

# Slavonia



As locals say, 'the highest mountain is a cabbage' in pancake-flat Slavonia. While it can't boast much geographical diversity, this fertile region has quite an impressive cultural mix, having blended Hungarian, Serbian and German influences over the centuries. Bounded by three major rivers, the Sava, Drava and Danube, it borders Hungary in the north, Bosnia and Hercegovina in the south and Serbia in the east.

For visitors, Slavonia provides a landscape nearly untouched by tourism, with unique natural wonders and tasty regional cuisine. The wetlands of Kopački Rit are one of Europe's finest ornithological reserves, and you can take a boat tour along its lakes. Osijek, Slavonia's largest town, is well worth a visit for its riverfront setting, a remarkable fortress quarter and Secessionist architecture. The Baranja region to the northeast, with its up-and-coming wine country, has developed 'ethnotourism' in an attempt to preserve traditional village life and make it accessible to tourists. Further east, Vukovar is still healing its war wounds but rising out of the ashes and calling visitors to its war memorials. Ilok, on the Serbian border, with its ancient wine cellars and a preserved old town, gives a glimpse of where East meets West.

Slavonia was once Croatia's breadbasket, its plains yielding wheat, corn, beets, sunflowers and clover, plus some of Croatia's finest wines. Although the 1990s war put a serious dent in the agricultural industry, you'll still see plenty of grain fields and few industrial landscapes. Traces of the war remain, but the peaceful villages, laid-back people and steady year-round prices make Slavonia an ideal destination for those who want to skip the standard experience.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Touring the ancient wine cellars of **Ilok** (p116)
- Sampling the restaurants of Osijek's fortress quarter **Tvrđa** (p110)
- Bird-watching in **Kopački Rit Nature Park** (p112), one of Europe's largest wetlands
- Visiting the war memorials in **Vukovar** (p115)
- Experiencing village life in **Karanac Ethno-Village** (p113)
- Travelling the wine roads of **Baranja** (see boxed text, p114)





## History

Before the 1991 war displaced tens of thousands of inhabitants, Slavonia contained one of the most ethnically diverse populations in Europe. Settled by Slavic tribes in the 7th century, the region was conquered by the Turks in the 16th century. Catholic residents fled and Serbian Orthodox settlers, who were better received by the Turks, arrived en masse.

In 1690, Serb supporters of Vienna, in their battles with the Turks, left Kosovo and settled in the Srijem region around Vukovar. The Turks ceded the land to Austria in 1699 and the Habsburgs turned a large part of the region into a Military Frontier (Vojna Krajina).

The Muslim population left but more Serbs arrived, joined by German merchants, Hungarian, Slovak and Ukrainian peasants, Catholic Albanians and Jews. Much land was sold to German and Hungarian aristocrats who built huge baroque and classical mansions around Osijek, Vukovar and Ilok. Many Germans were killed or expelled after WWI and WWII and their homesteads occupied by Serbs and Montenegrins from southern Yugoslavia.

The large Serbian community prompted Serbian president Slobodan Milošević's attempt to incorporate the region into 'Greater Serbia'. This assault began with the destruction of Vukovar and the shelling of Osijek in 1991. A ceasefire prevailed in 1992, but it wasn't until January 1998 that the region was returned to Croatia as part of the Dayton peace agreement. The scars of war remain clearly visible but the region has been hard at work to revive its economy and inject new life into its landscapes.

## Dangers & Annoyances

Osijek and its surrounds were heavily laid with land mines during the 1990s war. Although the city and its outskirts along the main road have been de-mined and are completely safe, it would be unwise to wander through the swampland north of the Drava River, which leads to Kopački Rit. Most mined areas are marked, so watch out for the skeleton head signs.

In summer, the mosquitoes are bloodthirsty little devils, chewing through every bit of flesh they can find. Wear long sleeves and trousers or slather on plenty of repellent after dark.

