

History

Croatia has a long and torrid history. Since time immemorial, people have come and gone, invading, trading and settling. For long periods, the Croats have been ruled by and have fought off others – Venetians, Ottomans, Hungarians, Habsburgs. This troubled history has helped define the Croats and contributed much to the fabric of the country.

EARLY INHABITANTS

Around 30,000 years ago, Croatia was the haunt of Neanderthals, who lumbered through the hills of Slavonia. The Croatian Natural History Museum (p77) in Zagreb displays relics of this distant era, and the outdoor 'prehistoric park' at Krapina (p103) offers a general picture of Neanderthal life.

During the third millennium BC, Vučedol, near Vukovar, became the base for a relatively advanced culture, which eventually spread throughout Central Europe. Around the same time, Hvar saw the rise of an early, distinctively Mediterranean culture.

The Illyrians took centre stage in what is now Croatia, Serbia and Albania by around 1000 BC. Historians debate the origins of the Illyrians and whether they were a culturally homogenous people or a loose conglomeration of tribes. Whatever the case, the Illyrians had to contend with Greeks who established trading colonies on the Adriatic coast at Vis and elsewhere by the 4th century BC, and Celts who pushed down from the north.

In 231 BC an uppity Illyrian, Queen Teuta, committed a fatal tactical error in seeking to conquer various Greek colonies. The put-upon Greeks asked the Romans for military support. Thereafter the Romans pushed their way into the region. By 168 BC, they defeated Gentius, the last Illyrian king, and the Illyrians were gradually Latinised.

ROME, THEN BYZANTIUM

The Romans swiftly established the province of Illyricum, then broadened their control along the Dalmatian coast. By 11 BC, Rome had conquered the Pannonian tribes, which inhabited the interior, thus extending their empire's reach to the Danube. The realm was later reorganised into the provinces of Dalmatia (the former Illyricum), and Upper and Lower Pannonia, thus covering much of the interior of modern Croatia.

Roman rule centred on the administrative headquarters of Salona (now Solin). Other important Roman towns included Jadera (Zadar), Parentium (Poreč) and Polensium (Pula). The amphitheatre at Pula (p159) remains an evocative reminder of the glory – and lust for blood – of the Roman era.

The Adriatic is derived from the name of the ancient Illyrian tribe Ardeioi.

TIMELINE

300 BC

Illyrian tribes achieve supremacy in the Balkans founding city states – including Histri (from which the Istrian Peninsula takes its name) and Liburnia – and establishing themselves as maritime powers in the Adriatic.

11 BC

The Roman province of Illyricum, covering present-day Dalmatia, is extended to the Danube after the defeat of Pannonian tribes. The new province takes in much of modern-day Croatia.

AD 257

Salona, the Roman capital, with a population of about 10,000, becomes the first diocese in Roman Dalmatia, thus creating a toehold for Catholicism in the region; within 30 years the Bishop of Salona has become pope.

WHO ARE THE CROATS?

A conundrum surrounds the exact origins of the Croats. While they are clearly related to other Slavic nations, the name by which they know themselves – Hrvat – is not a Slavic word. One theory posits that Hrvat is in fact a Persian word, and the Croats are a Slavic tribe who were briefly ruled – and named – by a ruling cast of Persian-speaking Alans from Central Asia.

The Romans constructed a series of roads reaching to the Aegean and Black seas and the Danube, thus facilitating trade and the spread of Roman culture. The roads also accelerated the spread of Christianity, a religion initially persecuted by the Romans.

In the late 3rd century AD, two strong Dalmatian emperors emerged. Diocletian became emperor in AD 285, and in an effort to simplify the unwieldy empire, he divided it into two administrative halves. In so doing he sowed the seeds for the later division into the Eastern and Western Roman Empires. In AD 305, Diocletian retired to his palace in Spalato (Split; see p220), today the greatest Roman remnant in Eastern Europe.

The last Roman leader to rule a united empire was Theodosius the Great, who adeptly staved off threats from the northern Visigoths. On Theodosius' death in AD 395, the empire was formally divided into eastern and western realms along the perforation created earlier by Diocletian. The eastern half became the Byzantine Empire, which persisted until 1453. Visigoth, Hun and Lombard invasions marked the fall of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century.

ARRIVAL OF THE SLAVS

In the wake of these 'barbarian' tribes, the Croats and other Slavic groups headed south from their original territory north of the Carpathians to fill the vacuum left by the disintegrating Roman Empire. No definitive historical records exist, but it appears that early in the 7th century they moved south across the Danube. Around the same time, the Avars (Eurasian nomads) were sallying around the Balkan fringes of the Byzantine Empire. The Avars were responsible for ravaging the former Roman towns of Salona and Epidaurus, whose inhabitants took refuge in Spalato and Ragusa (Dubrovnik) respectively.

By the middle of the 7th century, the Slavs in the Western Balkans had divided into two distinct groups: the Croats, who settled in Pannonia and Dalmatia forming communities around the Dalmatian towns of Jadera, Acona (Nin) and Tragurium (Trogir); and the Serbs, who settled the central Balkans. By the 8th century the Dalmatian and Pannonian Croats organised themselves into two powerful tribal entities, each led by a duke (*knez*). The Avars, meanwhile, faded into history.

Clearly explaining centuries of complicated events, Marcus Tanner's *Croatia: A Nation Forged in War* sallies from the Roman era to President Tudman, presenting in a lively, readable style the trials and tribulations of Croatian history.

395

On the death of Theodosius the Great, the Roman Empire is split in two. Present-day Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia fall into the Western Roman Empire, with modern Serbia, Kosovo and Macedonia in the Byzantine Empire.

614

Central Asian marauders, the Avars, sack Salona and Epidaurus. Some contend that Slavic tribes, including the Croats, followed in their wake; others say the Croats were invited to the region by Emperor Heraclius to fend off the Avars.

845–64

Trpimir establishes the first Croatian royal line. He fights and defeats the powerful Bulgarian state, as well as inflicting major defeats on the Byzantines. Under Trpimir's rule Croatian territory expands well into what is now Bosnia.

CHRISTIANITY & THE CROAT KINGS

Charlemagne's Franks, who had gradually encroached on Central Europe, seized Dalmatia in AD 800, which led to mass baptisms of the previously pagan Croats. After Charlemagne's death in AD 814, the Pannonian Croats revolted unsuccessfully against Frankish rule without the support of the Dalmatian Croats, whose major coastal cities remained under the influence of the Byzantine Empire.

Trpimir, *knez* from 845 to 864, is widely considered to have founded the first Croatian dynasty. Trpimir's successors held their own among the jostling Adriatic powers of the time until Branimir revolted against Byzantine control and in so doing won recognition for the Croats from Pope John VIII. This brought the Croats into the Vatican's sphere of influence and ensured that Catholicism became a defining feature of Croatian national identity.

Tomislav was the first ruler to unite Pannonian and Dalmatian Croatian entities. He rewarded himself in 925 by crowning himself king, whereas all of his predecessors had worn the mantle of *knez*. Tomislav's realm included virtually all of modern Croatia as well as parts of Bosnia and the coast of Montenegro.

However, the vagaries of history saw the Byzantines and Venetians reimpose themselves on the Dalmatian coast during the 11th century, while new adversaries, the Hungarians, emerged in the north and advanced into Pannonia. Krešimir IV (r 1058–74) turned the tables and regained control of Dalmatia, but Croatia was on the rebound only temporarily. Krešimir was succeeded by Zvonimir and Stjepan, neither of whom produced an heir, and the Hungarians, by stealth and outright invasion, terminated the era of the Croat kings at the end of the 11th century.

COVETOUS NEIGHBOURS: HUNGARY & VENICE

The Hungarian King Koloman imposed the *Pacta conventa* in 1102. This ostensibly stated that Hungary and Croatia were separate entities under a single – Hungarian – monarchy, but in practice, while Croatia maintained a *ban* (viceroy or governor) and *sabor* (parliament), the Hungarians steadily marginalised the Croatian nobility.

Under the Hungarians, Pannonia became known as Slavonia, and the interior towns of Zagreb, Vukovar and Varaždin became thriving centres of trade and culture. In 1107, Koloman talked around the Dalmatian nobility, thus bringing the coast, long coveted by land-locked Hungarian kings, into his realm. However, Koloman's very eagerness for sea access meant he was willing to grant Dalmatian cities more autonomy than others in the kingdom. But the Venetians, who had tarried a while, returned soon enough. Upon Koloman's death in 1116, Venice launched new assaults on Biograd and the islands of Lošinj, Pag, Rab and Krk.

Dalmatian dogs are thought to be one of the oldest breeds; however, there is no conclusive evidence that they originated in Dalmatia. Some experts on the breed believe the dogs may have been brought to Dalmatia by the Roma.

869

At the behest of Byzantium, Macedonian monks Methodius and Cyril create the Cyrillic alphabet, specifically with a view to speeding the spread of Christianity among the Slavic peoples.

910–28

Tomislav proclaims himself king while making territorial expansion at the expense of the Hungarians and defeating Bulgarian Tsar Simeon in modern Bosnia. During his reign, Tomislav unites Pannonian and Dalmatian Croats.

1000

Venice capitalises on a lack of stability in Croatia to begin encroaching on the Dalmatian coast. So begins what is to become a recurring theme: the tussle between Venice and other powers for control of Dalmatia.

THE VENETIAN YOKE

For nearly 800 years the doges of Venice sought to control, colonise and exploit the Croatian coast. Coastal and island towns from Rovinj in the north to Korčula in the south still show a marked Venetian influence in architecture, cuisine and culture, but, as in Venice's other dominions, the period was not a happy time.

Venetian rule in Dalmatia and Istria was a record of virtually unbroken economic exploitation. The Venetians systematically denuded the landscape in order to provide timber for their ships. State monopolies set artificially low prices for olive oil, figs, wine, fish and salt, thus ensuring cheap commodities for Venetian buyers, while local merchants and producers were impoverished and threadbare. Shipbuilding was effectively banned, since Venice tolerated no competition with its own ships. No roads or schools were built, and no investment was made in local industry.

In the meantime, Zadar had grown to be the largest and most prosperous Dalmatian city. It succeeded in fending off two Venetian naval expeditions in the 1190s. A vengeful Venetian doge in 1202 paid the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade to attack and sack Zadar; this they did before rumbling on to turn Constantinople on its ear.

But there was more trouble on the horizon. In 1242, the Mongol juggernaut in Central Europe inevitably rolled through Hungary. King Bela IV of Hungary fled the onslaught taking refuge in Trogir, but the Croatian interior was ravaged. As ever, the opportunistic Venetians hovered on the periphery and took advantage of the confusion to consolidate their hold on Zadar. The death of King Bela in 1270 led to another power struggle among the Croatian nobility, which allowed Venice to add Šibenik and Trogir to its possessions.

King Ludovic (Louis) I of Hungary (r 1342–82) re-established control over the country and even persuaded Venice to relinquish Dalmatia. But the Hungarian victory was short-lived. New conflicts emerged upon Ludovic's death and the Croatian nobility rallied around Ladislav of Naples who was crowned king in Zadar in 1403. Short of funds, Ladislav then sold Zadar to Venice in 1409 for a paltry 100,000 ducats and renounced his rights to Dalmatia. In the early 15th century, Venice solidified its grip on the Dalmatian coastline south from Zadar and remained in control until the Napoleonic invasion of 1797. Only the wily citizens of Ragusa (Dubrovnik) managed to retain their independence.

The Balkans, by noted historian Mark Mazower, is a highly readable short introduction to the region. It offers clearly discussed overviews of geography, culture and the broad historical sweep of the Balkans in general.

HOVERING OTTOMANS

As if Croatia hadn't had enough to contend with as Venetians, Hungarians, Mongols and others picked at the remnants of the original Croatian state, another threat loomed from the east during the 14th century. The Ottoman Turks had emerged out of Anatolia in the early 1300s and rapidly swallowed up the Balkans. The Serbs were rolled at Kosovo Polje in 1389, a hastily

1058–74

Krešimir IV is recognised by the pope as king of Dalmatia and Croatia. Coming soon after the Great Schism of 1054, which split the church into Orthodox and Catholic realms, this places Croatia squarely within the Catholic sphere.

1091–1102

Hungarian King Ladislav, related by marriage to the late King Zvonimir, claims the Slavonian throne; his successor, Koloman, defeats the last Croatian king, Petar, and cements Hungarian control of Croatia with the *Pacta conventa*.

1242

The Mongols rumble through, devastating Hungary and Croatia and their royal houses. Nobility, including the Šubić and Frankopan families, steps into the breach to assume a degree of political and economic power that persists for centuries.

THE REPUBLIC OF RAGUSA

While most of the Dalmatian coast struggled under Venetian rule for many years, Ragusa (now Dubrovnik) led a charmed life, existing as a republic in its own right. A ruling class, abounding in business acumen and diplomatic skill, ensured that this miniscule city-state punched well above its weight and played a significant role in the immediate region and beyond.

The Ragusans asked the pope for permission to trade with the Turks in 1371 and subsequently established trade centres throughout the Ottoman Empire. Burgeoning trade led to a flowering in the arts and sciences. The Ragusans, once described as 'mild and noble', were extremely liberal for the time, abolishing the slave trade in the 15th century, and advanced in the realms of science, establishing a system of quarantine in 1377.

However, they had to maintain a perilous position sandwiched between Ottoman and Venetian interests. An earthquake in 1667 caused a great deal of damage, and Napoleon finally swallowed up the republic in 1808.

Šibenik-born Faust Vrančić (1551–1617) made the first working parachute.

The neck tie is a descendant of the *cravat*, which originated in Croatia as part of military attire and was adopted by the French in the 17th century. The name 'cravat' is a corruption of Croat and Hrvat.

choreographed anti-Turkish crusade was garrotted in Hungary in 1396, Bosnia was despatched in 1463 and when the Croatian nobility finally faced up to the Ottomans in 1493 in Krbavsko Polje, they too were pummelled.

Despite a sudden show of unity among the remaining noble families, one city after another fell to the Ottoman sultans. The important bishopric at Zagreb heavily fortified the cathedral in Kaptol, which remained untouched, but the gateway town of Knin fell in 1521. Five years later, the Ottomans engaged the Hungarians in Mohács. Again the Turks were victorious, the might of the Hungarian army was annulled and by knock-on effect the era of Hungarian domination of Croatia was ended. The Croats then turned to the Austrians for protection and were duly absorbed into the Habsburg Empire, ruled from Vienna. Nevertheless, by the end of the century only a narrow strip of territory around Zagreb, Karlovac and Varaždin was under Habsburg control. The Adriatic coast was threatened by the Turks but never captured, and Ragusa maintained its independence throughout the turmoil.

Turkish assaults on the Balkans caused massive disruptions. Cities and towns were destroyed, people were enslaved and commandeered to the Ottoman war machine, and movements of refugees created havoc in the region. The Habsburgs sought to build a buffer against the Ottomans, creating the *Vojna Krajina* (Military Frontier), a string of forts south of Zagreb, and a region in which a standing army, largely of Vlachs and Serbs, faced down the Ottomans.

