	May 6, 2013	Rovinj	Sibenik	387	7:30:00
	Tuesday	May 7, 2013	sibenik	Trogir	50	
	Wednesday	May 8, 2013	Trogir	Trogir (Split)	25	

Noting Service Intervals for Motorcycle Maintenance

If your trip spans service intervals on your motorcycle make sure you keep these in mind, and, use the comment section here to highlight service that is necessary. We started out the trip with every major service done to our motorcycle so we prevented as much unscheduled maintenance, and effectively planned maintenance. For instance we knew we'd wear out the rear tire in about 20,000 kms and had one ordered and in stock in Turkey. The dealer is a Horizons Unlimited member, and treated us royally the afternoon we arrived in his small town. Bora Eris is our contact in Bandirma, Turkey.

If you are **traveling by motorcycle** then plan to restrict your daytime travel to some reasonable distances. We **try to stay under 300 kms. a day, some friends try to stay under 150 kms** per day. It depends on the time you have and how much of a wide net you want to cast. On our first motorcycle trip which was fulfilling a dream of riding over there, **the ride was important** and we sought out some of the recommended '**Great Rides**' from Alpine Roads website. This time we still used the site but with less emphasis on the ride being the thing. The **spreadsheet of course will show you 2 things. How you are using up your days and how much distance you have to cover.**

We discovered in 2006 that we didn't have the time needed to go to Greece even though Croatia isn't far from Greece.

Intersperse some rest or flex days and sightseeing days.

The **flex days should be 1 for every 4-5 days**. How we did it was travel for part of the day, see something that we wanted to see (column 5) and then move on, or decide to stay. In either case we had accommodation alternatives listed in the next column (6) on the spreadsheet. Column 8 and 9 showed us the status of whether we contacted the accommodation location and or whether we actually booked the accommodation ahead of time. (We don't do this very much but we did it this trip where we knew we'd be landing in Dubrovnik 1 day and wanted to spend a full day there.) We use a color to highlight a flex day.

On this trip we were on our schedule (not a critical thing to keep to) it just gives you a benchmark, when we arrived in Levanto with Fernando and Leah. The weather was fantastic, the phases of the moon were aligned and we decided to stay on another day there. We had also built in a little extra time by keeping to our 300 kms or less rule however decided we'd make the trip to Rome in 1 day if needed. As it turned out we stayed the extra day in Levanto and the trip to Rome was an easy 1 day trip because we had rested up. We then used up another flex day in staying on the Amalfi coast in an exceptional place on the beach.

Use the Library and Internet

The library is a fantastic resource for some of the official travel guides. DK Travel, Lonely Planet and Rough Guides are 3 of the better ones. Using Google on the internet is also a valuable resource. As well as Babelfish (a translation webservice). If you plan to go to Poland then Poltran is another translation service for Polish. For 2006 we ordered the specific country maps from the governments themselves and got much better quality maps from an information standpoint than we had from AMA. We have one memorable day's ride in Slovenia that took us to Predjama castle

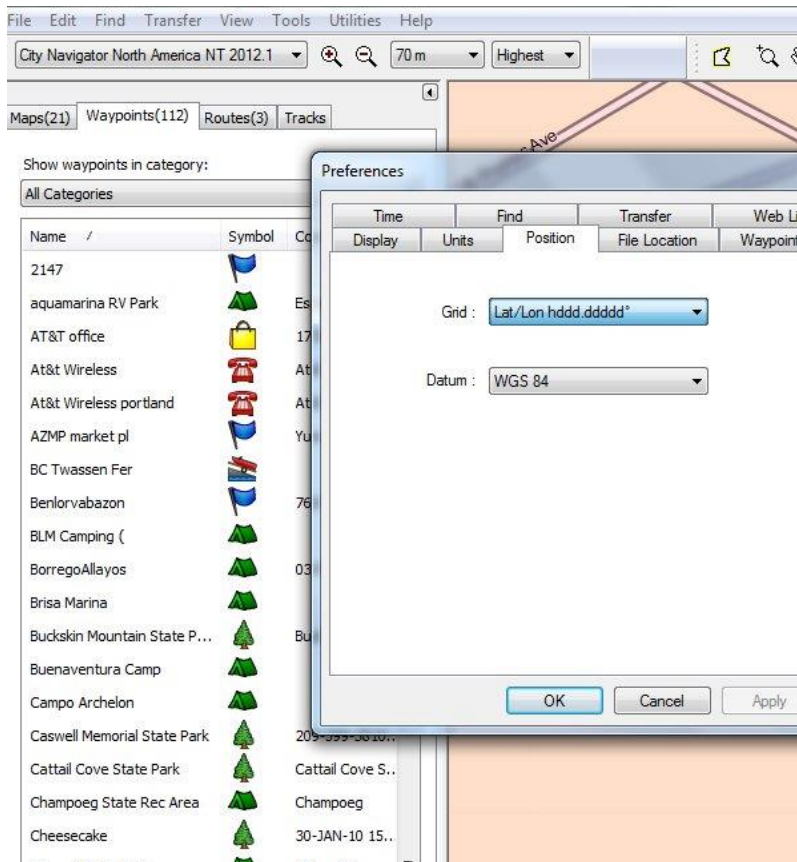
Talk to other People and Travelers when you Travel