## OSIJEK

☎ 031 / pop 90,411

Photographs of Osijek before the 1990s reveal a relaxed river city of wide avenues, leafy parks and grand 19th-century Secessionist mansions. Sadly, the shells that fell during the 1991 offensive scarred the pretty image of this lively university town.

Although many buildings along the avenues have been restored to their former lustre, the pits and pock-marks on other structures are grim reminders of the war that ravaged eastern Slavonia in the early 1990s. However, the economy is kicking back, with a healthy number of people returning to their home town after years of exile, new hotels and restaurants popping up and tourists slowly trickling in. A new highway extension from Zagreb shortened the travel time by some 40 minutes, while direct flights from Germany also make access easier.

A pleasant waterfront promenade along the Drava River, an imposing 18th-century fortress and the resilient spirit of this relaxed city all make excellent reasons to visit Osijek.

## History

Osijek's location on the Drava River, near its junction with the Danube (Dunav in Croatian), has made it strategically important for more than two millennia. It was the Slavic settlers that gave Osijek its name; by the 12th century it was a thriving market town. In 1526, the Turks destroyed Osijek, rebuilt it in Ottoman style and made it into an administrative centre.

The Austrians chased the Turks out in 1687, the Muslims fled into Bosnia, and the city was repopulated with Serbs, Croats, Germans and Hungarians. Still wary of Turkish attacks, the Austrians built the fortress that still stands, Tvrđa, in the early 18th century.

Until the recent 1990s war, Osijek was a powerful industrial centre of former Yugoslavia. When the war broke out in 1991, the federal Yugoslav army and Serbian paramilitary units overran the Baranja region north of Osijek. The first shells began falling in July 1991 from Serbian positions across the Drava River. When Vukovar fell in November of that year, federal and Serbian forces made Osijek the object of their undivided attention, pounding it with artillery as thousands of terrified residents poured out of the city. This devastating

shelling continued until May 1992, but the city never fell.

The economy was seriously hurt by the costs of reconstruction and of housing refugees, as well as the loss of markets for its products. In the last couple of years, the city has awoken from its postwar slumber and a new optimism is in the air.

## Orientation

Stretching along the southern bank of the Drava River, Osijek is composed of three boroughs: the Upper Town (Gornji Grad), the Lower Town (Donji Grad) and the 18th-century fortress, Tvrđa. The bus station (a new one is being built just to the west) and train station are adjacent in the southern part of the Upper Town. Most of the sights, hotels, cafés and shops are located between the train and bus stations and the river.

The main shopping street is Kapucinska, which becomes the wide Europska Avenija in the east, bordered by a series of parks planted with chestnut and linden trees. A pleasant riverfront promenade stretches all the way to the city's outskirts.

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS

**Press Café** (☎ 212 313; Lorenza Jägera 24; per hr 15KN; ☎ 7am-11pm Mon-Sat, 8am-11pm Sun)

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Hospital** (☎ 511 511; Josipa Huttlera 4)

### MONEY

**Privredna Banka** (Stjepana Radića 19)

**Slavonska Banka** (Kapucinska 29)

### POST

**Post office** (Kardinala Alojzija Stepinca 17; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Sat) You can make phone calls and get cash advances on MasterCard.