Exactly a century after their defeat by the Ottomans, the Croats managed to turn the tables on the Turks. At Sisak in 1593 the Habsburg army, including Croat soldiers, finally inflicted a defeat on the Ottomans. In 1699 in *Sremski Karlovci* the Ottomans sued for peace for the first time and the Turkish stranglehold on Central Europe was loosened. The Habsburgs

1300s

The Hungarian Anjou dynasty under Carl (Charles) and Louis (Ludovic) reasserts royal authority in Croatia and endeavours to expel the Venetians who had recently taken Dalmatian territory. Venice is ejected, albeit temporarily.

1358

Ragusa (modern Dubrovnik) prides itself from the clutches of Venice and establishes itself as a city republic. It grows to become an advanced and liberal society, while cannily fending off Venetians and Ottomans.

1409

Ladislas of Naples assumes the throne of Croatia but dynastic squabbling puts him to flight. He sells Dalmatia to Venice for 100,000 ducats. Within a decade Venetian control extends along the coast from Zadar to Ragusa.

reclaimed Slavonia soon after, thus expanding the Krajina. And while the Turkish threat may have been eliminated, the Hungarians reasserted their authority over the Croats within the pecking order of the Habsburg Empire. This period's rule saw a return to stability and advances in agricultural production, but Croatian culture and language were neglected. Meanwhile, the Venetians, no longer troubled by Ottoman navies, pestered the Dalmatian coast again.

NAPOLEON & THE ILLYRIAN PROVINCES

Habsburg support for the restoration of the French monarchy provoked Napoleon to invade Italian states in 1796. After conquering Venice in 1797 he agreed to transfer Dalmatia to Austria in the Treaty of Campo Formio in exchange for other concessions. Croatian hopes that Dalmatia would be united with Slavonia were soon dashed as the Habsburgs made it clear that the two territories would retain separate administrations.

Austrian control of Dalmatia only lasted until Napoleon's 1805 victory over Austrian and Prussian forces at Austerlitz, which forced Austria to cede the Dalmatian coast to France. Ragusa quickly surrendered to French forces, which also swallowed up Kotor in Montenegro. Napoleon renamed his conquest the 'Illyrian provinces' and moved with characteristic swiftness to reform the neglected territory. A tree-planting program was implemented to reforest the barren hills. Since almost the entire population was illiterate, the new government set up primary schools, high schools and a college at Zadar. Roads and hospitals were built and new crops introduced. Yet the French regime remained unpopular, partly because the anticlerical French were staunchly opposed by the clergy and also because the population was heavily taxed to pay for the reforms.

The fall of the Napoleonic empire after Napoleon's Russian campaign led to the 1815 Congress of Vienna, which recognised Austria's claims to Dalmatia and placed the rest of Croatia under the jurisdiction of Austria's Hungarian province. For the Dalmatians the new regime meant a return to the status quo, since the Austrians restored the former Italian elite to power. For the northern Croats the agreement meant they remained hobbled, as the Hungarians imposed the Hungarian language and culture on the population.

Napoleon, flush with Enlightenment fervour, had aimed to create a south Slavic consciousness. This sense of a shared identity eventually manifested itself in an 'Illyrian' movement in the 1830s that centred on the revival of the Croatian language. Napoleon's grand plan was to foster Serbian culture, too, but since Serbia remained under Ottoman occupation, Croatia first took the baton. Traditionally, upper-class Dalmatians spoke Italian, and northern Croats spoke German or Hungarian. The establishment of the first Illyrian newspaper in 1834, written in Zagreb dialect, prompted the Croatian *sabor* to call for the teaching of Slavic languages in schools.

Misha Glenny's *The Balkans: Nationalism, War & the Great Powers, 1804–1999* explores the history of outside interference in the Balkans. His *The Fall of Yugoslavia* deciphers the complex politics, history and cultural flare-ups that led to the wars of the 1990s.

The ballpoint pen and fountain pen were invented in 1906 by the Croatian Slavoljub Penkala (1871–1922), who also introduced the hot-water bottle and a laundry blueing agent.

1493

At Krbavsko Polje a joint Croatian-Hungarian army engages the Turks but is obliterated, leaving Croatia open to Turkish raids. The Turkish advance in the region brings turmoil, as populations flee and famine ensues.

1526–27

At the Battle of Mohács, the all-powerful Ottoman Turks annihilate the Hungarian nobility, thus ending Hungarian control of Croatia. Hungarian King Louis dies without an heir, allowing the Austrian Habsburgs to assume control of Hungary.

1537–40

The Turks, under Sultan Suleyman, take Klis, the last Croatian bastion in Dalmatia. The Turkish advance continues to Sisak, just south of Zagreb. For reasons unknown, the Turks never push on to Zagreb.

Nikola Tesla (1856–1943), the father of the radio and alternating electric current technology, was born in Croatia. The Tesla unit for magnetic induction was named after him.

In the wake of the 1848 revolution in Paris, the Hungarians began agitating for reform within the Habsburg Empire. The Croats, in turn, saw this as a way of reclaiming their autonomy and unifying Dalmatia, the Krajina and Slavonia. The Habsburgs paid lip service to Croatian sentiments and appointed Josip Jelačić *ban* of Croatia. Jelačić promptly called elections, claimed a mandate and declared war on Hungarian agitators in order to curry favour with the Habsburgs. Jelačić is immortalised in a martial pose in the heart of Zagreb (p79), but the Habsburgs quietly ignored his demands for autonomy.

DREAMS OF YUGOSLAVIA

Disillusionment spread after 1848, and was amplified after the birth of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy in 1867. The monarchy placed Croatia and Slavonia within the Hungarian administration, while Dalmatia remained within Austria. Whatever limited form of self-government the Croats enjoyed under the Habsburgs disappeared.

The river of discontent forked into two streams that dominated the political landscape for the next century. The old 'Illyrian' movement became the National Party, dominated by the brilliant Bishop Josif Juraj Strossmayer. Strossmayer believed that the differences between Serbs and Croats were magnified by the manipulations of the Habsburgs and the Hungarians, and that only through Jugoslavenstvo (south Slavic unity) could the aspirations of both peoples be realised. Strossmayer supported the Serbian independence struggle in Serbia but favoured a Yugoslav (ie south Slavic) entity within the Austro-Hungarian Empire rather than complete independence.

By contrast, the Party of Rights, led by the militantly anti-Serb Ante Starčević, envisioned an independent Croatia made up of Slavonia, Dalmatia, the Krajina, Slovenia, Istria, and part of Bosnia and Hercegovina. At the time, the Eastern Orthodox Church was encouraging the Serbs to form a national identity based upon their religion. Until the 19th century, Orthodox inhabitants of Croatia identified themselves as Vlachs, Morlachs, Serbs, Orthodox or even Greeks, but with the help of Starčević's attacks, the sense of a separate Serbian Orthodox identity within Croatia developed.

Under the theory of 'divide and rule', the Hungarian-appointed *ban* of Croatia blatantly favoured the Serbs and the Orthodox Church, but his strategy backfired. The first organised resistance formed in Dalmatia. Croat representatives in Rijeka and Serb representatives in Zadar joined together in 1905 to demand the unification of Dalmatia and Slavonia with a formal guarantee of Serbian equality as a nation. The spirit of unity mushroomed, and by 1906 Croat-Serb coalitions had taken over local government in Dalmatia and Slavonia, forming a serious threat to the Hungarian power structure. During the Balkan wars of 1912–13, newly independent Serbia won considerable prestige in advancing into Ottoman territory in Europe.

1593

At Sisak, previously the Ottoman high-tide mark, the Habsburgs inflict the first major defeat on the Ottomans, thus proving the Turks were not invincible and prefiguring the long, slow Turkish retreat from Central Europe.

1671

A deputation led by Franjo Frankopan and Petar Zrinski, with the aim of ridding Croatia of Hungarian domination, is cut short. Frankopan and Zrinski are hanged and their lands confiscated by the Habsburgs.

1699

At the Treaty of Karlovci, the Ottomans renounce all claims to Croatia. However, rather than allowing Croatia to assume control of its territory, Venice and Hungary reclaim all freed lands over the next 20 years.

THE KINGDOM OF SERBS, CROATS & SLOVENES

With the outbreak of WWI, Croatia's future was again up for grabs. Sensing that they would once again be pawns to the Great Powers, a Croatian delegation, the 'Yugoslav Committee', convinced the Serbian government to agree to the establishment of a parliamentary monarchy that would rule over the two countries. The Yugoslav Committee became the National Council of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918 and it quickly negotiated the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes to be based in Belgrade. Although many Croats were unsure about Serbian intentions, they were very sure about Italian intentions, since Italy lost no time in seizing Pula, Rijeka and Zadar in November 1918. Effectively given a choice between throwing in their lot with Italy or Serbia, the Croats chose Serbia.

Problems with the kingdom began almost immediately. As under the Habsburgs, the Croats enjoyed scant autonomy. Currency reforms benefited Serbs at the expense of the Croats. A treaty between Yugoslavia and Italy gave Istria, Zadar and a number of islands to Italy. The new constitution abolished Croatia's *sabor* and centralised power in Belgrade, while new electoral districts severely under-represented the Croats.

Opposition to the new regime was led by the Croat Stjepan Radić, who favoured the idea of Yugoslavia but wished to transform it into a federal democracy. His alliance with the Serb Svetozar Pribičević proved profoundly threatening to the regime and Radić was assassinated in 1928. Exploiting fears of civil war, on 6 January 1929 King Aleksandar in Belgrade proclaimed a royal dictatorship, abolished political parties and suspended parliamentary government, thus ending any hope of democratic change. Meanwhile, during the 1920s the Yugoslav communist party arose; Josip Broz Tito was to become leader in 1937.

Ivan Vučićić (1858–1925), the man who developed dactyloscopy (fingerprint identification), was born on the island of Hvar.

THE RISE OF USTAŠE & WWII

One day after the proclamation, a Bosnian Croat, Ante Pavelić, claiming inspiration from Mussolini, set up the Ustaše Croatian Liberation Movement in Zagreb with the stated aim of establishing an independent state, by force if necessary. Fearing arrest, he fled to Sofia in Bulgaria and made contact with anti-Serbian Macedonian revolutionaries before fleeing to Italy. There, he established training camps for his organisation under Mussolini's benevolent eye. After organising various disturbances, in 1934 he and the Macedonians succeeded in assassinating King Aleksandar in Marseilles while he was on a state visit. Italy responded by closing down the training camps and imprisoning Pavelić and many of his followers.

When Germany invaded Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, the exiled Ustaše were quickly installed by the Germans with the support of the Italians who hoped to see their own territorial aims in Dalmatia realised. Within days the

1780s

The Habsburgs begin a process of Germanisation, ordering all administration be conducted in German. This creates 'blowback' in the form of rising nationalist feelings among the Habsburg's non-German subjects.

1797–1815

Napoleon brings the Venetian Republic to an end; Venetian dominions are initially given to the Habsburgs, but in 1806 Napoleon gains the Adriatic coast, which he dubs the 'Illyrian provinces'. He begins a program of reform.

1830–50

The south Slavic consciousness is awakened, aiming to reverse the processes of Hungarianisation and Germanisation under the Habsburgs. An offshoot is the Croatian National Revival.

For a quirky, or perhaps reverent (who can tell?) look at Tito, visit his home page: www.titoville.com. Enjoy pictures of him in statesmanlike poses, scripts from his speeches, lists of his 'wives' and jokes about him.

Independent State of Croatia (NDH; Nezavisna Država Hrvatska), headed by Pavelić, issued a range of decrees designed to persecute and eliminate the regime's 'enemies', a thinly veiled reference to the Jews, Roma and Serbs. The majority of the Jewish population was rounded up and packed off to extermination camps between 1941 and 1945.

Serbs fared little better. The Ustaše program explicitly called for 'one-third of Serbs killed, one-third expelled and one-third converted to Catholicism', an agenda that was carried out with appalling brutality. Villages conducted their own personal pogroms against Serbs and extermination camps were set up, most notoriously at Jasenovac (south of Zagreb), where Jews, Roma and antifascist Croats were killed. The exact number of Serb victims is uncertain and controversial, with Croat historians tending to minimise the figures and Serbian historians tending to maximise them. In all, around one in six Serbs was killed.

TITO & THE PARTISANS

Not all Croats supported these policies, and some spoke out against them. The Ustaše regime drew most of its support from the Lika region southwest of Zagreb and western Hercegovina, but Pavelić's agreement to cede a good part of Dalmatia to Italy was highly unpopular and the Ustaše had almost no support in that region.

Armed resistance to the regime took the form of Serbian 'Četnik' formations led by General Draža Mihailović. The Četniks began as an antifascist rebellion but soon retaliated against the Ustaše with in-kind massacres of Croats in eastern Croatia and Bosnia.

The most effective antifascist struggle was conducted by National Liberation Partisan units and their leader, Josip Broz, known as Tito (see opposite). With their roots in the outlawed Yugoslavian Communist Party, the Partisans attracted long-suffering Yugoslav intellectuals, Croats disgusted with Četnik massacres, Serbs disgusted with Ustaše massacres, and antifascists of all kinds. The Partisans gained wide popular support with their early manifesto, which, although vague, appeared to envision a postwar Yugoslavia that would be based on a loose federation.

Although the Allies initially backed the Serbian Četniks, it became apparent that the Partisans were waging a far more focused and determined fight against the Nazis. With the diplomatic and military support of Churchill and other Allied powers, the Partisans controlled much of Croatia by 1943. They established functioning local governments in the territory they seized, which later eased their transition to power. On 20 October 1944, the Partisans entered Belgrade alongside the Red Army. When Germany surrendered in 1945, Pavelić and the Ustaše fled and the Partisans entered Zagreb.

The remnants of the NDH army, desperate to avoid falling into the hands of the Partisans, attempted to cross into Austria. A small British contingent

1867

The Habsburg throne devolves to become the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary. Croatian territory is divided between them: Dalmatia is awarded to Austria, and Slavonia is under Hungarian control.

1905

Burgeoning Croatian national consciousness is clearly visible in the Rijeka Resolution, which, aside from making demands for increased democracy, calls for the reunification of Dalmatia and Slavonia. A Serb-Croatian coalition forms soon after.

1908

Austria-Hungary assumes control of Bosnia and Hercegovina, thus bringing the Slavic Muslims of the Balkans within its sphere of responsibility, and unwittingly creating the nucleus of the future Yugoslav federation.

TITO

Josip Broz was born in Kumrovec in 1892 to a Croat father and Slovene mother. When WWI broke out, Tito was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian army and was taken prisoner by the Russians. He escaped just before the 1917 revolution, became a communist and joined the Red Army. He returned to Croatia in 1920 and became a union organiser while working as a metalworker.

As secretary of the Zagreb committee of the outlawed Communist Party, he worked to unify the party and increase its membership. When the Nazis invaded in 1941, he adopted the name Tito and organised small bands of guerrillas, which formed the core of the Partisan movement. His successful campaigns attracted military support from the British and Americans, but the Soviet Union, despite sharing his communist ideology, repeatedly rebuffed his requests for aid.

In 1945 he became prime minister of a reconstituted Yugoslavia. Although retaining a communist ideology, and remaining nominally loyal to Russia, Tito had an independent streak. In 1948 he fell out with Stalin and adopted a conciliatory policy towards the West.