Other people are your most reliable source of information. You can question them on a tourist location to determine if it fits with your plans. They can show you the location of the map if it's hard to find, so draw in more information. And if you don't use the information this time save it for next time. That's how we found the back road to Predjama castle, two other motorcyclists from Germany staying at the same Agriturismo as us in Slovenia mentioned the road and the fact it wasn't paved but it was good. I may have turned around not believing it would take us there had they not mentioned about the paving, and, the road was fine in packed gravel. This was before our days of travelling with a GPS.

GPS Coordinates Formats

There are three basic forms of a coordinate plus many other variations. You can adjust the settings of your GPS, or software, to accept input in any of these formats. Use your GPS manual if you are unsure how to do this.

This is a screen shot of the window in Mapsource for Garmin. Preferences is found under the Edit tab, then Position Tab. Others may be different. Shown is degree decimal format.



GPS formats

1. Coordinate containing **degrees (°)** (integer), **minutes (')** (integer), and **seconds (")** (integer, or real number) (DMS).
2. Coordinate containing degrees (integer) and minutes (real number) (MinDec).
3. Coordinate containing only degrees (real number) and decimal. (DegDec).

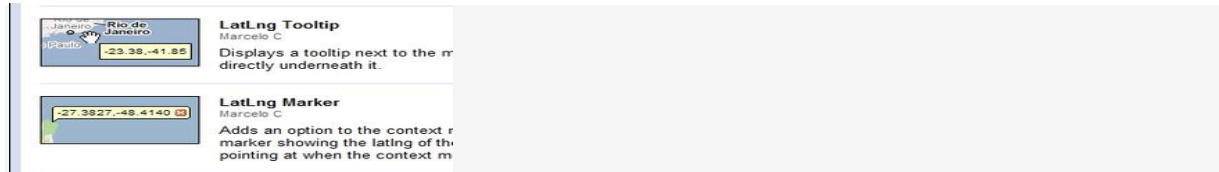
All forms of coordinates are capable of representing the same amount of data and the same precision. Depending on which type of coordinate you are provided with, and which type you would like to work with, you may have to do some conversion.

Format Examples

- N40°26'47" W079°58'36" (DMS)
- 40.446195 W79.948862 (Degree Decimal)
- 40° 26.7717, -79° 56.93172 (MinDec)