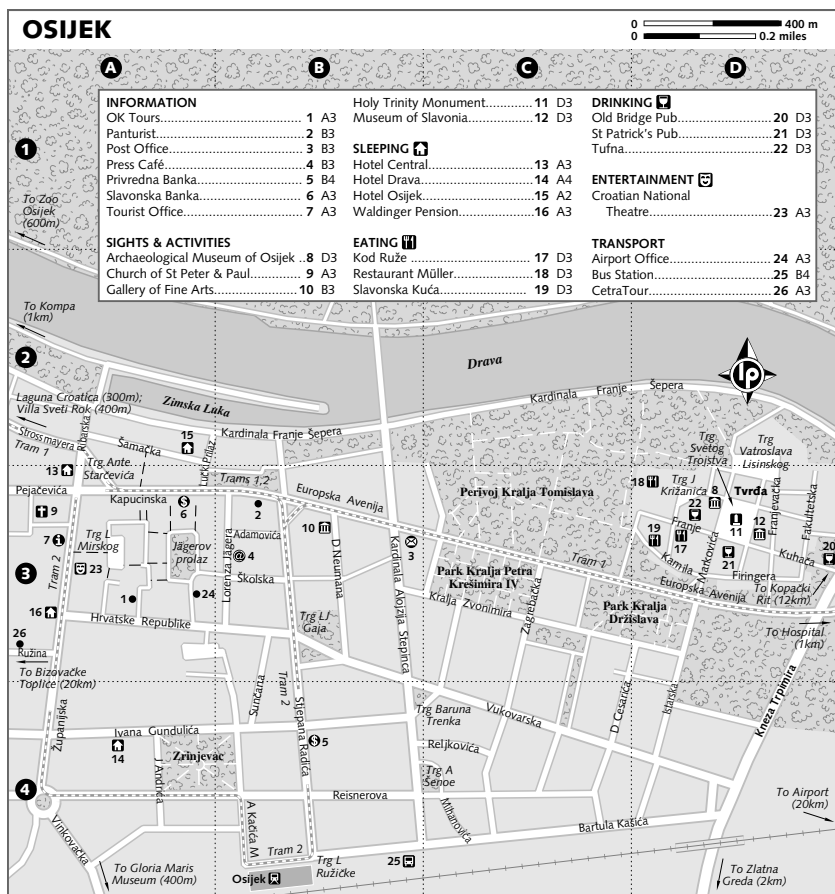
### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (☎ /fax 203 755; www.tzosijek.hr; Županijska 2; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat) Distributes plentiful brochures, booklets and maps.

### TRAVEL AGENCIES

**OK Tours** (☎ 212 815; www.ok-tours.hr; Trg Slobode 7; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Good source of local information and some private accommodation.

**Panturist** (☎ 214 388; www.panturist.hr; Kapucinska 19; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) Slavonia's largest



agency, it runs buses to the coast as well as to Germany, Switzerland and Bosnia and Hercegovina.

**Zlatna Greda** ☎ 565 180; [www.zlatna-greda.org](http://www.zlatna-greda.org); Opatijska 26F; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) An offshoot of the Zeleni Osijek ([www.zeleni-osijek.hr](http://www.zeleni-osijek.hr)) environmental nonprofit group, which runs an ecocentre in the wetlands of Baranja, this agency organises hiking trips, photo safaris, boat and canoe rides along the Danube, and bike tours.

## Sights

### TVRĐA

Built under Habsburg rule as a defence against Turkish attacks, the 18th-century citadel was relatively undamaged during the recent war. This baroque complex of cobblestone streets, spacious squares and stately mansions reveals

a remarkable architectural unity, lending it an open-air museum feel.

The main square, Trg Svetog Trojstva, is marked by the elaborate **Holy Trinity Monument**, a baroque pillar erected in 1729 to commemorate the victims of the 18th-century plague that swept the city.

The **Museum of Slavonia** (Muzej Slavonije Osijek; ☎ 250 730; Trg Svetog Trojstva 6; adult/student 15/10KN; ☎ 8am-2pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun) traces Slavonia's long history, beginning with implements from the Bronze Age and displays of coins, pottery and utensils from the Roman colony of Mursa.

Diagonally opposite is the city's newest museum, the **Archaeological Museum of Osijek** (Arheološki Muzej Osijek; ☎ 232 132; Trg Svetog Trojstva 2;

adult/student 15/8KN; ☎ 10am-3pm Tue-Fri, to 1pm Sat & Sun). In the renovated city guard building with a glass dome over an arcaded patio, it showcases finds – from Roman stones to Celtic helmets – unearthed during the building of the new highway.