Yugoslavia's rival nationalities were Tito's biggest headache, which he dealt with by suppressing all dissent and trying to ensure a rough equality of representation at the upper echelons of government. As a committed communist, he viewed ethnic disputes as unwelcome deviations from the pursuit of the common good.

Yet Tito was well aware of the ethnic tensions that simmered just below the surface of Yugoslavia. Preparations for his succession began in the early 1970s as he aimed to create a balance of power among the ethnic groups of Yugoslavia. He set up a collective presidency that was to rotate annually but the system proved unworkable. Later events revealed how dependent Yugoslavia was on its wily, charismatic leader.

When Tito died in May 1980, his body was carried from Ljubljana (Slovenia) to Belgrade (Serbia). Thousands of mourners flocked the streets to pay respects to the man who had united a difficult country for 35 years. It was the last communal outpouring of emotion that Yugoslavia's fractious nationalities were able to share.

met the 50,000 troops and promised to intern them outside Yugoslavia. It was a trick. The troops were forced into trains that headed back into Yugoslavia where the Partisans awaited them. The ensuing massacre claimed the lives of at least 30,000 men (although the exact number is in doubt) and left a permanent stain on the Yugoslav government.

YUGOSLAVIA

Tito's attempt to retain control of the Italian city of Trieste and parts of southern Austria faltered in the face of Allied opposition, but Dalmatia and most of Istria were made a permanent part of postwar Yugoslavia. In creating the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Tito was determined to forge a state in which no ethnic group dominated the political landscape. Croatia became one of six republics – along with Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Slovenia – in a tightly configured federation.

1918

The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes is created after the Serbs and others break away from Austria-Hungary. Serbian Prince Aleksander Karađorđević assumes the throne. Montenegro and Macedonian territory is included in his domains.

1920

Stjepan Radić establishes the Croatian Republican Peasant Party. It becomes the primary voice for Croatian interests in the face of Serb domination. In the same year, the communist party, later led by Tito, is established.

1941

Ante Pavelić proclaims the Independent State of Croatia (NDH), a Nazi puppet state. Pavelić's Ustaše begins a brutal persecution of Serbs, Roma and Jews; the Serbs respond by forming the Četniks, who harass Croatian populations.

However, Tito effected this delicate balance by creating a one-party state and rigorously stamping out all opposition.

During the 1960s, the concentration of power in Belgrade was an increasingly testy issue as it became apparent that money from the more prosperous republics of Slovenia and Croatia was being distributed to the poorer autonomous province of Kosovo and the republic of Bosnia and Hercegovina. The problem seemed particularly blatant in Croatia, which saw money from its prosperous tourist business on the Adriatic coast flow into Belgrade. At the same time, Serbs in Croatia were over-represented in the government, armed forces and police.

In Croatia the unrest reached a crescendo in the 'Croatian Spring' of 1971. Led by reformers within the Communist Party of Croatia, intellectuals and students called for greater economic autonomy and constitutional reform to loosen Croatia's ties to Yugoslavia, but nationalistic elements manifested themselves as well. Tito fought back, clamping down on the liberalisation that had gradually been gaining momentum in Yugoslavia. Serbs viewed the movement as the Ustaše reborn; in turn, jailed reformers blamed the Serbs for their troubles. The stage was set for the rise of nationalism and the war of the 1990s, even though Tito's 1974 constitution afforded the republics more autonomy.

Croatia Through History by Branka Magaš is a highly detailed doorstopper of a history, focusing on pivotal events and clearly delineating the gradual development of Croatian national identity.

THE COLLAPSE OF YUGOSLAVIA

Tito left a shaky Yugoslavia upon his death in May 1980. The economy was in a parlous state and a presidency rotating among the six republics could not compensate for the loss of his steady hand at the helm. The authority of the central government sank along with the economy, and long-suppressed mistrust among Yugoslavia's ethnic groups resurfaced.

In 1989 repression of the Albanian majority in Serbia's Kosovo province sparked renewed fears of Serbian hegemony and precipitated the end of the Yugoslav Federation. With political changes sweeping Eastern Europe, Slovenia embarked on a course for independence and many Croats felt the time had come for them to also achieve autonomy. In the Croatian elections of April 1990, Franjo Tudman's Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ; Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica) secured 40% of the vote, to the 30% won by the Communist Party, which retained the loyalty of the Serbian community as well as voters in Istria and Rijeka. On 22 December 1990, a new Croatian constitution was promulgated, changing the status of Serbs in Croatia from that of a 'constituent nation' to a national minority.

The constitution's failure to guarantee minority rights, and the mass dismissals of Serbs from the public service, stimulated the 600,000-strong ethnic Serb community within Croatia to demand autonomy. In early 1991, Serb extremists within Croatia staged provocations designed to force federal military intervention. A May 1991 referendum (boycotted by the Serbs)

1943

Tito's communist Partisans achieve military victories and build a popular antifascist front. They reclaim territory from retreating Italian brigades. The British and US lend military support.

1945–48

The Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia is founded. In time, Tito breaks with Stalin and steers a careful course between Eastern and Western blocs, building the economic middle way of syndicalism and founding the nonaligned movement.

1960s

Croatian unrest about the centralisation of power in Belgrade builds. The use of Croatian money to support poorer provinces is resented, along with the over-representation of Serbs in the Croatian government, armed forces and police.

produced a 93% vote in favour of Croatian independence, but when Croatia declared independence on 25 June 1991, the Serbian enclave of Krajina proclaimed its independence from Croatia.

THE WAR FOR CROATIA

Under pressure from the EU, Croatia declared a three-month moratorium on its independence, but heavy fighting broke out in Krajina, Baranja and Slavonia, initiating what Croats refer to as the Homeland War. The Yugoslav People's Army, dominated by Serbs, began to intervene on its own authority in support of Serbian irregulars under the pretext of halting ethnic violence. When the Croatian government ordered a blockade of federal military installations in the republic, the Yugoslav navy blockaded the Adriatic coast and laid siege to the strategic town of Vukovar on the Danube. During the summer of 1991, a quarter of Croatia fell to Serb militias and the Serb-led Yugoslav People's Army.

In late 1991, the federal army and Montenegrin militia moved against Dubrovnik (see boxed text, p263, for more), and the presidential palace in Zagreb was hit by rockets fired by Yugoslav jets in an apparent assassination attempt on President Tudman. When the three-month moratorium on independence ended, Croatia declared full independence. Soon after, Vukovar finally fell when the Yugoslav army moved in, in one of the more bloodthirsty acts in all of the wars in the former Yugoslavia (see boxed text, p115). During six months of fighting in Croatia, 10,000 people died, hundreds of thousands fled and tens of thousands of homes were destroyed.

Beginning on 3 January 1992, a UN-brokered ceasefire generally held. The federal army was allowed to withdraw from its bases inside Croatia and tensions diminished. At the same time, the EU, succumbing to pressure from Germany, recognised Croatia. This was followed by US recognition and in May Croatia was admitted to the UN.

The UN peace plan in Krajina was intended to bring about the disarming of local Serb paramilitary formations, the repatriation of refugees and the return of the region to Croatia. Instead, it only froze the existing situation and offered no permanent solution. In January 1993, the Croatian army suddenly launched an offensive in southern Krajina, pushing the Serbs back in some areas and recapturing strategic points. The Krajina Serbs vowed never to accept rule from Zagreb and in June 1993 they voted overwhelmingly to join the Bosnian Serbs (and eventually Greater Serbia); continued 'ethnic cleansing' left only about 900 Croats in Krajina out of an original population of 44,000. A comprehensive ceasefire in early 2004 substantially reduced the violence in the region and established demilitarised 'zones of separation' between the parties.

In the meantime, neighbouring Bosnia had been subjected to similar treatment at the hands of the Yugoslav army and Serbian paramilitaries.

Blanka Raguz' *Labyrinth* is a coming-of-age story set during the tragic fall of Vukovar, painting a stark yet humane representation of tragic events little-known to the outside world.

1971

In the 'Croatian Spring' Communist Party reformers, intellectuals, students and nationalists call for greater economic and constitutional autonomy for Croatia.

1980

President Tito dies. There is a genuine outpouring of grief, and tributes are paid from around the world; however, Yugoslavia is beset by inflation, unemployment and foreign debt, setting the scene for the difficulties to come.

1989

The communist system begins to collapse in Eastern Europe; Franjo Tuđman establishes the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), the first noncommunist party in Yugoslavia. Early in 1990 Tuđman is sworn in as president.

Richard Holbrooke's *To End A War* recounts the events surrounding the Dayton Accords. As the American diplomat who prodded the warring parties to the negotiating table to hammer out a peace accord, Holbrooke was in a unique position to evaluate the personalities and politics of the region.

Initially, in the face of Serbian advances, Bosnia's Croats and Muslims had banded together but in 1993 the two sides fell out and began fighting each other. The Bosnian Croats, with tacit support from Zagreb, were responsible for several horrific events in Bosnia, including the destruction of the old bridge in Mostar. This conflagration was extinguished when the US fostered the development of the Muslim-Croatian federation in 1994 while the world looked on in horror at the Serb siege of Sarajevo.

While these grim events unfolded in Bosnia and Hercegovina, the Croatian government quietly began procuring arms from abroad. On 1 May 1995, the Croatian army and police entered occupied western Slavonia, east of Zagreb, and seized control of the region within days. The Krajina Serbs responded by shelling Zagreb in an attack that left seven people dead and 130 wounded. As the Croatian military consolidated its hold in western Slavonia, some 15,000 Serbs fled the region despite assurances from the Croatian government that they were safe from retribution.

Belgrade's silence throughout this campaign showed that the Krajina Serbs had lost the support of their Serbian sponsors, encouraging Croats to forge ahead. On 4 August the military launched a massive assault on the rebel Serb capital of Knin. The Serb army fled towards northern Bosnia, along with 150,000 civilians whose roots in the Krajina stretched back centuries. The military operation ended in days, but was followed by months of terror. Widespread looting and burning of Serb villages seemed designed to ensure the permanence of this huge population shift.

The Dayton Accords signed in Paris in December 1995 recognised Croatia's traditional borders and provided for the return of eastern Slavonia. The transition proceeded relatively smoothly, but the two populations still regard each other with suspicion and hostility.

POSTWAR MOVES TOWARDS EUROPE

Hostilities over, a degree of stability returned to Croatia. A key provision of the agreement was the promise by the Croatian government to facilitate the return of Serbian refugees, a promise that is far from being fulfilled. Although the central government in Zagreb made the return of refugees a priority in accordance with the demands of the international community, its efforts have often been subverted by local authorities intent on maintaining the ethnic purity of their regions. In many cases, Croat refugees from Bosnia and Hercegovina have occupied houses abandoned by their Serb owners. Serbs intending to reclaim their property face a forbidding array of legal impediments in establishing a claim to their former dwellings, plus substantial obstacles in finding employment in what are now economically precarious regions. Twelve years after the cessation of hostilities, only about half have returned.

On the political scene, Franjo Tudman, the strong man of the war era, rapidly declined in popularity once the country was no longer under threat.

1991

The Croatian *sabor* (parliament) proclaims the independence of Croatia; Krajina Serbs declare independence from Croatia, with support of Slobodan Milošević who is pursuing a dream of Greater Serbia. War breaks out between Croats and Serbs.

1992

A first UN-brokered ceasefire takes effect temporarily. The EU recognises Croatian independence and Croatia is admitted into the UN in the (unrealised) hope that official recognition will halt fighting. War breaks out in neighbouring Bosnia.

1995

The 'Bljesak' (Lightning) military campaign sees Croatian forces reclaiming lost Croatian territory and expelling Serbs from Krajina. This reversal of military fortunes leads to the Dayton Accords, bringing peace and establishing Croatia's borders.

His combination of authoritarianism and media control, resurrection of old NDH symbolism, and tendency to be influenced by the far right no longer appealed to the weary Croatian populace. By 1999 opposition parties united to work against Tuđman and the HDZ. Tuđman was hospitalised and died suddenly in late 1999, and planned elections were postponed until January 2000. Still, voters turned out in favour of a centre-left coalition, ousting the HDZ and voting the centrist Stipe Mesić into the presidency.

The 2000 election results illustrated that Croatia had made a distinct turn towards the West and integration in modern Europe. The country gradually began welcoming foreign tourists again, and the economy opened up to foreign competition. This westward lilt lost some momentum when the International War Crimes Tribunal indicted two Croatian generals for crimes against the Serbian populations of Krajina. The handing over of General Norac to the Hague in 2001 proved a divisive issue among Croats, and perhaps explains the return of the HDZ to power in the elections of late 2003. However, by this time the HDZ had pragmatically abandoned the hardline stance of the Tuđman era and was, like the centrist parties, focused on economic reform and attaining membership of the EU and NATO. Above all, the peaceful transition of power was interpreted by Europe as evidence of the maturity of Croatian democracy. The handover of General Ante Gotovina to the Hague in 2005 was the main condition for the beginning of Croatia's negotiations to join the EU, though these discussions have been slowed down by various hurdles, such as the reforms of the country's judiciary system and the fight against corruption. The proposed joining date is anywhere between 2009 and 2012.

Dubrovnik: A History by Robin Harris is a thoughtful and thorough look at the great city, investigating events, individuals and movements that have contributed to the architectural and cultural fabric of the 'pearl of the Adriatic'.

1999

Croatia's first president, Franjo Tuđman, dies; elections the following January are convincingly won by a coalition of anti-Tuđman parties. The centrist coalition is led by Ivica Račan (prime minister) and Stipe Mesić (president).

2003

The HDZ returns to power, having abandoned the nationalistic baggage it had borne under Tuđman. This time it has an agenda of economic reform and a goal of UN and NATO membership.

2005

War crimes suspect Ante Gotovina is captured and handed to the International War Crimes Tribunal. The arrest of Gotovina, considered by some Croats as a war hero, is controversial in Croatia but is regarded positively by the EU.

The Culture

THE NATIONAL PSYCHE

Like in all countries in the world, a collective 'national psyche' is subject to a variety of nuances, regional differences and historical heritage. With its capital on the continent and the majority of its big cities on the coast, Croatia is torn between a more serious and *mitteleuropean* mindset in Zagreb and northern Croatia (with meaty food, Austrian architecture and a strong interest in personal advancement over pleasure) and the coastal, more relaxed, Mediterranean character. The Istrians, bilingual in Italian and Croatian, have a strong Italian influence, while the Dalmatians are generally a relaxed and easygoing bunch: many offices empty out at 3pm, allowing people to enjoy the long hours of sunlight on a beach or at an outdoor café. Most people involved in the tourist industry speak German, English and Italian, though English is the most widely spoken language among the young.

The vast majority of Croats have a strong cultural identification with Western Europe and like to think of themselves as especially more Western than their 'Eastern' Bosnian or Serbian neighbours. The idea that Croatia is the last stop before the Ottoman East is prevalent in all segments of the population, though this idea is questionable when considering the recently overwhelming popularity of Serbian turbo folk in Croatia (see p48), a type of music frowned upon and avoided during the 1990s war. It seems that with the national tensions of the 1990s easing up, the connecting Balkan elements are again being embraced in some parts of Croatia's society.