Google Maps

(a) Provide Instant Lat/Long (GPS) Coordinates



RELATED



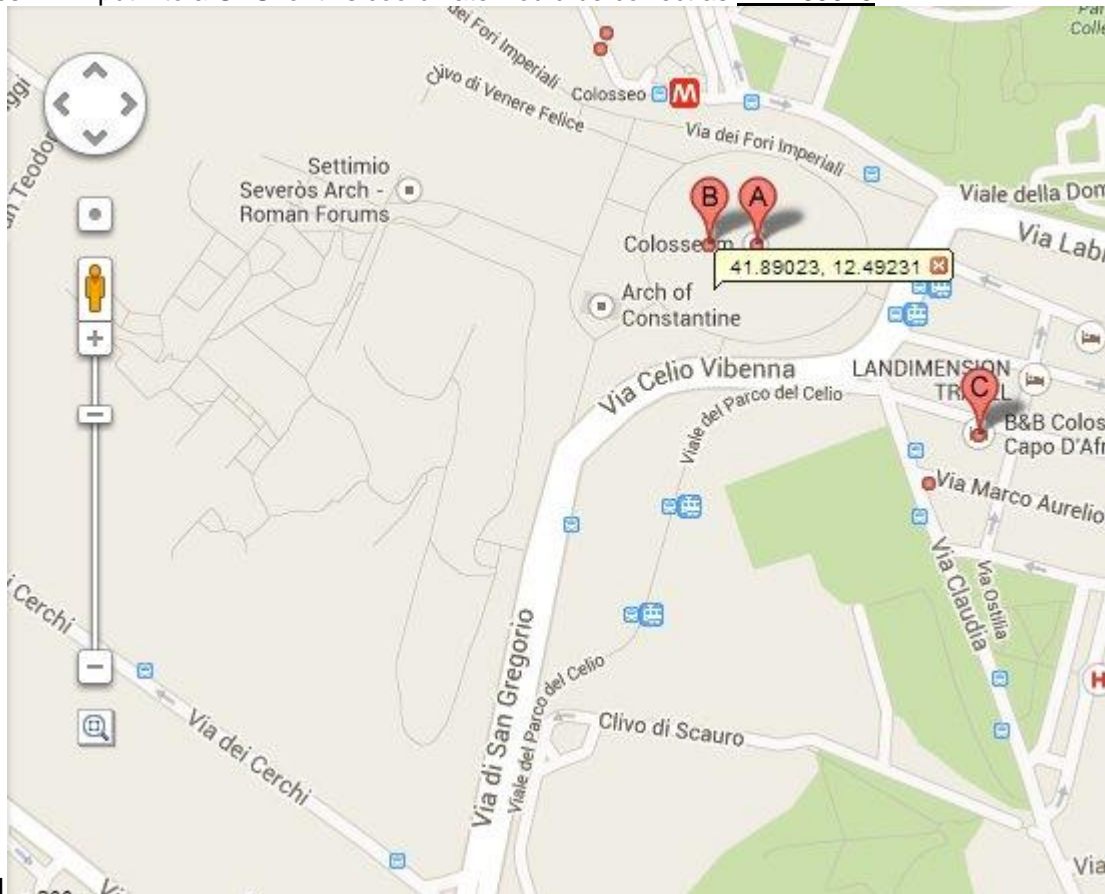
How to find Latitude and Longitude

The always helpful Tech-Recipes has come up with an ingenious way to find latitude and longitude values for any location using Google Maps. If you need GPS coordinates, Google Maps can provide them, but not by default. Click the green beaker-style Labs icon in the upper-right corner of Google Maps, then enable the LatLng Tooltip to see coordinates wherever your cursor is, or the LatLng Marker to be able to drop a "pin" wherever you need coordinates. You will need to right click on the spot to drop the marker.

Tip courtesy <http://lifelacker.com/5525758/top-10-things-you-didnt-know-google-maps-could-do>

Google Maps provides its GPS coordinates in Degree Decimals. The following example shows a GPS coordinate for the Coliseum in Rome, Italy. In this instance, it does not have North or South, East or West designations attached to it. Anything **E**ast of Greenwich is shown as a positive number, anything **W**est of Greenwich is shown as a negative number. Correspondingly, the equator separates North and South.

Coordinates. An input into a GPS for this coordinate would be correct as **N 41.89023**



E12.49231

In a similar vein this next example shows a hotel reservation with the GPS coordinates marked in **DMS** format.

Your reservation

Reservation made in the name of: **Mr. Heiko Neumann**
Reservation number: **G0I-1F13**

Please retain this number as you will be asked to provide it should you request any information related to your reservation or should you wish to cancel. (if terms and conditions of the rate booked allow)