### UPPER TOWN

The towering **Church of St Peter & Paul** (☎ 310 020; ☎ 8am-7.30pm) looms over Trg Ante Starčevića with its 90m-high tower, surpassed in height only by the cathedral in Zagreb. Built in the 1890s, this red-brick neo-Gothic structure features an interior with 40 elaborate stained-glass windows in Viennese style, and vividly coloured frescoes by Croatian painter Mirko Rački.

Housed in an elegant neoclassical mansion, the **Gallery of Fine Arts** (Galerija Likovnih Umjetnosti; ☎ 251 280; Europska Avenija 9; adult/student 10/5KN; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, to 1pm Sat & Sun) contains a collection of paintings and sculptures by Slavonian artists from the 18th century onwards.

### BEYOND THE CENTRE

As an escape from museums and churches, take a free ride on the emblematic *kompa* (a wooden pedestrian ferry propelled by the water current) from the shore of Gornji Grad to **Zoo Osijek** (☎ 285 234; Tvrdavica 1; adult/child 7/3KN; ☎ 9am-7pm Mar-Aug, to 5pm Sep-Feb) on the other side of the Drava. Croatia's largest zoo spreads over 11 verdant riverside hectares, with 80 animal species and a reptile-filled aquarium. The *kompa* operates from 8am to midnight, June to September, and from 9am to 6pm, October to May.

Worth a trek to the semi-industrial zone of Bosutsko Naselje is Osijek's most offbeat sight: the **Gloria Maris Museum** (☎ 273 008; Svetog Josipa Radnika 35; adult/child 20/15KN; ☎ 10am-1pm & 4-7pm Tue-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun) of sea shells and marine life. This private collection of over 250,000 items – from the giant mammoth tooth found in the Sava River to pearl shells from the Indian Ocean – has been gathered over a lifetime by avid collector Ivan Filipović. Ivan also shares a million fascinating tidbits on an educational guided tour (request in advance for an English speaker).

### Festivals & Events

Extreme sports fans should make it here in August, when the **Pannonian Challenge** (www.pannonian.org) event attracts an international

following of adrenaline junkies who compete in skateboarding, BMX skills, in-line skating and mountain biking.

### Sleeping

Osijek recently got a fresh crop of hotels, and a few more are in the works. There are no hotels and limited private accommodation. For private rooms (from 165KN per person), ask at the tourist office or OK Tours (p108).

**ourpick Waldinger Pension** (☎ 250 450; www.waldinger.hr; Županijska 8; s/d 290/440KN; Ⓟ ☎ ☎) In the quiet backyard of Osijek's boutique Waldinger Hotel, this three-star annexe – with a pond and garden – offers plain but gracious rooms. The hotel rooms (single/double 650/950KN) in the elegant Secessionist building come with jacuzzis. The lovely tearoom showcases rotating exhibits and fantastic cakes.

**Hotel Central** (☎ 283 399; www.hotel-central-os.hr; Trg Ante Starčevića 6; s/d 335/514KN; Ⓟ ☎) While it no longer holds its status as the grandest of Osijek hotels, this old-fashioned property still has a prime location on the main square. The room decor is out of date, but perks include wireless internet and nice panoramas from the square-facing units.

**Hotel Drava** (☎ 250 500; www.hotel-drava.com; Ivana Gundulića 25a; s/d 380/680KN; Ⓟ ☎ ☎) Tucked away from the busy street, a hop and a skip from the train and bus stations, this small family-run hotel has colourful rooms, each slightly different but all with modern furnishings.

**Villa Sveti Rok** (☎ 310 490; www.villa-sveti-rok.hr; Svetog Roka 13; s/d 585/785KN; Ⓟ ☎ ☎) Hole up in one of the plush rooms at this swanky little guest house on a leafy residential street a stone's throw from the centre. You may not want to leave – there are DVD players, hydro-massage showers, wireless internet and piped music in the bathrooms.