Attitudes towards Croatia joining the EU are divided. Most people are enthusiastic, though the enthusiasm is starting to droop with, according to some locals, 'an endless list of rules' presented to the country, and the date for joining – anywhere between 2009 and 2012 – edging out of reach. Predictably, it's the younger generations who are more geared towards joining the EU, while the older generations lament the loss of industrial and agricultural independence that will inevitably happen when the country joins up.

The word 'normal' pops up frequently in Croatian conversations about themselves. 'We want to be a normal country', they might say. Croats will frequently make a distinction between rabid, flag-waving nationalists and 'normal people' who only wish to live in peace. International isolation is exceedingly painful for most Croats, which is why Croatia reluctantly bowed to international pressure to turn over its war criminals.

Attitudes towards the 1990s 'Homeland War' or 'Patriotic War' vary by region. The destruction of Vukovar, the shelling of Dubrovnik and Osijek, and the ethnic cleansing of and by the Krajina Serbs has traumatised the surrounding regions. Comments questioning the assumption that Croats were wholly right and Serbs were wholly wrong are not likely to be appreciated. In other parts of the country, Croats are more open to a forthright discussion of the last decade's events.

Croats are united by a common religion, Catholicism, though there are small Muslim, Serb Orthodox and Jewish minorities.

DAILY LIFE

Croats like the good life and take a lot of pride in keeping up appearances. Streets are tidy and clothes are stylish. Even with a tight economy, people will cut out restaurants and films in order to afford a shopping trip to Italy or Austria for some new clothes. Lounging in cafés and bars for much of the day is an important part of life here and you often wonder how the country's

For a thorough rundown of cultural events in Croatia, check www.culturenet.hr.

wheels are turning with so many people at leisure rather than work. But perhaps it's all that coffee that makes them work twice as fast once they're back in the office?

Most people own their homes, bought in the post-communist years when previously state-owned homes were sold to the tenants for little money. It's traditional and perfectly normal for children to live with their parents well into their adult life. The tradition extends particularly to sons, who often bring their wives to the family home where they'll continue to live – this is, however, mostly the case in rural and small-town areas. Family is very important to the Croats and extended-family links are strong.

Although attitudes are slowly changing towards homosexuality, Croatia is an overwhelmingly Catholic country with highly conservative views of sexuality. In a recent survey only 58% of those surveyed said they regarded gays as 'normal people with a different sexual orientation'. The rest consider it a perversion. Most homosexuals are highly closeted, fearing harassment if their sexual orientation were revealed.

In Croatia 32% of women and 34% of men are smokers.

ECONOMY

Croatia has emerged from a rocky period that reached its height with a series of corruption and privatisation scandals in the late 1990s. While corruption remains a problem, the government has made progress in investigating and prosecuting corruption cases, which reassures international investors. Croatia's prospective entry into the EU has also brought increased investment, especially from Austria and Italy in banking, Germany in telecommunications and Hungary in the oil industry. Several Croatian companies have high brand-recognition throughout former Yugoslavia. Pliva (pharmaceuticals), Podravka (food processing) and Croatia Osiguranje (insurance) are valuable exports. Naturally, there's tourism, which accounts for about 20% of GDP.

From the point of view of the average Croat, life is tough. Unemployment, though decreasing, is still high (11.18%), pensions for retirees are ridiculously low, unemployment compensation isn't much better and the cost of living continues to rise. About 11% of Croats, mostly in rural areas, live below the poverty line.

POPULATION

According to the most recent census (2001), Croatia had a population of roughly 4.5 million people, a decline from the prewar population of nearly five million. Some 59% live in urban areas. About 280,000 Serbs (50% of the Serbian population) departed in the early 1990s; an estimated 110,000 have returned. In the postindependence economic crunch, 120,000 to 130,000 Croats emigrated, but a roughly equal number of ethnic Croat refugees arrived from Bosnia and Hercegovina and another 30,000 or so came from the Vojvodina region of Serbia. The current breakdown after the census is: Croat 89.6%, Serb 4.5%, Bosniak 0.5%, Hungarian 0.4%, Slovene 0.3%, Czech 0.2%, Roma 0.2%, Albanian 0.1%, Montenegrin 0.1% and others 4.1%. The Serb population is highest in eastern Slavonia, which also includes a significant number of Hungarians and Czechs. Italians are concentrated in Istria, while Albanians, Bosniaks and Roma can be found in Zagreb, Istria and some Dalmatian towns.

War and a discouraging economic outlook are responsible for a steady decline in Croatia's population as educated young people leave in search of greater opportunities abroad. Some experts predict that in 50 years only 13% of the population will be children under 14, and adults between 25 and 64 will drop to only 54%. There are no easy solutions, but the

The literacy rate in Croatia is 98.5%.

government is hoping to encourage the children of expats working abroad to return to Croatia.

About one million Croats live in the other states of former Yugoslavia, mainly Bosnia and Hercegovina, northern Vojvodina and around the Bay of Kotor in Montenegro. Some 2.3 million ethnic Croats live abroad, including almost 1.5 million in the USA, 270,000 in Germany, 240,000 in Australia, 150,000 in Canada and 150,000 in Argentina. Pittsburgh and Buenos Aires have the largest Croatian communities outside Europe. Croatians outside of the country retain the right to vote in national elections and many do. Many of these voting expatriates take a hard nationalistic line and tend to vote for right-wing parties.

SPORT

Football, tennis and skiing are enormously popular and sporty Croatia has contributed a disproportionate number of world-class players in each sport.

Basketball

The most popular Croatian sport after football, basketball is followed with some reverence. The teams of Split, Zadar and Cibona from Zagreb are known across Europe, though no one has yet repeated the star team of the 1980s, when players such as Dražen Petrović, Dino Rađa and Toni Kukoč formed Cibona and became European champions. For the thorough low-down on Croatian basketball, go to www.kos.arika.hr.

Croatia has fielded national teams at every Olympic Games (summer and winter) since 1992.

Football

By far the most popular spectator sport in Croatia is football (soccer), which frequently serves as an outlet for Croatian patriotism and, occasionally, as a means to express political opposition. When Franjo Tuđman came to power he decided that the name of Zagreb's football club, 'Dinamo', was 'too communist', so he changed it to 'Croatia'. Waves of outrage followed the decision, led by angry young football fans who used the controversy to express their opposition to the regime. Even though the following government restored the original name, you will occasionally see *Dinamo volim te* (Dinamo I love you) graffiti in Zagreb. Dinamo's frequent rival is Hajduk of Split, named after ancient resisters to Roman rule. Hajduk and Dinamo supporters are infamous rivals, often causing brawls when the two teams meet.

The national team did well in the 2008 European Championships, coached by Croatia's own and formerly West Ham's Slaven Bilić, reaching the quarter finals, and beating strong teams such as Germany, but finally losing to Turkey. It also performed outstandingly to finish third in the 1998 World Cup in France, following stunning victories over teams of the calibre of Germany and Holland. In addition, Davor Šuker won the prestigious 'Golden Boot' award for being the tournament's leading goal scorer with six goals. By career end Šuker scored 46 international goals, 45 of them for Croatia; he is the Croatian national team's all-time goal-scoring leader. Football great Pelé named him one of the top 125 greatest living footballers in March 2004.

Tennis

'I don't know what's in the water in Croatia, but it seems like every player is over 7ft tall' (Andy Roddick).

Not quite. Yet Croatia is producing some mighty big players, in every sense of the word.

The 2001 victory of 6ft 4in Goran Ivanišević at Wimbledon provoked wild celebrations throughout the country, especially in his home town of Split.

The charismatic serve-and-volley player was much loved for his engaging personality and on-court antics, and dominated the top 10 rankings during much of the 1990s. Injuries forced his retirement in 2004, but Croatia stayed on the court with a 2005 Davis Cup victory led by Ivan Ljubičić and Mario Ančić. Born in Bosnia and Hercegovina, Ljubičić fled to Croatia with the outbreak of war and built his rocketlike serve in Rijeka. Split-born Mario Ančić is dubbed 'Baby Goran' by Ivanišević himself.

On the women's side, Zagreb-born Iva Majoli won the French Open in 1997 with an aggressive baseline game, but failed to follow up with other Grand Slam victories.

Tennis is more than a spectator sport in Croatia. The coast is amply endowed with clay courts and they are rarely empty. The biggest tournament in Croatia is the Umag Open in Istria, held in July.

Skiing

If Croatia had a national god it would be Janica Kostelić. Born in Zagreb to a family of winter-sports nuts, Kostelić is the most accomplished skier to have emerged from Croatia. After winning the Alpine Skiing World Cup in 2001, Kostelić won three gold medals and a silver in the 2002 Winter Olympics – the first Winter Olympic medals ever for an athlete from Croatia. At the age of 20 she became the first female skier ever to win three gold medals at one Olympics. Since 2002, Kostelić was plagued by a knee injury and the removal of her thyroid, but this didn't stop her from winning a gold medal in the women's combined and a silver in the Super-G at the 2006 Winter Olympics in Torino.

Maybe it's in the genes. Brother Ivica Kostelić took the men's slalom World Cup title in 2002 and brought home a silver medal in the men's combined in Torino 2006.

MEDIA

The media landscape in Croatia has changed considerably from the days of tight censorship. Now the only state-owned newspaper is *Vjesnik*, the most respected daily in Croatia with a loyal but relatively small readership. Croatian newspapers and magazines have discovered that fighting for advertisers is not much easier than fighting censorship. The two largest private dailies, *Večernji List* and *Jutarnji List*, are trying to lure advertisers with a mix of politics, show biz and scandal, while the glossy news magazines *Globus* and *Nacional* struggle for readers. Newspapers and magazines in Croatia are independently owned, usually by Croatians, except for *Večernji List*, which is Austrian owned.

The Croatian edition of *Metro*, called *Metro Express*, was launched in 2006 and has had a reasonable readership, though it has run into financial difficulties more than once in its short life – the daily newspaper changed to a weekly publication in August 2007, then went back to being a daily before firing all 20 of its reporters in July 2008 and announcing yet another return to being published weekly!

There are two government-owned radio stations (HRT1 and HRT2) that broadcast nationally, plus about 150 commercial radio stations that broadcast locally and nationally. There are three national TV networks: the government-owned HRT and the privately owned Nova and RTL. (RTL is the Croatian extension of the German RTL channel.) Nova and RTL entered the arena amid high hopes for improving Croatia's TV landscape, but they have seen their viewers and profits decline dramatically as each searches for a winning format. In contrast, the government-owned HRT, which broadcast state propaganda during the Tudman years, has turned into a respectable public station, financed by a tax on all TV-owning households.

Keep up with Croatian football by following the fortunes of Dinamo Zagreb at www.nk-dinamo.hr.

RELIGION

According to the most recent census, 87.8% of the population identified itself as Catholic, 4.4% Orthodox, 1.3% Muslim, 0.3% Protestant, and 6.2% others and unknown. Croats are overwhelmingly Roman Catholic, while all Serbs belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church, a division that has its roots in the fall of the Roman Empire. In fact, religion is the only factor separating the ethnically identical populations. In addition to various doctrinal differences, Orthodox Christians venerate icons, allow priests to marry and do not accept the authority of the pope.

It would be difficult to overstate the extent to which Catholicism shapes the Croatian national identity. The Croats pledged allegiance to Roman Catholicism as early as the 9th century and were rewarded with the right to conduct Mass and issue religious writings in the local language, which eventually became the Glagolitic script. The popes supported the early Croatian kings who in turn built monasteries and churches to further promote Catholicism. Throughout the long centuries of domination by foreign powers, Catholicism was the unifying element in forging a sense of nationhood.

Tragically, the profound faith that had animated Croatian nationalism was perverted into a murderous intolerance under the wartime Ustaše regime. The complicity of local parishes in 'cleansing' the population of Jews and Serbs prompted Tito to suppress religion – and, he hoped, nationalism – when he took power. Although religion was not officially forbidden, it was seen as 'politically incorrect' for ambitious Croats to attend Mass. Small wonder that the Vatican was the first entity to recognise an independent Croatia in 1991.

The Church enjoys a respected position in Croatia's cultural and political life and Croatia is the subject of particular attention from the Vatican. Nearly 76% of Croatian Catholics answering a poll said they considered themselves religious and about 30% attended services weekly. The Church is also the most trusted institution in Croatia, rivalled only by the military. Also Croats, both within Croatia and abroad, provide a stream of priests and nuns to replenish the ranks of Catholic clergy.

Former president Tuđman cultivated a close relationship with the Church, signing a series of treaties with the Vatican that codified the relationship between the Church and state in Croatia. The most important provisions deal with the equivalency of a church marriage and a civil wedding, the introduction of obligatory religious instruction in the state school system, and restitution of Church property nationalised under Tito's communists. The state also agreed to give financial support to Church activities.

Croatia's special relationship with the Vatican is a mutual one. In 2003, Pope John Paul II made his third trip to Croatia since independence. As the Catholic Church loses ground in much of secular Europe, Croatia's strong identity as a Catholic country has become increasingly important to the Vatican. Religious holidays are celebrated with fervour and Sunday Mass is strongly attended.

WOMEN IN CROATIA

Women face special hurdles in Croatia. Under Tito's brand of socialism, women were encouraged to become politically active and their representation in the Croatian *sabor* (parliament) increased to 18%. Since independence, however, it has fallen to a mere 8%. Because of the overwhelming 'maleness' of politics, some 80% of men and women find it highly unlikely that a woman would be head of state.

More and more wives and mothers must work outside the home to make ends meet (48% of women are in the workforce), but they still perform most household duties and are under-represented at the executive levels. Only 66% of women and 42% of men unequivocally accept the idea of a female boss.

Eva Sköld Westerlind's *Carrying the Farm on Her Back* traces the lives of three generations of Croatian farm women in mountain villages.

Women fare worse in traditional villages than in urban areas and were hit harder economically than men after the Homeland War. Many of the factories that closed, especially in eastern Slavonia, had a high proportion of women workers. Both domestic abuse and sexual harassment at work are common in Croatia and the legal system is not yet adequate for women to seek redress.

ARTS

Arts are of major importance to the Croats, from the more classical forms – classical music, theatre, dance and fine art – to modern stuff such as pop, rock or electronic music, avant-garde and experimental theatre and dance, fashion and spoken word. Folk music and crafts are also very popular.

Literature

The Croatian language developed in the centuries following the great migration into Slavonia and Dalmatia. In order to convert the Slavs to Christianity, Greek missionaries Cyril and Methodius learned the language and Cyril put the language into writing. This became known as Glagolitic script. The earliest known example of Glagolitic script is an 11th-century inscription in a Benedictine abbey on the island of Krk. Ecclesiastical works in Glagolitic continued to appear until the Middle Ages.

Ivan Gundulić (1589–1638) from Ragusa (Dubrovnik) is widely considered to be the greatest Croatian poet.

POETS & PLAYWRIGHTS

The first literary flowering in Croatia, however, took place in Dalmatia, which was strongly influenced by the Italian Renaissance. The works of the scholar and poet Marko Marulić (1450–1524), from Split, are still venerated in Croatia. His play *Judita* was the first work produced by a Croatian writer in his native tongue. Ivan Gundulić's (1589–1638) epic poem *Osman* celebrated the Polish victory over the Turks in 1621 – a victory that the author saw as heralding the destruction of the detested Ottoman rule. The plays of Marin Držić (1508–67), especially *Dundo Maroje*, express humanistic Renaissance ideals and are still performed, especially in Dubrovnik.