ibis Bayeux Port En Bessin

Tel : (+33)2/31220404
12 Quai Baron Gerard - 14520 PORT EN BESSIN

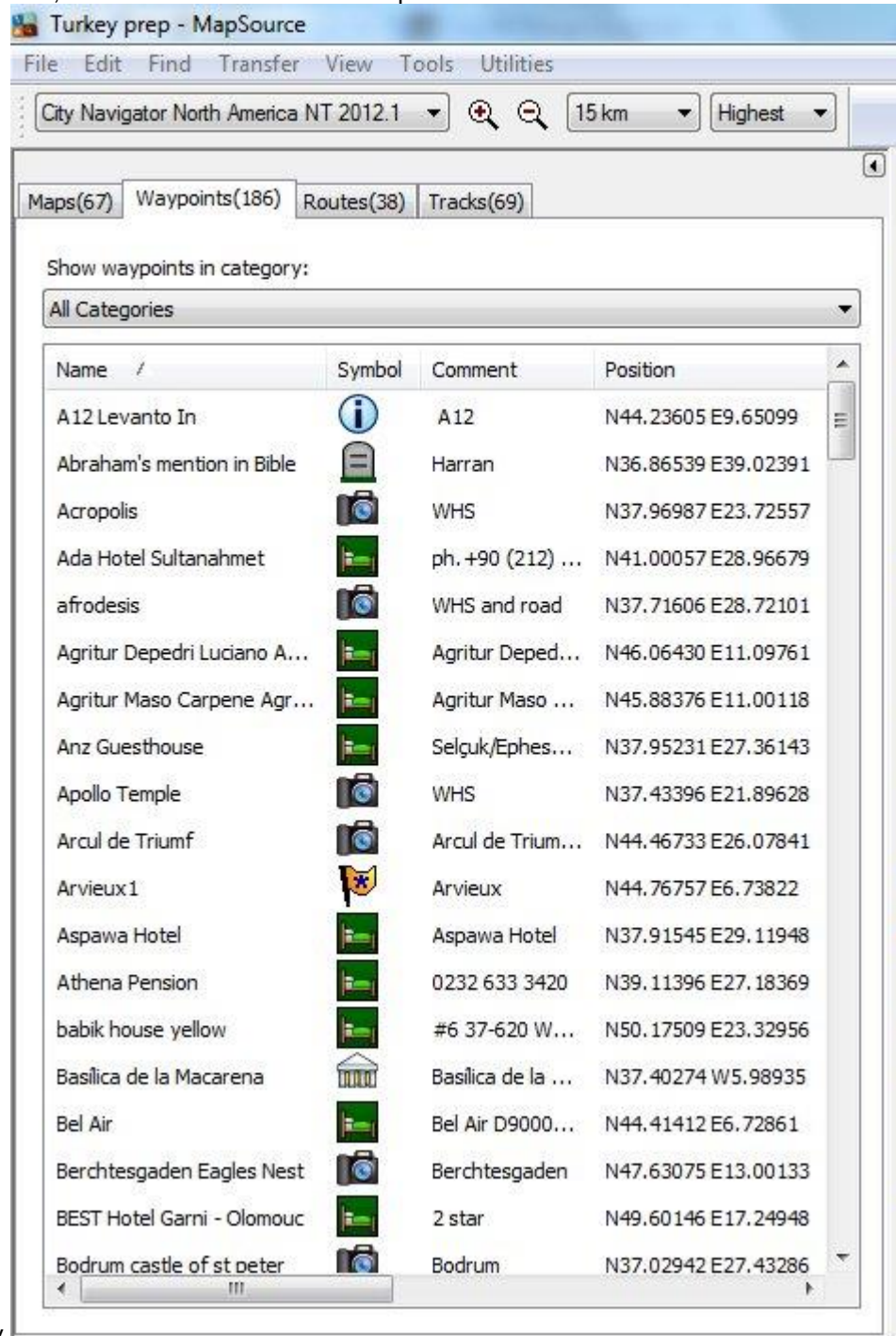
GPS :N 49° 20' 48.42" W 0° 45' 11.42"
[Access](#)

World Heritage Sites (WHS)

WHS are available on line in GPS format, but many of them are already listed in your GPS Points of Interest, listings. Get familiar with using your Points of Interest categories and where to find this information.

Storing your research information for later review

As you do your research on an area you will want to save this information someplace for review when you get to a location/town, or area. The below shown Mapsource database shows a host of site locations we



saved for Turkey.

Using the icons provided in the program you can highlight the GPS coordinates as B&B's, World Heritage Sites. However you choose to code your selections will be up to you. One tip is to make sure that how you name them in Mapsource and ultimately download to your GPS, should be the same name as in your reference material document which we will cover off next. Naming conventions are helpful common denominators across 2 or 3 source documents.

Reference Material Development

How we make notes for later use is very personal. We can show you a page from a trip and show you are way of doing it, however this may not work for you. No matter, just remember that a reference document is important as it centralizes all your information in one cohesive document, and, with the use of **Smartphones, tablets** and **Internet clouds** this document can be saved for review without carrying any paper.

Excerpt from our 2013 Travel document which can be saved either as a Google document on the Drive, or as a Word document on your laptop, or a PDF document on a Smartphone.

