

## The Ronald Brown Pathway (Stražišće peak) Compiled by Mick Melvin.

On April 3, 1996 an American Air Force Boeing 737 on an official trade mission to Croatia crashed into the summit of Stražišće peak (701m) on an approach to Dubrovnik Airport near to Cavtat. All 35 people onboard were killed including Ron Brown who was the United States Secretary of State for Commerce. Walkers can reach the peak using the Ronald Brown Pathway which is an old Austrian Military road renamed to commemorate him.

**Cavtat to Velji Do: 2 hours. Velji Do to Summit: 35 minutes.**

**Summit to Velji Do: 30 minutes. Velji Do to**

**Cavtat: 1 hour 55 minutes.**

**Total ascent: 2300 Feet. Total time not including stops: 5 hours.**

Begin the walk at the main bus station in Cavtat which is situated close to the Marina.

With your back to the bus station, cross the road at the zebra crossing and walk along the ulica Šetalište žal passing the Hotel Cavtat on the right and Tiha bay on your left. Follow the road around the bay keeping the sea on your left until you reach the Albatross Hotel 10 Minutes. When the road turns to the left in front of the hotel, turn right and then sharp left in front of the Villa Bellevue, and take the narrow lane that runs parallel to the main road which is on a lower level.



This quiet lane turns to the right in about 200 yards and reaches a main road. Cross straight over this road and take the narrow lane opposite which, at first appears to enter a private house but soon turns to the left. You are now on a grassy track which is followed over a bridge and passes by a farm before reaching another tarmac road. Turn right onto the road and follow it uphill between houses until you reach the last house on the left. A flight of stone steps goes left up the side of this house and cuts the road corner emerging once again on a tarmac road. Turn left at this road and you soon arrive at the Adriatic Highway in the village of Gornji Obod 23 minutes.



Walk left for 25 metres and cross the highway, you are now at the start of the Ronald Brown Footpath and information board. Walk up the concrete track facing you between houses for 70 metres and when the track turns right, keep straight ahead on a stony/grassy track between a wall on the left and a house on your right. At the top of the house garden turn left to pass through an untidy area and follow the path, much narrower now below the foot of a limestone crag to emerge onto a grassy Landrover track running from left to right. Turn left and pass between two large square concrete blocks.

Walk along this track in a northerly direction for approx 250 metres and keep a look out to the right for a junction marked with a red and white waymark indicating the start of the zig zags. This junction is now signed 'Velji Do' please lookout for it. Once you have started ascending the zig zags you can't get lost. After taking nine left turns you are on quite a long section which climbs steadily up the hill before reaching the second set of zig zags.

The third right turn on these zig zags takes you to an airy viewpoint with good views up and down the coast and the land dropping away to the north and east forms a large hanging valley. The track eases a little now as you make your way round this hillside and in the late morning there is some shade to rest in provided by clumps of trees. The track heads south east then turns to the north east and after briefly walking north, it takes an abrupt turn to the south and you get your first glimpse of the village of Velji Do in a shallow depression. The wooded hillside of Stražišće Peak with its large metallic memorial cross on top is immediately behind the village. The village is the home of a very pleasant restaurant enjoying a reputation for ambiance and good food, Konavoski Komin.



I stopped only to buy a bottle of water and to have a look inside as I had been told that it was something special. You are presented with two choices when moving on from the village. You can do a circular walk to the summit cross and return to the village on a different route, or you can take one leg of the route to the cross and return to the village the same way.

**The circular route from the village:** Leave the restaurant and turn left to ascend a gently climbing tarmac lane. Immediately after passing the last building of the restaurant, a farm track leads down to the left and a bulldozed track leaves the lane and heads off uphill to your right. Take the right hand lane which climbs steeply at first but levels out when it turns to the right and enters a pleasant valley between two wooded hills. Six minutes after leaving the lane a walled field is reached on your left, one minute later watch for a narrow path on the right, marked with a silver post and a red and white waymark. This steep path which is a little rough in places is waymarked with red and white circles the rest of the way to the summit cross, 15 Minutes from the silver post.

As you climb the hillside you are rewarded with magnificent views of the coastal mountains extending up to Dubrovnik. The top of the hill is surprisingly flat and featureless, only broken by the presence of a huge metal silver cross, sat on a large square marble base forming a memorial commemorating the unfortunate people, who with Ronald Brown lost their lives on this spot in the 1996 air crash. To locate the start of the return path, from the cross walk south east in the direction of Cilipi for a few yards until you reach the edge of the summit plateau and pick up a



narrow path that descends the hillside. Remain faithful to this path which is well waymarked and winds its way round the hill to gradually descend to the village. The path emerges in the village of Velji Do at the side of a huge tree almost opposite the entrance to the restaurant.

If you prefer to go to the summit and back the same way, to locate this path use these directions. From the small car park where the track from Gornji Obod enters the village, walk down the lane into the village and just before the road widens in front of the restaurant you

will see a large tree on the right hand side of the road. A narrow red and white waymarked path leaves the lane on the right hand side of this tree. This is the point where the return route from the summit enters the village. Return to Cavtat by reversing your upward journey. The author has no objection to this article being reproduced providing due credit is given.