The most towering figure in the post-1990s-war period was the lyrical and sometimes satirical Vesna Parun. Although Parun was often harassed by the government for her 'decadent and bourgeois' poetry, her *Collected Poems* have reached a new generation who find solace in her vision of wartime folly.

NOVELISTS

Croatia's towering literary figure is 20th-century novelist and playwright Miroslav Krleža (1893–1981). Always politically active, Krleža broke with Tito in 1967 over the writer's campaign for equality between the Serbian and Croatian literary languages. Depicting the concerns of a changing Yugoslavia, his most popular novels include *The Return of Philip Latinovicz* (1932), which has been translated into English, and *Banners* (1963–65), a multivolume saga about middle-class Croatian life at the turn of the 20th century.

Mention should also be made of Ivo Andrić (1892–1975), who won the 1961 Nobel Prize in Literature for his Bosnian historical trilogy *The Bridge on the Drina*, *Bosnian Story* and *Young Miss*. Born as a Catholic Croat in Bosnia, the writer used the Serbian dialect and lived in Belgrade, but identified himself as a Yugoslav.

Some contemporary writers have been strongly marked by the implications of Croatian independence. Alenka Mirković is a journalist who wrote a powerful memoir of the siege of Vukovar. Goran Tribuson uses the thriller genre to explore the changes in Croatian society after the war. In *Oblivion*, Pavao Pavličić uses a detective story to explore the problems of collective historical memory. American-based Josip Novakovich's work stems from

Vedrana Rudan's novel *Night* (2004) perfectly illustrates the strong language and controversial, antipatriarchal themes that are often ruffling feathers in the literary establishment. Rudan was born in Rijeka.

Award-winning writer Dubravka Ugrešić and four other female writers were accused of being 'witches' by a Croatian magazine for not wholeheartedly supporting the Croatian war for independence.

nostalgia for his native Croatia. His most popular novel, *April Fool's Day* (2005), is an absurd and gritty account of the recent wars that gripped the region. Slavenka Drakulić is another worthy name, with books that are often politically and sociologically provocative, and always witty and intelligent.

Expat writer Dubravka Ugrešić has been a figure of controversy in Croatia and acclaimed elsewhere. Now living in the Netherlands in self-imposed exile, she is best known for her novels *The Culture of Lies* (1998) and *The Ministry of Pain* (2006). Ugrešić (www.dubravkaugresic.com) also published *Nobody's Home* in 2007, a collection of stories and essays on travel across Europe and the US, and the relationship between East and West. Slavenka Drakulić's *Café Europa – Life After Communism* (1999) is another excellent book to look out for.

Miljenko Jergović, Sarajevo-born but living in Croatia, is a witty, poignant writer whose *Sarajevo Marlboro* (1994) and *Mama Leone* (1999) powerfully conjure up the atmosphere in prewar Yugoslavia.

A great introduction to contemporary Croatian writers is the collection of short stories, *Croatian Nights* (2005), edited by Tony White, Borivoj Radaković and Matt Thorne. The excellent anthology of 19 short stories features prominent Croatian writers such as Gordana Nuhanović, Vladimir Arsenijević, Jelena Čarija, Zoran Ferić, Miljenko Jergović and Zorica Radaković, and British writers including Toby Litt, Anna Davis, Tony White, Ben Richards, Niall Griffiths and others.

Cinema

Yugoslav cinema was dominated by Serbian directors, but Croatia had two important names to call their own: Krešo Golik (1922–98), who directed popular comedies such as *Plavi 9* (Blue 9; 1950) and *Tko pjeva zlo ne misli* (He Who Sings Never Means Harm; 1970); and Branko Bauer (1921–), who directed thrillers, war dramas and adventure films. Croatia excelled at more experimental and 'intellectual' filmmaking (which wasn't necessarily very popular), with prominent names being Branko Babaja, Zvonimir Berković, Lordan Zafranović and Vatroslav Mimica, among others.

Franjo Tuđman's rule brought about a crisis in Croatian cinema, and the 1990s are considered to be the lowest point of Croatian filmmaking since WWII.

Some notable names in recent Croatian cinema are Vinko Brešan (1964–) and Goran Rušinović (1968–). Brešan's *Kako je počeo rat na mom otoku* (How the War Started on My Island; 1996) and *Maršal* (Marshal Tito's Spirit; 1999) were massively popular hits in Croatia. Goran Rušinović's film *Mondo Bobo* (1997) is a stylish black-and-white criminal drama inspired by the films of Jim Jarmusch and Shinya Tsukamoto, and the first independent feature film in Croatia.

Dalibor Matanić's *Fine Mrtve Djevojke* (Fine Dead Girls; 2002) was a popular thriller, while Rajko Grlić's *Karaula* (2006) recalled Yugoslav army days with much hilarity.

Music

FOLK

Although Croatia has produced many fine classical musicians and composers, its most original musical contribution lies in its rich tradition of folk music. This music reflects a number of influences, many dating back to the Middle Ages when the Hungarians and Venetians vied for control of the country. Franz Joseph Haydn (1732–1809) was born near a Croat enclave in Austria and his classical music pieces were strongly influenced by Croatian folk songs.

Hrvoje Hribar's *What's a Man Without a Moustache?* (2005) sees a young widow, an ageing widower and returnee, and a priest from a bankrupt parish struggling to come to terms with the postwar environment and unrequited love.

RECOMMENDED FOLK RECORDINGS

- *Croatie: Music of Long Ago* is a good starting point as it covers the whole gamut of Croatian music.
- *Lijepa naša tamburaša* is a selection of Slavonian chants accompanied by *tamburica* (a three- or five-string mandolin).
- *Omiš 1967–75* is an overview of *klapa* (an outgrowth of church-choir singing) music.
- *Pripovid O Dalmaciji* is an excellent selection of *klapa* in which the influence of church choral singing is especially clear.

The instrument most often used in Croatian folk music is the *tamburica*, a three- or five-string mandolin that is plucked or strummed. Introduced by the Turks in the 17th century, the instrument rapidly gained a following in eastern Slavonia and came to be closely identified with Croatian national aspirations. *Tamburica* music remained the dominant kind played at weddings and local festivals during the Yugoslav period, too.

Vocal music followed the *klapa* tradition. Translated as ‘group of people’, *klapa* is an outgrowth of church-choir singing. The form is most popular in Dalmatia, particularly in Split, and can involve up to 10 voices singing in harmony about love, tragedy and loss. Traditionally the choirs were all-male, but now women are getting into the act, although there are very few mixed choirs. For an insight into a *klapa*, see p225.

Yet another popular strain of folk music emanates from the region of Međimurje in northeastern Croatia. Strongly influenced by music in neighbouring Hungary, the predominant instrument is a *citura* (zither). The tunes are slow and melancholic, frequently revolving around love-lost themes. New artists have breathed life into this traditional genre, including Lidija Bajuk and Dunja Knebl, female singers who have done much to resuscitate the music and gained large followings in the process.

In dance, look for the *drmeš*, a kind of accelerated polka danced by couples in small groups. The *kolo*, a lively Slavic round dance in which men and women alternate in the circle, is accompanied by Roma-style violinists. In Dalmatia, the *poskočica* is also danced by couples creating various patterns. Like the music, Croatian traditional dances are kept alive at local and national festivals. The best is the International Folklore Festival (p83) in Zagreb in July, but if you can’t make it to that, not to worry: music and folklore groups make a circuit in the summer, hitting most coastal and island towns at one point or another. Ask at local tourist offices for the schedule.

POP, ROCK & THE REST

There’s a wealth of home-grown talent in Croatia’s pop and rock music scene. One of the most prominent bands is Hladno Pivo (Cold Beer), which plays energetic punky music with witty, politically charged lyrics. Then there’s the ridiculously named indie-rock band Pips, Chips & Videoclips, whose breakthrough single ‘Dinamo ja te volim’ (Dinamo, I Love You) referred to Tudman’s attempts to rename Zagreb’s football team (see p42), but whose music has generally been apolitical since. Vještice (The Witches) is a Zagreb-based band that mixes folk music from Međimurje, South African jive and punk rock.

The band Gustafi sings in the Istrian dialect and mixes Americana with local folk sounds, while the deliciously insane Let 3 from Rijeka is (in)famous for its nutty tunes and live performances at which the band members often show up naked, with only a piece of cork up their backsides (yes, really). TBF

BROTHERHOOD & UNITY OR DUMB & DUMBER?

Turbo folk, a supercharged, techno version of Serbian folk music, is notoriously difficult to categorise as anything but itself. Widely listened to in Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Hercegovina, it's possibly one of the biggest unifying contemporary factors across former Yugoslavia. The undisputed queen of turbo folk is Svetlana Ražnatović 'Ceca', widow of the Serbian Arkan, who was indicted by the UN for crimes against humanity. Ceca has produced numerous albums and performed at sell-out concerts at all the biggest stadiums across the region. Turbo folk started out and flourished under the Milošević regime and is widely associated with mafia types – Ceca herself was arrested (but later cleared of all charges) in connection with her ties to members of the Zemun clan, responsible for the murder of the Serbian prime minister Zoran Đinđić in 2003. Some *folkotekas* – the clubs where turbo folk is played – have metal detectors at their entrances and, particularly in Bosnia and Hercegovina, are subject to occasional bomb attacks associated with 'unfinished business' among the local mafia members. The intellectual elite sees turbo folk as a sort of 'dumbing down' of the current generation, but its ever-growing popularity is an undeniable fact.

(The Beat Fleet) is Split's answer to hip hop, using Split slang to talk about current issues, family troubles, heartbreak, happy times and so on. Bosnian-born but Croatia-based, hip-hop singer Edo Maačka is another witty voice.

The fusion of jazz and pop with folk tunes has been a popular musical direction in Croatia for a while. Two of the more prominent names in this scene are Tamara Obrovac, a talented singer from Istria, and Mojmir Novaković, formerly the singer of the popular band Legen.

The Croatian queen of pop is Severina, famous for her good looks and eventful personal life, which is widely covered by local celebrity and gossip magazines. Gibonni is another massively popular singer from Dalmatia, and his major influence is Oliver Dragojević, a legendary singer of loveable schmalz. All three (Severina, Gibonni and Dragojević) are from Split.

If anything unifies the fractious former republics of Yugoslavia, it's music. Bosnian Goran Bregović teamed up with filmmaker Emir Kusturica for some remarkable scores and his music remains loved throughout the region.

Architecture

Examples of Roman architecture are abundant in Dalmatia, and the Euphrasian Basilica (p171) in Poreč is an outstanding example of Byzantine art; however, the first distinctively Croatian design also appeared along the coast. *Pleter* (plaited ornamentation) appeared around AD 800 on the baptismal font of Duke Višeslav of Nin in the Church of the Holy Cross (Nin). This ornamentation appears frequently on church entrances and church furniture from the early medieval period. Around the end of the 10th century, the lattice-work began to acquire leaves and tendrils. The design is so linked with the country's culture that ex-president Franjo Tuđman used it on a poster during his first election campaign to signal a return to traditional Croatian culture.

The best example of pre-Romanesque architecture is found on the Dalmatian coast, beginning with the 11th-century Church of the Holy Cross in Nin, built in the shape of a cross with two apses and a dome above the centre point. There are remains of circular pre-Romanesque churches in Split, Trogir and Ošalj, but the most impressive is the Church of St Donat (p188) in Zadar, dating from the 9th century. Its round central structure and three semicircular apses make it most unusual. Other smaller churches in Šipan and Lopud from the 10th and 11th centuries are built with a cross-shaped ground plan indicating the growing influence of Byzantine culture at that time.

The Romanesque tradition persisted along the coast long after the Gothic style had swept the rest of Europe. In the 13th century the earliest examples of Gothic style usually appeared still mixed with Romanesque forms. The most stunning work from this period is the portal on the Cathedral of St Lovro (p233) in Trogir, carved by the master artisan Radovan. Depicting human figures performing everyday chores was a definite break with traditional Byzantine reliefs of saints and apostles. The unusual wooden portal on Split's Cathedral of St Domnius (p223), made up of 28 square reliefs by Andrija Buvina, is another masterpiece from the Gothic period. The Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (formerly St Stephen's; p73) in Zagreb was the first venture into the Gothic style in northern Croatia. Although reconstructed several times, the sacristy has remnants of 13th-century murals.

Late-Gothic building was dominated by the builder and sculptor Juraj Dalmatinac, who was born in Zadar in the 15th century. His most outstanding work was Šibenik's Cathedral of St James (p209), which marks a transition from the Gothic to the Renaissance period. In addition to constructing the church entirely of stone, without timber, Dalmatinac adorned the apses with a wreath of realistically carved local people.

The Renaissance flourished especially in independent Ragusa (Dubrovnik), and by the second half of the 15th century, Renaissance influences were appearing on late-Gothic structures. The Sponza Palace (p266), formerly the Customs House, is a fine example of this mixed style. By the mid-16th century, Renaissance features began to supplant the Gothic style in the palaces and summer residences built in and around Ragusa by the wealthy nobility. Unfortunately, much was destroyed in the 1667 earthquake and now Dubrovnik is more notable for the mixed Gothic-Romanesque Franciscan Monastery (p265), the 15th-century Orlando Column (p266), the Onofrio Fountain (p265), the baroque St Blaise's Church (p266), the Jesuit St Ignatius Church (p267) and the Cathedral of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Northern Croatia is well known for the baroque style that was introduced by Jesuit monks in the 17th century. The city of Varaždin was a regional capital in the 17th and 18th centuries and, because of its location, it enjoyed a steady interchange of artists, artisans and architects with northern Europe. The combination of wealth and a creatively fertile environment led to Varaždin becoming Croatia's foremost city of baroque art. You'll notice the style in the elaborately restored houses, churches and especially the impressive castle.

In Zagreb, good examples of the baroque style are found in the Upper Town. Notice the Jesuit Church of St Catherine (p73) and the restored baroque mansions that are now the Croatian History Museum (p78) and the Croatian Museum of Naïve Art (p78). Wealthy families built baroque mansions around Zagreb, including at Brezovica, Milyana, Lobar and Bistra.

Painting & Sculpture

The painter Vincent of Kastav was producing lovely church frescoes in Istria during the 15th century. The small church of St Maria near Beram contains his frescoes, most notably the *Dance of Death*. Another notable Istrian painter of the 15th century is Ivan of Kastav, who has left frescoes throughout Istria, mostly in the Slovenian part.

Many artists born in Dalmatia were influenced by, and in turn influenced, Italian Renaissance style. The sculptors Lucijan Vranjanin and Frano Laurana, the miniaturist Julije Klović and the painter Andrija Medulić left

Zagreb was the backdrop for scenes in Orson Welles' masterpiece *The Trial*.

Dalmatia while the region was under threat from the Ottomans in the 15th century and worked in Italy. Museums in London, Paris and Florence contain examples of their work, but few of their creations are in Croatia.