Frankfurt, Germany

Fussen Germany

- Neuschwanstein Castle - Entrance tickets can only be bought at the [Ticketcenter Hohenschwangau](#) in the village of Hohenschwangau below the castle. Tickets on sale 23 March to 15 October: 8 am-5 pm; Opening Hours: 23 March to 15 October: 9 am-6 pm; Admission Price - 12 euros; Address: Ticket-Center-Hohenschwangau, Alpseestrasse 12, D-87645 Hohenschwangau;
 - Hohenschwangau Castle - same times and prices as Neuschwanstein; Address: Ticket-Center-Hohenschwangau, Alpseestrasse 12, D-87645 Hohenschwangau; info@ticket-center-hohenschwangau.de
 - Where to Stay
 - ** Gasthaus Schoeberl - www.schoeberl-fuessen.de -- excellent reviews on Trip advisor - Address: Luitpoldstrasse 14, 87629 Fussen, Bavaria; Tel: 0049 (0) 8362 922411; Email: info@schoeberl-fuessen.de (**entered in Mapsource**) - 60 euros includes breakfast
 - Haus Martina(**closed for renovations until April 28**) - www.haus-martina-schwangau.de -- Blair and Sandy stayed here - 64 euros includes breakfast; Address: Am Jurgenfeld 16 87645 Schwangau; Tel: 08362/8506 (**entered in Mapsource**) Email: hausmartina@web.de
 - Gasthause Weiher B&B - excellent reviews in Tripadvisor 100%; Address: Hofwiesenweg 11; 87645 Schwangau-Hohenschwangau, Bavaria, Germany; Tel: +49 8362 81161; Email: haus.weiher@arcor.de ; 60 Euros includes breakfast (**entered in Mapsource**)
 - Ferienwohnung Purucker - Address: Am Winkelacker 10, 87645 Schwangau, Germany; Phone:+49 171 8853804 (Brian found) **entered in Mapsource** - \$80 CAD
Where to Eat:
 - Ritterstub'n - in the old town; Address: Ritter Strasse 4, Fussen (Rick Steves)
- ## **Innsbruck, Austria**
- **Gasthof zum Schupfen** - <http://gasthof-zum-schupfen.at/> Address: Unterberg 5 | Brennerbundesstraße 5, Innsbruck 6020, Austria; Score of 8.0 on Booking.com; Price of \$80 CAD includes breakfast - non refundable price;Tel: +43 512562426; Email: info@gasthof-zum-schupfen.at ; office@gasthof-schupfen.at

- **Ibis Hotel** - Address: Sterzinger Strasse 1, Innsbruck 6020, Austria; Tel: 011 43 512 5703000 **entered in Mapsource**
Venice, Italy

- Frari Church - 9:00-6:00 on weekdays -
3 euros
Where to Stay:

- **Venice Resort Hotel - booked for May 1 and May 2** - Hotel Venice Resort Srl - via Triestina, 153 Tessera (VENEZIA); Phone. +39 041 5416826; E-mail: info@veniceresort.it **entered in Mapsource** - \$100 CAD
- Villa Gasparini **entered in Mapsource**
- Hotel Ca'dei Barcaroli - Address: Via Forte Marghera 63/65, 30173 Mestre(Venice) - Phone: +39 041 5044495; Email: info@cadeibarcaroli.com ; Score of 8.8 on booking.com; very good reviews on Tripadvisor; \$120 CAD includes breakfast
- B&B Angela - Address: Via Cappuccina, 101, 30172 Mestre, Italy; good reviews; Phone: +39 041 5314289; Mobile: +39 3289087110; Email: info@angelabb.it \$105 CAD

Croatia

- Food - lamb, pasticada (rich dish made with marinated beef and dried plums, usually served with gnocchi); sarma (stuffed cabbage leaves); best red wines are from the Dingac region and from Ivan Dolac on the island of Hvar; an excellent beer is Velebitsko Pivo; wines - try a Vugava from Vis or Grasevina from Ilok

Other Systems to consider Integrating

E Books

Much of the travel information you will read will come from Travel guides as previously mentioned. Some of these travel guides can be purchased as E Books. Rick Steves is one such source. There are several E Book formats so making a selection of host system will be important since not all formats are as easily sourced.

General Reading is also important. Trying to find a good English language novel to read while away isn't always easy in a foreign country and of course space/weight is always a consideration, but an e-reader such as a Kindle, or application such as Overdrive Media Console, can help with getting books from your home library while your away. Familiarize yourself with how your library manages its ebook library.

PDF Self Built Guides

In the case of our most recent trip where we wanted to visit some of the Greek Islands there is a guide called *The Greek Island Hopping Guide*. The guide book is huge, and not all the information is of use to us, so we scanned just the information we needed into a PDF guide book of our own and downloaded to our tablet, Kindle and Smartphone for later use. When I broached this method with our library the manager said it was fine to do so, as long as it was for personal use, and not for distribution.

Service and Parts Manuals, Dealer listings

Fortunately the Vstrom 1000 is a popular model with a well-supported online forum. I was able to get a PDF copy of the Service Manual for the motorcycle for reference if I needed it, and a PDF of the Parts

micro-fiche, which I did need to order one specific part. I also had a PDF of the Suzuki dealer addresses for all countries we would be in.