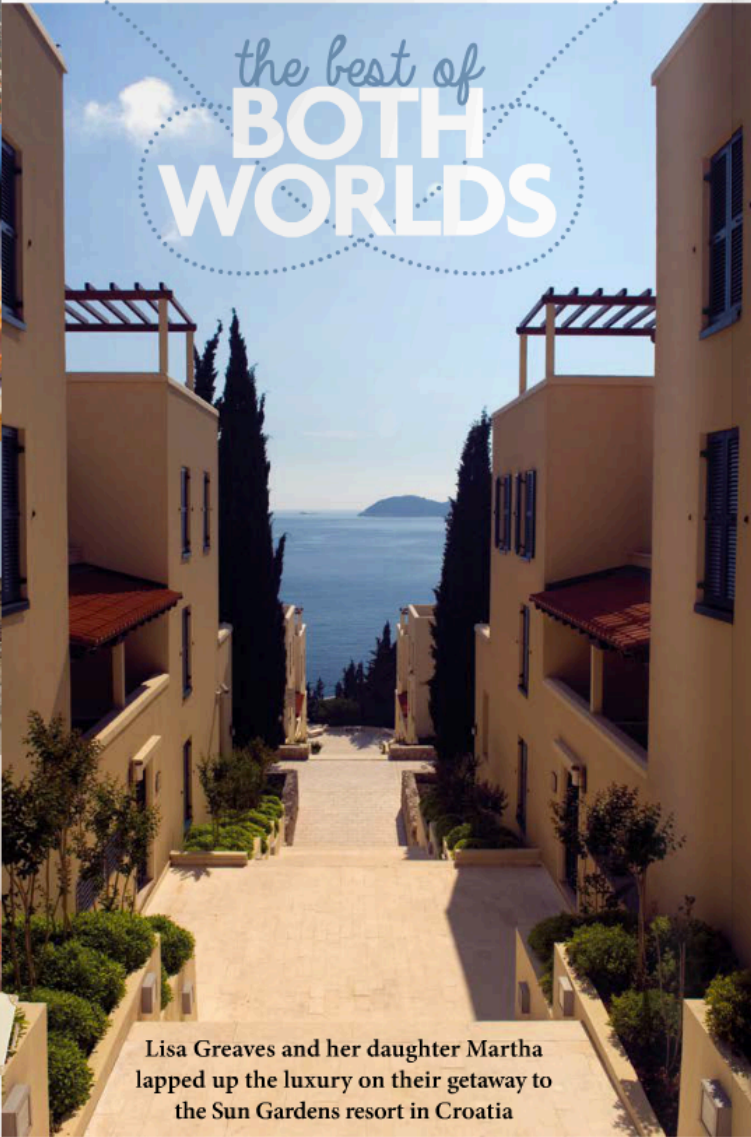


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Top to bottom, Dubrovnik old town, seafood cuisine at Sun Gardens, you can do a tour of Dubrovnik and take boat trips to surrounding islands, relax in the spa, Lisa



Lisa Greaves and her daughter Martha lapped up the luxury on their getaway to the Sun Gardens resort in Croatia



Top to bottom, Martha Greaves is a pupil at Firton House School, Wardsnorth, children can enjoy the rock-climbing wall as part of the kids' club, there are three outdoor pools, luxury Residence



Martha had fun on the rock-climbing wall organised by the hotel's kids' club, while I had a full body massage



As you round the bend along the coastal road approaching the Sun Gardens resort, the lush landscaping reveals the main building of the hotel to be tastefully ingratiated into the hillside with staggering views over the Adriatic coastline.

My six-year-old daughter, Martha, and I had decided to take our first trip together – sans famille. She is the youngest of three – the elder two being firmly ensconced in the throes of senior school life.

Sun Gardens is a five-star resort, comprising of a hotel, the Radisson Blu, and private residences – and opened its doors back in July 2009. It has enjoyed a bustling trade ever since, thanks mainly to its location – a 40-minute car journey from a handy airport. Once there, visiting the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Dubrovnik is simple by car (20 minutes) or by boat.

This was our first visit to Croatia and we were completely bowled over by the hospitality we encountered, and the Croatians' love of food – it was these two traits that underpinned our stay. Upon arrival, we were whisked to a fabulous dinner at The Butcher Grill: I challenge any meat enthusiast to not visit this restaurant more than once, as we indulged in a beguiling selection of canapés featuring Croatian feta cheese, followed by a tender steak each. Just what we wanted on our first night in Croatia.

The hotel was at 80% capacity and yet the space and scope of its differing locations meant that we never felt that it was crowded. The hotel offers three different outdoor pools (one for adults only); a beautifully laid out shingle beach with bathing platforms and safe swimming areas; water sports equipment; six restaurants and several bars; an indoor pool; an extensive spa; clay tennis courts; beach volley ball court and a whole indoor sports complex spread over a 22-hectare site.

For the first time, Scott Dunn has established itself at Sun Gardens. Its facilities and highly imaginative activities for children are a welcome addition. The children's club is open daily and there is a babysitting service available in the evenings. Sadly, there was no space for Martha on the days we were there, but I was able to use their babysitting services, which were professional and friendly. Ours was a rather good Uno player, according to Martha, which is high praise indeed!

The Radisson Blu is a stylishly designed building. Each of its 200 bedrooms has a stunning en suite bathroom, complete with a balcony from which to savour the view.

The Residences, built before the hotel, slot neatly into the hillside and are all accessed by steps. In fact, there are quite a lot of steps throughout the complex – so be prepared if

you have a child's buggy in tow! Our Residence was tastefully decorated: there were handy large cupboards in the bedroom and an en suite bathroom complete with "rainfall" showers.

Martha thoroughly enjoyed a session on the indoor rock-climbing wall organised by the hotel's kids' club, while I had a soothing full body massage at the award-winning spa by OCCO.

We followed this with a swim and early supper at the Maraska Lounge Bar, while drinking in the rosy-hued sunset.

Our favourite restaurant at the resort was Cilantro. During our stay we must have devoured platters of sea bass, turbot and John Dory fish – our decision on what to eat aided and abetted by our hugely informative and friendly waiter, Roberto. I also never knew that Croatian wine was so diverse and a wine-tasting evening exploring local produce such as Miloš Stagnum, Pošip Grgić and Bire Gek, hosted by the hotel, was a glorious way to sit out an unseasonal storm outside.

We chose The Market at the hotel on our last night and as we ate, we reminisced over our Croatian adventure. We decided that it had undoubtedly made its way into our hearts. I for one cannot wait to be reunited. ♥



BOOK IT Seven nights B&B for a family of four in a two bedroom Residence is from £4,975, including British Airways flights, private transfers and two places in the Scott Dunn Explorers club. 020 8682 5040. scottdunn.com