Vlaho Bukovac (1855–1922) was the most notable Croatian painter in the late 19th century. After working in London and Paris, he came to Zagreb in 1892 and produced portraits and paintings on historical themes in a lively style. Early-20th-century painters of note include Miroslav Kraljević (1885–1913) and Josip Račić (1885–1908), but the most internationally recognised artist was the sculptor Ivan Meštrović (1883–1962), who created many masterpieces on Croatian themes. Antun Augustinčić (1900–79) was another internationally recognised sculptor whose *Monument to Peace* is outside New York's UN building. A small museum of his work can be visited in the town of Klanjec (p105), north of Zagreb.

Post-WWI artists experimented with abstract expressionism, but this period is best remembered for the naïve art that began with the 1931 *Zemlja* (Soil) exhibition in Zagreb, which introduced the public to works by Ivan Generalić (1914–92) and other peasant painters. Committed to producing art that could be easily understood and appreciated by ordinary people, Generalić was joined by painters Franjo Mraz (1910–81) and Mirko Virius (1889–1943), and sculptor Petar Smajić (1910–85), in a campaign to gain acceptance and recognition for naïve art.

Abstract art also infiltrated the postwar scene. The most celebrated modern Croatian painter is Edo Murtić (1921–2005), who drew inspiration from the countryside of Dalmatia and Istria. In 1959, a group of artists – Marijan Jevšovar (1922–88), Ivan Kožarić (1921–) and Julije Knifer (1921–2004) – created the Gorgona group, which pushed the envelope of abstract art. Dubrovnik-born Đuro Pultika (1922–2006) was well known for his colourful landscapes, and together with Antun Masle (1919–67) and Ivo Dulčić (1916–75) formed a trio of Dubrovnik painters.

The post-WWII trend to avant-garde art has evolved into installation art, minimalism, conceptualism and video art. Contemporary Croatian artists worth seeing include Lovro Artuković (1959–), whose highly realistic style is contrasted with surreal settings; on the video scene look for Sanja Iveković (1949–) and Dalibor Martinis (1947–). The multimedia works of Andreja Kulunčić (1968–) and the installations of Sandra Sterle (1965–) are attracting international attention, while the performances of Slaven Tolj (1964–) could be called 'extreme art'. Lana Šlezic (1973–) is a New York-based photographer, whose excellent work is often shot in Croatia.

The Gallery of Modern Art (p79) in Zagreb gives an excellent overview of the last 200 years of Croatian art.

Art Treasures of Croatia
by Radovan Ivančević is
a great summary of the
history of Croatian art.

Food & Drink

If thoughts of Croatian cuisine conjure up images of greasy steaks with a side of boiled potatoes and sauerkraut, think again. While it still holds firm to its Eastern European roots and positively pleases meat-happy Balkan palates, Croatian food is a savoury smorgasbord of taste, echoing the varied cultures that have influenced the country over the course of its history. You'll find a sharp divide between the Italian-style cuisine along the coast and the flavours of Hungary, Austria and Turkey in the continental parts. From grilled sea bass smothered in olive oil in Dalmatia to a robust paprika-heavy meat stew in Slavonia, there's something for every taste. Each area proudly touts its very own speciality, but regardless of the region you'll be surprised by the generally good food made from fresh, seasonal ingredients.

The price and quality of meals varies little in the midrange category, but if you're willing to splurge you can spend hours feasting on slow food delicacies or savouring forward-thinking concoctions created by up-and-coming young chefs. There is a limit to what the local crowd can afford to pay, so restaurants still cluster in the middle of the price spectrum – few are unbelievably cheap and few are exorbitantly expensive. Whatever your budget, it's hard to get a truly bad meal anywhere in Croatia. Another plus is that food is often paired with plenty of alfresco dining in warm weather.

Even though Croatians are not overly experimental when it comes to food, they're particularly passionate about it. They'll spend hours discussing the quality of the lamb or the first-grade fish, and why it overshadows all food elsewhere. Foodie culture is on the rise in Croatia, inspired largely by the slow food movement (p52), which puts the emphasis on fresh seasonal ingredients and the joy of dining for hours.

Istria and Kvarner have quickly shot up to the top of the gourmet ladder but other places aren't lagging far behind. There is a new generation of chefs updating traditional Croatian dishes and joining the cult of celebrity chefs – yes, this movement has even made it to Croatia! Wine and olive oil production have been revived, and there's now a network of signposted roads around the country celebrating these precious nectars.

STAPLES & SPECIALITIES

Zagreb and northwestern Croatia favour the kind of hearty meat dishes you might find in Vienna. Juicy *pečenje* (spit-roasted and baked meat) features *janjetina* (lamb), *svinjetina* (pork) and *patka* (duck), often accompanied by *mlinci* (baked noodles) or *pečeni krumpir* (roast potatoes). Meat slow-cooked under a *peka* (domed baking lid) is especially delicious, but needs to be ordered in advance at many restaurants. *Purica* (turkey) with *mlinci* is practically an institution on Zagreb and Zagorje menus, along with *zagrebački odrezak* (veal steak stuffed with ham and cheese, then fried in breadcrumbs) – another calorie-ridden speciality. Another mainstay is *sir i vrhnje* (fresh cottage cheese and cream) bought from the locals at markets. If you have a sweet tooth, *palačinke* (thin pancakes) with various fillings and toppings are a common dessert.

Spicier than in other regions, cuisine in Slavonia uses liberal amounts of paprika and garlic. The Hungarian influence is most prevalent here, as many typical dishes, such as *čobanac* (a meat stew), are in fact a version of *gulaš* (goulash). The nearby Drava River provides fresh fish such as carp, pike and perch, which is stewed in a paprika sauce and served with noodles in a dish known as *fiš paprikaš*. Another speciality is *šaran u rašljama* (carp

The salt extracted at the Pag and Ston saltpans is the cleanest in the Mediterranean.

SLOW FOOD

With its plastic industrialised approach to the eating experience, it was only a matter of time before fast food got an enemy. It was – surprise, surprise! – ‘slow food’ that stood up to the fast-food trend that was taking over the world. Originally started in Italy in the 1980s, this movement now exists in over 120 countries in an attempt to preserve the culture of particular cuisines. The emphasis is placed on indigenous plants, seeds and animals, all raised and grown in a traditional way.

While there are countless interpretations of slow food, Croatia has its very own version that focuses on promoting local, fresh and seasonal ingredients. There’s much attention placed on the ritual of eating as well as the presentation of food. The courses are served in small portions and brought out in a certain order. There’s a longish break between the dishes, and they’re all paired with fitting wines. The experience is about the joy of eating and understanding where your food comes from.

When Nenad Kukurin, the owner of Kukuriku restaurant (p123) in Rijeka introduced the concept over a decade ago, they called him a ‘gastro-terrorist’. Kukuriku is now a destination, and reason enough to make it to the Kvarner Gulf. All bread and pasta is handmade, the herbs picked from the restaurant’s garden, and the ingredients market fresh. The owner frequents the Rijeka market daily, consults the chef by phone and together, on the spot, they create that day’s menu according to what’s in the stalls. Whether you savour wild asparagus from Učka, truffles from the Motovun forest or lamb from a nearby village, you’re guaranteed pure ingredients, without much elaboration. As Nenad Kukurin says, ‘the point of a good meal is to walk away feeling light and happy’.

on a forked branch), roasted in its own oils over an open fire. The region’s sausages are particularly renowned, especially *kulen*, a paprika-flavoured sausage cured over a period of nine months and usually served with cottage cheese, peppers, tomatoes and often *turšija* (pickled vegetables).

Coastal cuisine is typically Mediterranean, using a lot of olive oil, garlic, fresh fish and shellfish, and herbs. Along the coast, look for lightly breaded and fried *lignje* (squid) as a main course; Adriatic squid is generally more expensive than squid from further afield. Meals often begin with a first course of pasta such as spaghetti or *rižoto* (risotto) topped with seafood. For a special appetiser, try *paški sir* (Pag cheese; p206), a pungent hard cheese from the island of Pag. Dalmatian *brodet* (stewed mixed fish served with polenta; also known as *brodetto*) is another regional treat, but it’s often only available in two-person portions. Dalmatian *pašticada* (beef stewed in wine and spices and served with gnocchi) appears on menus on the coast as well as in the interior. Lamb from Cres and Pag is deemed Croatia’s best, as it’s fed on fresh herbs, which makes the meat delicious.

Istrian cuisine has been attracting international foodies in recent years for its long gastronomic tradition, fresh foodstuffs and unique specialities. Typical dishes include *maneštra*, a thick vegetable-and-bean soup similar to minestrone, *fuzi*, hand-rolled pasta often served with *tartufi* (truffles) or *divljač* (game meat), and *fritaja* (omelette often served with seasonal veggies, such as wild asparagus). Thin slices of dry-cured Istrian *pršut* (prosciutto) – also excellent in Dalmatia – are often on the appetiser list; it’s expensive because of the long hours and personal attention involved in smoking the meat. Istrian olive oil is highly rated and award-winning; the tourist board has marked an olive oil route along which you can visit local growers, tasting oils from the source. The best seasonal ingredients include white truffles (see boxed text, p179), picked in autumn, and wild asparagus, harvested in spring.

Pizza is often a good choice in Croatia. These range from thin crispy pizzas to those with a puffy crust, and the toppings are fresh. For fast food, you can usually snack on *čevapčići* (small spicy sausages of minced beef, lamb or pork), *pljeskavica* (an ex-Yugo version of a hamburger), *ražnjići* (small chunks of pork grilled on a skewer) or *burek* (pastry stuffed with ground meat or cheese).

The secret behind the pungent taste of *paški sir* (Pag cheese) is the diet of wild herbs that the sheep feast on while producing their milk.

DRINKS

Croatia is famous for its *rakija* (brandy), which comes in different flavours. The most commonly drunk are *loza* (grape brandy), *šljivovica* (plum brandy) and *travarica* (herbal brandy). Istrian grappa is particularly excellent, and ranges in flavour from *medica* (honey) to *biska* (mistletoe) and various berries. The island of Vis is famous for its delicious *rogačica* (carob brandy). It's customary to have a small glass of brandy before a meal. Other popular drinks include *vinjak* (cognac), maraschino (cherry liqueur made in Zadar), *prosecco* (sweet dessert wine) and *pelinkovac* (herbal liqueur).

The two top types of Croatian *pivo* (beer) are Zagreb's Ožujsko and Karlovačko from Karlovac. The small-distribution Velebitsko has a loyal following among in-the-know beer drinkers but only some bars and shops carry it, and they're mostly in continental Croatia. You'll want to practise saying *živjeli!* (cheers!).

Wine is an important part of Croatian meals but oenophiles will be dismayed to see Croats diluting their wine with water. This is called *bevanda* (red wine with water) in Dalmatia, and *gemišt* (white wine with mineral water) in continental Croatia, especially Zagorje. This watering down is hardly necessary. Although not world-class, Croatian wines are eminently drinkable and occasionally distinguished. Virtually every region produces its own wine but Istrian wines are the most acclaimed, with the main grape varieties being the white *malvazija*, red *teran* and sweet *muškat*. The tourist board has marked wine trails across the peninsula, so you can visit the growers in their cellars. The top winemakers include Coronica, Kozlović, Matošević, Markežić, Degrassi and Sinković.

The Kvarner region is known for its *žlahtina* of Vrbnik on Krk Island; Katunar is the best-known producer. Dalmatia has a long wine-producing tradition – look for *pošip*, *rukatac* and *grk* on Korčula, *dingač* and *postup* from the Pelješac Peninsula, *mali plavac* on Hvar (Plenković winery is tops) and *brač* and *vugava* on Vis. Slavonia produces excellent white wines such as *graševina*, Rhine riesling and *traminac* (see p114).

Strongly brewed *kava* (espresso-style coffee) served in tiny cups is popular throughout Croatia. You can have it diluted with milk (macchiato) or order a cappuccino. Although some places have decaf options this is considered somewhat of a sacrilege, as Croats love their coffee. Herbal teas are widely available but regular tea (*čaj*) is apt to be too weak for aficionados. Tap water is drinkable.

CELEBRATIONS

Croats love to eat and take any excuse to feast, so holidays and special celebrations such as weddings and christenings are party time if you like food.

As in other Catholic countries, most Croats don't eat meat on *Badnjak* (Christmas Eve); instead they eat fish. In Dalmatia, the traditional Christmas Eve dish is *bakalar* (dried salted cod). Christmas dinner may be roast suckling pig, turkey with *mlinci* or another meat. Also popular at Christmas is *sarma* (sauerkraut rolls stuffed with minced meat). Fresh Christmas Eve bread, also known as *Badnji Kruh*, is the centrepiece; it's made with honey, nuts and dried fruit. Another tradition is the Christmas braid, glazed dough made with nutmeg, raisins and almonds and shaped into a braid. It's often decorated with wheat and candles and left on the table until the Epiphany (6 January), when it is cut and eaten. *Orahnjača* (walnut cake), *fritule* (fritters) and *makovnjača* (poppy seed cake) are popular desserts at celebrations.

The most typical Easter dish is ham with boiled eggs, served with fresh veggies. *Pinca*, a type of hard bread, is another Easter tradition, especially in Dalmatia.

Research shows that the prized oysters in the Ston area on Pelješac have been farmed since Roman times.

THE OLIVE OIL BOOM OF ISTRIA *Anja Mutić*

There's an olive tree on Veli Brijun in the Brijuni Islands proven to be 1600 years old. Even the early Greek and Roman manuscripts praised the quality of Istrian olive oil. Now there's a revival of this ancient agricultural activity, with 94 listed growers on the Istrian Peninsula and a network of signposted olive oil roads. In Istria, the plant is cultivated with special attention, and each tree given love and care. Several growers have received prestigious international awards and top marks for their fruity nectars, which is no small feat in the competitive world olive oil market.

Duilio Belić is a relative newbie on the scene. The son of a miner, he grew up in Raša and went on to become a successful Zagreb businessperson before starting Croatia's newest gastronomic trend – olive oil tastings. With his wife Bosiljka, an agriculture specialist, he bought an old grove near Fažana seven years ago and started what has become a real hit among gourmets. He now has five olive groves in three locations in Istria, with a total of 5500 trees. Under the brand name Oleum Viride, they produce eight single-sort, extra virgin olive oils, four of which are made of indigenous varieties – Buža, Istarska Bjelica, Rosulja and Vodnjanska Crnica. Their showcase oil is Selekcija Belić, a blend of six mono-sorts with a flavour of vanilla and chicory.

Over a coffee at a Fažana café, Duilio reminds me of a simple fact most people forget: olive is a fruit and olive oil is a fruit juice. Just like with wine, certain oils can be combined with certain dishes to enhance the flavours. Selekcija Belić, for example, is a great accompaniment to lamb and veal under a *peka* (domed baking lid), or a wild asparagus omelette. The highly prized Buža oil pairs wonderfully with raw fish and meat, as well as mushrooms and grilled vegetables. The golden-green Istarska Bjelica with its scent of mown grass and a hint of radicchio goes well with chocolate ice cream or a dark-chocolate hazelnut cake.

It's all sounding quite abstract to me so we move on to Vodnjanka (p161), a restaurant in Pula, where Duilio pulls out a box with a selection of his oils and orders a range of hors d'oeuvres. There, I learn to taste olive oil. A small sample is poured into a wine glass, which you warm up with your hand in order for the oil to reach body temperature. You then cover the glass with your hand to release the oil's natural aroma. Next, you place a small sip of the oil at the front of your mouth, mix it gently and then swallow in one go.

Such tastings have become a trend among Croatian foodies. Duilio organises the gatherings for his wider circle of friends and hopes to offer them at his olive grove in the future. In the meantime, his oils can be sampled at Croatia's top restaurants: Bevanda (p127) in Opatija, Valsabbion (p162) and Milan (p162) in Pula, Kukuriku (p123) in Rijeka, Foša (p192) in Zadar and Damir i Ornella (p174) in Novigrad. At 650KN per litre (400KN from the producer), they don't come cheap but the experience is worth every lipa.

I ask Duilio my last questions as we sample Vodnjanska Crnica in *maneštra* (a thick vegetable-and-bean soup similar to minestrone). I wonder what makes Istria such prime territory for growing olives. 'It's the microlocation,' Duilio says. 'Plus we harvest the olives early, unlike in Dalmatia, to preserve the natural antioxidants and nutrients. The oils may taste more bitter but they're also healthier.'

As we're parting ways, fascinated by the man's passion for olive oil, I wonder what made him enter this whole new world. 'It's simple – I love food, I love wine, I love all good things in life,' he replies. 'Olive oil is one of them.'

WHERE TO EAT & DRINK

A *restauracija* or *restoran* (restaurant) is at the top of the food chain, generally presenting a more formal dining experience and an elaborate wine list. A *gostionica* or *konoba* is usually a traditional family-run tavern – the produce may come from the family garden. A *pivnica* is more like a pub, with a wide choice of beer; sometimes there's a hot dish or sandwiches available. A *kavana* is a café, where you can nurse your coffee for hours and, if you're lucky, have cakes and ice cream. A *slastičarna* (pastry shop) serves ice cream, cakes, strudels and sometimes coffee, but you usually have to gobble your food standing up or take it away. Self-service *samoposluživanje* (cafeterias) are good for a quick meal. Even if the quality varies, all you need to do is point to what you want.

If you're on your own, an elaborate breakfast is difficult as all you can get easily is coffee at a café and pastries from a bakery. Otherwise, you can buy some bread, cheese and milk at a supermarket and have a picnic. If you're staying in a hotel you'll be served a buffet breakfast that includes cornflakes, bread, yoghurt, a selection of cold meat, powdered 'juice' and cheese. More upmarket hotels have better buffets that include eggs, sausages and homemade pastries.

Fruit and vegetables from the market and a selection of cheese, bread and ham from a grocery store can make a healthy picnic lunch. If you ask nicely, the person behind the deli counter at supermarkets or grocery stores will usually make a *sir* (cheese) or *pršut* (prosciutto) sandwich and you only pay the regular price of the ingredients.

VEGETARIANS & VEGANS

A useful phrase is *Ja ne jedem meso* (I don't eat meat), but even then you may be served soup with bits of bacon swimming in it. That is slowly changing and vegetarians are making inroads in Croatia, but this is mostly felt in the larger cities. Zagreb, Rijeka, Split and Dubrovnik now have vegetarian restaurants, and even standard restaurants are beginning to offer vegetarian menus in the big cities. Vegetarians may have a harder time in the north (Zagorje) and the east (Slavonia) where traditional fare has meat as its main focus. Specialities that don't use meat include *maneštra od bobiča* (bean and fresh maize soup) and *juha od krumpira na zagorski način* (Zagorje potato soup). If that's not enough, go on to *štrukli* (dumplings filled with cottage cheese) or *blitva* (Swiss chard boiled and often served with potatoes, olive oil and garlic). Along the coast you'll find plenty of pasta dishes and risottos with various vegetable toppings and delicious cheese. If fish and seafood are part of your diet, you'll eat royally nearly everywhere.

EATING WITH KIDS

Croats are kid-friendly and the relaxed dining scene means that you can bring the kids nearly everywhere. Even the more upmarket restaurants will have a kid-friendly pasta or rice dish on the menu. Children's portions are easily arranged. However, you won't often find high chairs for the tinier tots and dining establishments are rarely equipped with nappy-changing facilities. Baby food and powdered baby milk formulas are easily found at most supermarkets and pharmacies, and are sold according to age group. For more information on travelling with children, see p297.

HABITS & CUSTOMS

Throughout former Yugoslavia, the *doručak* (breakfast) of the people was *burek*. Modern Croats have opted for a lighter start to their day, usually just coffee and a pastry with yoghurt and fresh fruit.

Restaurants open for *ručak* (lunch) around noon and usually serve continuously until midnight, which can be a major convenience if you're arriving in town at an odd hour or just feel like spending more time at the beach. Croats tend to eat either an earlier *marenda* or *galeb* (cheap filling lunch) or a large, late lunch. *Večera* (dinner) is typically a much lighter affair, but most restaurants have adapted their schedules to the needs of tourists who tend to load up at night. Few Croats can afford to eat out regularly; when they do, it's likely to be a large family outing on Saturday night or Sunday afternoon.

Croats are proud of their cuisine and vastly prefer it to all others (except Italian). Outside the main cities there are few restaurants serving international cuisine (mostly Chinese and Mexican) and few variations on the basic Croatian themes.

The history of wine-making in Istria goes back to ancient Phoenicians and Greeks, but it really flourished during the Roman times (177 BC–AD 476).

COOKING COURSES

Cooking courses in Croatia are becoming increasingly popular but mainly for the affluent crowd, as they don't come cheap. British-based operation **My Croatia** (☎ in the UK 44-118-961 1554; www.mycroatia.co.uk) offers upmarket gourmet holidays in Zagreb, Lovran and Istria. They start at £895 per person based on two people and include upmarket accommodation for seven nights, private tours, gourmet meals, wine tastings and cooking classes. The cheapest option is a three-day Zagreb fling for £595 per person. A Zagreb-based company, **Delicija 1001** (www.1001delicija.com) organises a variety of cooking courses and gourmet events. Options and pricing vary greatly. A one-day cooking course in Zagreb or Istria (with a visit to the market, a cooking lesson and the meal with wine) starts at €125 per person. A weekend cooking course in Istria or Dalmatia – with accommodation, meals with wine and cooking lessons – ranges from €260 to €360 per person. Such a weekend in Istrian *agroturizmi* (rural retreats) starts at €190 per person.

EAT YOUR WORDS

Get behind the cuisine scene by getting to know the language. For pronunciation guidelines see p318.

Useful Phrases

I'm hungry.

Ja sam gladan/gladna. (m/f)

ya sam gla-dan/glad-na

I'm a vegetarian.

*Ja sam vegetarijanac/
vegetarijanka.* (m/f)

ya sam ve-ge-ta-ree-ya-nats/
ve-ge-ta-ree-yan-ka

I don't eat meat.

Ja ne jedem meso.

ya ne ye-dem me-saw

Waiter!

Konobar!

kaw-naw-bar

The menu, please.

Molim vas jelovnik.

maw-leem vas ye-lawv-neek

**What's the speciality
of the house?**

Što je vaš specijalitet kuće?

shtaw ye vash
spe-tsee-ya-lee-tet koo-che

What would you recommend?

Što biste nam preporučili?

shtaw bee-ste nam
pre-paw-roo-tchee-lee

Please bring the bill.

Molim vas donesite račun.

maw-leem vas
daw-ne-see-te ra-tchoon

Enjoy your meal!

Dobar tek!

daw-bar tek

Food Glossary

BASICS

čaša

tcha-sha

glass

doručak

daw-roo-tchak

breakfast

kavana

ka-va-na

café

mlijeko

mlee-ye-ko

milk

nož

nawzh

knife

papar

pa-par

pepper

pivnica

peev-nee-tsa

pub

račun

ra-tchoon

bill/cheque

restoran

re-staw-ran

restaurant

ručak

roo-tchak

lunch

šećer

she-cher

sugar

sol

sawl

salt

tvečera

ve-tche-ra

dinner

viljuška

vee-lyoosh-ka

fork

voda

vaw-da

water

žlica

zhlee-tsa

spoon

The Zadar sour cherry liqueur maraschino was conjured up in the early 16th century by pharmacists working in Zadar's Dominican monastery.

DRINKS

<i>biska</i>	<i>bee-ska</i>	mistletoe brandy
<i>pelinkovac</i>	<i>pe-lin-ko-vats</i>	herbal liqueur
<i>pivo</i>	<i>pee-vo</i>	beer
<i>prosecco</i>	<i>pro-se-ko</i>	sweet dessert wine
<i>rogačica</i>	<i>ro-ga-tchee-tsa</i>	carob brandy
<i>šljivovica</i>	<i>shlyee-vo-vee-tsa</i>	plum brandy
<i>travarica</i>	<i>tra-va-ree-tsa</i>	herbal brandy
<i>vinjak</i>	<i>vee-nyak</i>	cognac

FISH

<i>bakalar</i>	<i>ba-ka-lar</i>	codfish
<i>brancin</i>	<i>bran-tseen</i>	sea bass
<i>dagnja</i>	<i>dag-nya</i>	mussel
<i>lignje</i>	<i>leeg-nye</i>	squid
<i>losos</i>	<i>law-saws</i>	salmon
<i>oslić</i>	<i>aw-sleech</i>	hake
<i>pastrva</i>	<i>pas-tr-va</i>	trout
<i>prstaci</i>	<i>prs-ta-tsee</i>	shellfish
<i>rak</i>	<i>rak</i>	crab
<i>riba</i>	<i>ree-ba</i>	fish
<i>šaran</i>	<i>sharan</i>	carp
<i>škamp</i>	<i>shkamp</i>	shrimp

MEAT

<i>govedina</i>	<i>gaw-ve-dee-na</i>	beef
<i>guska</i>	<i>goo-ska</i>	goose
<i>janjetina</i>	<i>ya-nye-tee-na</i>	lamb
<i>patka</i>	<i>pat-ka</i>	duck
<i>piletina</i>	<i>pee-le-tee-na</i>	chicken
<i>pršut</i>	<i>pr-shoot</i>	prosciutto
<i>purica</i>	<i>poo-ree-tsa</i>	turkey
<i>šunka</i>	<i>shoon-ka</i>	ham
<i>svinjetina</i>	<i>svee-nye-tee-na</i>	pork

VEGETABLES & FRUIT

<i>artičoka</i>	<i>ar-tee-tchaw-ka</i>	artichoke
<i>breskva</i>	<i>bres-kva</i>	peach
<i>jabuka</i>	<i>ya-boo-ka</i>	apple
<i>krumpir</i>	<i>kroom-peer</i>	potato
<i>kukuruz</i>	<i>koo-koo-rooz</i>	corn
<i>kupus</i>	<i>koo-poos</i>	cabbage
<i>luk</i>	<i>look</i>	onion
<i>naranča</i>	<i>na-ran-tcha</i>	orange
<i>paprika</i>	<i>pa-pree-ka</i>	fresh pepper
<i>rajčica</i>	<i>rai-tchee-tsa</i>	tomato
<i>riža</i>	<i>ree-zha</i>	rice
<i>tartufi</i>	<i>tar-too-fee</i>	wild truffle

STARTERS

<i>brodet</i>	<i>braw-det</i>	mixed stewed fish, served with polenta; also called <i>brodetto</i>
<i>burek</i>	<i>boo-rek</i>	heavy pastry stuffed with meat or cheese
<i>buzara</i>	<i>boo-za-ra</i>	sauce of tomatoes, onions, herbs, white wine and bread crumbs, usually served with shellfish

<i>juha od krumpira</i>	<i>yoo-ha awd krawm-pee-ra</i>	Zagorje potato soup
<i>na zagorski način</i>	<i>na za-gawr-skee na-tcheen</i>	
<i>klipiči</i>	<i>klee-pee-chee</i>	Varaždin's finger-shaped bread
<i>kulen</i>	<i>koo-len</i>	paprika-flavoured sausage
<i>maneštra</i>	<i>ma-nesh-tra</i>	vegetable-and-bean soup similar to minestrone
<i>maneštra od bobica</i>	<i>ma-nesh-tra awd baw-bee-cha</i>	bean and fresh maize soup
<i>miješana salata</i>	<i>mee-ye-sha-na sa-la-ta</i>	mixed salad
<i>paški sir</i>	<i>pash-kee seer</i>	sheep's milk cheese from the island of Pag
<i>pršut</i>	<i>pr-shoot</i>	dry-cured ham
<i>štrukli</i>	<i>shtroo-klee</i>	dumplings filled with cottage cheese
<i>turšija</i>	<i>toor-shee-ya</i>	pickled vegetables

MAIN COURSES

<i>blitva</i>	<i>bleet-va</i>	Swiss chard boiled and often served with potatoes, olive oil and garlic
<i>čevapčići</i>	<i>che-vap-tchee-chee</i>	small spicy sausages of minced beef, lamb or pork
<i>crni rižoto</i>	<i>tsr-nee ree-zho-to</i>	'black risotto' usually with cuttlefish, squid, olive oil, onion, garlic, parsley and red wine
<i>fiš paprikaš</i>	<i>fish pap-ree-kash</i>	fish stew with paprika
<i>fuži</i>	<i>foo-zhee</i>	Istrian hand-rolled pasta tubes
<i>gulaš</i>	<i>goo-lash</i>	goulash
<i>hrvatska pisanica</i>	<i>hr-vat-ska pee-sa-nee-tsa</i>	beef steak in a spicy mushroom, onion, tomato and red wine sauce
<i>husarska pečenka</i>	<i>hoo-sar-ska pe-tchen-ka</i>	steak with onions and bacon
<i>lignje na žaru</i>	<i>leeg-nye na zha-roo</i>	grilled squid
<i>mlinci</i>	<i>mleen-tsee</i>	baked noodles
<i>pašticada</i>	<i>pash-tee-tsa-da</i>	beef stewed in wine and spices and served with gnocchi
<i>pečenje</i>	<i>pe-tche-nye</i>	roasted meat
<i>pileći ujušak</i>	<i>pee-le-chee oo-yoo-shak</i>	chicken stew
<i>pljeskavica</i>	<i>plye-ska-vee-tsa</i>	a hamburger of minced pork, beef or lamb
<i>prženi krumpir</i>	<i>pr-zhe-nee kroom-peer</i>	fried potatoes
<i>punjene paprike</i>	<i>poo-nye-ne pa-pree-ke</i>	peppers stuffed with minced beef or pork and rice in tomato sauce
<i>purica s mlincima</i>	<i>poo-ree-tsa s mleen-tsee-ma</i>	turkey with <i>mlinci</i>
<i>ražnjići</i>	<i>razh-nyee-chee</i>	small chunks of pork grilled on a skewer
<i>riblji rižoto</i>	<i>reeb-lyee ree-zhaw-taw</i>	fish risotto usually with tomato sauce
<i>rižoto</i>	<i>ree-zhaw-taw</i>	risotto
<i>šurlice</i>	<i>shoor-lee-tse</i>	homemade noodles from Krk island, topped with goulash or seafood
<i>zagrebački odrezak</i>	<i>za-gre-batch-ki od-rez-ak</i>	veal steak stuffed with ham and cheese, then fried in breadcrumbs

DESSERTS

<i>amareta</i>	<i>a-ma-re-ta</i>	round, rich cake with almonds
<i>cukarini</i>	<i>tsoo-ka-ree-nee</i>	sweet biscuit
<i>klajun</i>	<i>kla-yoon</i>	pastry stuffed with walnuts
<i>kremšnite</i>	<i>krem-shnee-te</i>	custard pie
<i>palačinke</i>	<i>pa-la-tcheen-ke</i>	thin pancakes, often filled with jam, chocolate or walnut paste
<i>palačinke sa sirom</i>	<i>pa-la-tcheen-ke sa see-rawm</i>	pancakes filled with cottage cheese, sugar, raisins, egg and sour cream and then oven baked

Environment

THE LAND

Croatia is shaped like a boomerang: from the Pannonian plains of Slavonia between the Sava, Drava and Danube Rivers, across hilly central Croatia to the Istrian peninsula, then south through Dalmatia along the rugged Adriatic coast. The unusual geography makes it tricky to circle the country. If you're touring the country from Zagreb, when you get to Dubrovnik you can either fly back to Zagreb to catch a flight out, double back by land through Split, or drive up through Bosnia and Hercegovina to enter Croatia from the east.

The narrow Croatian coastal belt at the foot of the Dinaric Alps is only about 600km long as the crow flies, but it's so indented that the actual length is 1778km. If the 4012km of coastline around the offshore islands is added to the total, the length becomes 5790km. Most of the 'beaches' along this jagged coast consist of slabs of rock sprinkled with naturists. Don't come expecting to find sand, but the waters are sparkling clean, even around large towns.

Croatia's offshore islands are every bit as beautiful as those off the coast of Greece. There are 1185 islands and islets along the tectonically submerged Adriatic coastline, 66 of them inhabited. The largest are Cres, Krk, Mali Lošinj, Pag and Rab in the north; Dugi Otok in the middle; and Brač, Hvar, Korčula, Mljet and Vis in the south. Most are barren and elongated from northwest to southeast, with high mountains that drop right into the sea.

WILDLIFE

Animals

Deer are plentiful in the dense forests of Risnjak National Park (p128), as are brown bears, wild cats and *ris* (lynx), from which the park gets its name. Occasionally a wolf or wild boar may appear but only rarely. Plitvice Lakes National Park (p195), however, is an important refuge for wolves. A rare sea otter is also protected in Plitvice, as well as in Krka National Park (p212).

The griffon vulture, with a wingspan of 2.6m, has a permanent colony on Cres (see p138), and Paklenica National Park (p198) is rich in peregrine falcons, goshawks, sparrow hawks, buzzards and owls. Krka National Park is an important migration route and winter habitat for marsh birds, such as herons, wild duck, geese and cranes, and rare golden eagles and short-toed eagles. Kopački Rit Nature Park (p112), near Osijek in eastern Croatia, is an extremely important bird refuge.

The fine weather on Hvar is so reliable that hotels give a discount on cloudy days and a free stay should you ever see snow.

Croatia is home to about 400 bears.

KARST CAVES & WATERFALLS

The most outstanding geological feature of Croatia is the prevalence of the highly porous limestone and dolomitic rock called karst. Stretching from Istria to Montenegro and covering large parts of the interior, karst is formed by the absorption of water into the surface limestone, which then corrodes and allows the water to seep into the harder layer underneath. Eventually the water forms underground streams, carving out fissures and caves before resurfacing, disappearing into another cave and finally emptying into the sea. Caves and springs are common interior features of karstic landscapes, which explains Croatia's Pazin Chasm (p177), Plitvice Lakes (p195) and the Krka waterfalls (p213), as well as the Manita Peć cave (p199) in Paklenica. The jagged, sparsely vegetated exterior landscape is dramatic, but deforestation, wind and erosion have made the land unsuitable for agriculture. When the limestone collapses, a kind of basin (known as *polje*) is formed, which is then cultivated despite the fact that this kind of field drains poorly and can easily turn into a temporary lake.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

- Dubrovnik's Old Town (p264)
- Diocletian's Palace (p220), Split
- Plitvice Lakes National Park (p195)
- Euphrasian Basilica (p171), Poreč
- Trogir (p232)
- Cathedral of St James (p209), Šibenik

Two venomous snakes are endemic in Paklenica – the nose-horned viper and the European adder. The nonvenomous leopard snake, four-lined snake, grass snake and snake lizard species can be found in both Paklenica and Krka National Parks.

Plants

The richest plant life is found in the Velebit Range, part of the Dinaric Range that provides the backdrop to the central Dalmatian coast. Botanists have counted 2700 species and 78 endemic plants there, including the increasingly threatened edelweiss. Risnjak National Park is another good place to find edelweiss, along with black-vanilla orchids, lilies and hairy alpenroses, which look a lot better than they sound. The dry Mediterranean climate along the coast is perfect for maquis, a low brush that flourishes all along the coast but especially on the island of Mljet. You'll also find oleander, jasmine and juniper trees along the coast, and lavender is cultivated on the island of Hvar. Typically, Mediterranean olive and fig trees are also abundant.

Croatia's currency, the kuna, is named for the pelt of the stone marten (*kuna*), which was used as the medium of exchange under the Venetians.

NATIONAL PARKS

When the Yugoslav federation collapsed, eight of its finest national parks ended up in Croatia. These cover 7.5% of the country and have a total area of 994 sq km, of which 235 sq km is water. Risnjak National Park (p128), southwest of Zagreb, is the most untouched forested park, partly because the climate at its higher altitudes is somewhat inhospitable – an average temperature of 12.6°C in July. The winters are long and snowy, but when spring finally comes in late May or early June everything blooms at once. The park has been kept deliberately free of tourist facilities, with the idea that only mountain-lovers need apply. The main entrance point is the motel and information facility at Crni Lug.

The dramatically formed karstic gorges and cliffs make Paklenica National Park (p198) along the coast a rock-climbing favourite and the scene of a European rock-climbing competition held each year in early May. Large grottoes and caves filled with stalactites and stalagmites make it an interesting park for cave explorers, and there are many kilometres of trails for hiking. Tourist facilities are well developed here. More rugged is the mountainous Northern Velebit National Park, a stunning patchwork of forests, peaks, ravines and ridges that backs northern Dalmatia and the Šibenik-Knin region.

The waterfalls of Plitvice Lakes National Park (p195) were formed by mosses that retain calcium carbonate as river water rushes through the karst. Travertine or tufa builds up, sprouting plants that grow on top of each other to create barriers to the river. The park has been named a Unesco World

(Continued on page 69)

(Continued from page 60)

Heritage site and is easily accessible from either Zagreb or Zadar. The falls are at their watery best in the spring.

Krka National Park (p212) is an even more extensive series of lakes and waterfalls than Plitvice. The Zrmanja, Krka, Cetina and Neretva Rivers form waterfalls, but Manojlovac's power plant upstream can interfere with the flow, which can slow considerably in July or August. The main access point is in Skradinski Buk, with the largest cascade covering 800m.

The Kornati Islands (p214) consist of 140 islands, islets and reefs scattered over 300 sq km. They are sparsely inhabited and sparsely vegetated, but the great indented form of the islands and extraordinary rock formations make them an Adriatic highlight. Unless you have your own boat, however, you'll need to join an organised tour from Zadar.

The northwestern half of the island of Mljet (p277) has been named a national park due to its two highly indented salt-water lakes surrounded by lush vegetation. Maquis is thicker and taller on Mljet than nearly anywhere else in the Mediterranean, which makes it a natural refuge for many animals. Snakes nearly overran the island until the Indian mongoose was introduced in 1909. This idyllic island is accessible by regular boats from Dubrovnik.

The Brijuni Islands (p163) are the most cultivated national park since they were developed as a tourist resort in the late 19th century. They were the getaway paradise for Tito and now attract glitterati, their helpers and their yachts. Most of the exotic animals and plants were introduced (elephants are not normally found in the Adriatic), but the islands are lovely. Access to the islands is restricted, however, and you must visit on an organised tour.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The lack of heavy industry in Croatia has had the happy effect of leaving its forests, coasts, rivers and air generally fresh and unpolluted, but, as ever, an increase in investment and development brings forth problems and threats to the environment. With the tourist boom, the demand for fresh fish and shellfish has risen exponentially. As it is no longer possible to fish their way out of the problem, the only alternative for Croats is to grow their own seafood. The production of farmed sea bass, sea bream and tuna (for export) is rising substantially with all the resulting environmental pressure along the coast. It's particularly disturbing that Croatian tuna farms capture the young fish for fattening before they have a chance to reproduce and replenish the fish population.

Although 23% of Croatia is covered by forests, they are under serious threat. It's estimated that about 50% of the forests are imperilled as a result of acid rain, mostly from neighbouring countries. Logging and building projects are cutting into forested land at the rate of about 1000 hectares a year.

Coastal and island forests face particular problems. First logged by Venetians to build ships, then by local people desperate for fuel, centuries of neglect have left many island and coastal mountains barren. The dry summers and brisk *maestrals* (strong, steady westerly winds) also pose substantial fire hazards along the coast. In the last 20 years, fires have destroyed 7% of Croatia's forests.

The Adriatic's temperature ranges from 7°C in December up to 23°C in September.

Although the sea along the Adriatic coast is among the cleanest in the world, overfishing has greatly reduced the fish population.

The website of the Ministry of Environmental Protection (www.mzopu.hr) is the place for the latest news on Croatia's environment.

THE ADRIATIC

Touted as the 'new this' and the 'new that' for years upon its re-emergence on the world tourism scene, it is now obvious that Croatia is a unique destination that can hold its own, and then some. The Adriatic coast is a knockout: its limpid sapphire-blue waters pull visitors to remote islands, hidden coves and traditional fishing villages, while touting the glitzy beach and yacht scene. Istria is captivating with its gastronomic and wine offerings, and the bars, clubs and festivals of Zadar and Split remain little-explored delights. Punctuate all this with Dubrovnik in the south and a country couldn't wish for a better finale.





Island Hopping

Croatia's coast is speckled with dozens of magnificent islands that range from tiny, verdant and unpopulated, to massive, arid and sporting ancient towns and villages. One of the chief delights on any visit to Croatia is hopping between the islands on the numerous ferries, catamarans and taxi boats, or, if you're thus blessed, your own sailing boat.





1 The Elafiti Islands

An easy hop away from Dubrovnik, the Elafiti Islands (p276) range from totally unpopulated swimming spots to small villages on little-explored islands. They can be reached by a taxi boat from Dubrovnik or via a fishing picnic tour.

2 Hvar

Croatia's most popular island, Hvar (p250), draws more tourists than any other Adriatic atoll thanks to its gorgeous hub (also called Hvar). Stari Grad and Jelsa, the island's two other towns, are emerging as popular alternatives thanks to their quieter, more discerning charms.

3 Cres

Long, hardly populated and undeveloped, this wild island (p136) is perfect for wandering around primeval forests, visiting ageing hilltop towns, admiring Venetian mansions, swimming in hidden coves and sampling some of Croatia's most delicious lamb.

4 Mljet

The northwestern half of Mljet (p277) is a national park. There are two salt lakes in the middle of the island, remote sandy beaches, only one conventional hotel and the food is magnificent. Need we say more?



5 Brač

The biggest of the Adriatic islands, Brač (p243) sports Croatia's most famous beach, the lasciviously alluring Zlatni Rat in the pretty town of Bol. Windsurf and sunbathe here, but don't forget to explore the island's gorgeous interior.

6 Vis

Off-limits to foreign visitors for around four decades, Vis (p240) is a mysterious island that's truly off the trodden path. With its three small fishing villages and one of Croatia's few real eco-holiday options, Vis is well worth exploring.



Activities

There's tonnes to do for active and outdoorsy types. Starting with vigorous swimming in the clear Adriatic waters and exertive sunbathing, you can progress on to mountain hiking, windsurfing, trekking, kayaking, climbing, sailing and more.





1 Sailing

Possibly the most popular activity on the Adriatic, the privileged and much-envied owners of sailing boats or those renting can exercise their biceps while gliding between the beautiful Croatian islands. The most popular place to dock is Hvar (p250), but use your chance to discover some of the more difficult-to-reach islands such as Kornati (p214) or Elafiti (p276).

2 Hiking

The numerous national parks – Plitvice (p195), Paklenica (p198) and Krka (p212) among others – are fantastic for hikers. If you want something more challenging, head for Mt Biokovo (p237), near Makarska. The islands of Cres (p136) and Mljet (p277) are perfect for light walking among nature.

3 Windsurfing

Bol's gorgeous Zlatni Rat must be one of the most picturesque places to hurl yourself into the wind and water, which explains why so many do each year (see p248). The village of Viganj, near Dubrovnik, is a close contender for favourite, with the majority of visitors being windsurfing enthusiasts (see boxed text, p289).



4 Diving

The islands are prime diving spots with dozens of marine beauties to be discovered off Hvar (p250), Brač (p243), Krk (p141), Kornati (p214) and others. Most coastal towns have diving opportunities, too, so make sure you plunge and explore Croatia underwater at least once.

5 Naturism

Yes, you read it right. Croatia has a venerable naturist history, its founders being Edward VIII and Wallis Simpson, who skinny-dipped along the Rab coast in 1936 (see boxed text, p157). Istria is now Croatia's number-one place for going starkers, though the rest of the coast reserves numerous nudist beaches, too. Just look for the FKK sign!



Architecture & Landscape

It's all here – Renaissance, Venetian and Gothic architecture, sweeping green fields and breezy forests, and the impressive, rugged Dinaric Alps, not to mention the enchanting Adriatic Sea. Wherever you look, you're bound to swoon.





1 Dubrovnik

You didn't think we'd forget the star of the show? Dazzling all with its heart-stopping beauty, Dubrovnik (p260) is packed with five-star hotels, high-class restaurants and countless tourists, but move away from the main streets and there's still much to discover.

2 Kornati Islands

Imagine this: 147 mostly uninhabited islands and reefs, carved with cracks, caves and cliffs, and dotted with tufts of evergreen forest (see p214). The Kornati National Park (p215) is a delight for any lover of stark and unspoilt nature, limpid waters and solitude.

3 Plitvice Lakes National Park

A verdant maze of paths, woods and meadows revolves around 16 sparkling lakes and crashing waterfalls at Plitvice (p195). It's a World Heritage site and Croatia's most popular national park – also much loved by its resident bears and wolves and over 120 species of birds.

4 Trogir

A pocket-size town that brims with Romanesque and Renaissance architecture, and one of the loveliest cathedrals on the coast, Trogir's (p232) illustrious history has left it with a fantastic Venetian heritage.



5 Zadar

An up-and-coming city destination, Zadar (p185) has one of Dalmatia's prettiest old town centres, with marble, traffic-free streets that follow the old Roman street plan. Zadar's Roman ruins and medieval churches dazzle, as does its nightlife.

6 Adriatic Sea

It may be obvious, but it's hard to over-emphasise the beauty of the Adriatic. It's smooth, silky and pellucid, and the colour (in turn electric blue, jade green and steely) is unmatched. Fish will tickle your calves as you step in, but watch out for sea urchins!

7 Diocletian's Palace

One of the world's most impressive Roman ruins, these Unesco-protected remains still serve the very purpose they were built for: life is lived inside them. Split's heart, soul and most of its arteries, Diocletian's Palace (p220) is packed with shoppers, bar-hoppers, workers, kids and tourists. It's a real beauty.

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