**Hotel Osijek** (☎ 230 333; www.hotelosijek.hr; Šamačka 4; s/d 760/950KN; Ⓟ ☎ ☎) While your next-door neighbours are busy making business deals, you can indulge in the luxury facilities and in-room trappings of this 14-storey riverfront hotel. There's a top-floor wellness centre and gourmet restaurant, and delicious cakes and ice cream at the pastry shop.

### Eating

Osijek is the place to sample hearty and spicy Slavonian cuisine, which is strongly influenced by neighbouring Hungary. Paprika is

sprinkled on almost every dish and, as elsewhere in continental Croatia, meat is prominent. Freshwater fish features highly, often in a delicious stew called *fiš paprikaš*, served with noodles. Note that all restaurants listed here are closed on Sunday evening.

**Laguna Croatica** (☎ 369 203; Dubrovačka 13; mains 35-75KN) Once you've studied the extensive and varied menu, you can admire the bric-a-brac on the walls of this dark basement restaurant a short walk from the centre. Try the uniquely Slavonian version of calamari – filled with *kulen* (spicy pork sausage) and cheese!

**Slavonska Kuća** (☎ 369 955; Kamila Firingera 26a; mains from 40KN) This rustic old house on the edge of Tvrđa serves mean *fiš paprikaš* and venison *perkelt* (a goulash-like stew), as well as other regional specialities. Wash your meal down with *graševina*, a fruity white wine.

**Restaurant Müller** (☎ 204 770; Trg Jurja Križanića 9; mains 45-70KN) Conveniently located at the heart of Tvrđa, this place is perfectly pleasant and a decent choice for its well-prepared if uninspired Croatian and international standards. Frog legs à la Parisienne anyone?

**our pick Kod Ruže** (☎ 206 066; Kuhačeva 25a; mains from 45KN) Clad in wood and villagey knick-knacks, one of the city's newest restaurants has quickly become a locals' favourite for its excellent regional mainstays. Try the *čobanac* stew with game and don't miss the homemade cakes.

## Drinking & Entertainment

### BARs & NIGHTCLUBS

On warm evenings, everyone socialises at the outdoor cafés that line the riverfront around Hotel Osijek. Stjepana Radića has a cluster of cafés and bars catering to the local student population.

In winter, the coffee-sipping moves indoors to *kavanas*, as cafés are known locally. Waldinger, Central and Osijek are particularly popular. Most nightlife is in Tvrđa where nobody minds the noise.

**our pick Old Bridge Pub** (☎ 211 611; www.oldbridgepub.hr; Franje Kuhača 4) You'll catch anything from karaoke to *tamburica* (a small stringed instrument popular in Slavonian folk music) concerts at this classy pub-bar. There's tasty finger food, a huge menu of drinks and an upstairs restaurant with a country club vibe.

**St Patrick's Pub** (Franje Kuhača 15) With tables spilling out on Tvrđa's main square, this Irish-style pub is a simple but popular affair where lads and lasses chug their Osječko brews.

**Tufna** (www.tufna.hr; Franje Kuhača 10) The old popular Posh club has been turned into Tufna, Osijek's hottest nightclub with two floors, DJs spinning anything from disco to electro, and two-for-one happy hours from 10pm till midnight every weekend.

### THEATRE

**Croatian National Theatre** (Hrvatsko Narodno Kazalište; ☎ 220 700; Županijska 9) Designed in 1866 in historicist style, the theatre features a regular program of drama, ballet and opera performances from September to May.

## Getting There & Away

Osijek is a major transport hub with buses and trains arriving and departing in all directions.

### AIR

**Klisa Airport** (☎ 514 451, 060 339 338; Vukovarska 67, Klisa) is 20km from Osijek on the road to Vukovar. Its city office is at Vijenac J Gotovca 4. Germanwings has a direct flight from Cologne twice weekly. Croatia Airlines has weekly flights to Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Split, Pula and Zadar.

### BUS

Following are some of the international buses that depart from Osijek. Many more buses leave for Germany than can be listed here.

Destination	Fare (KN)	Duration (hr)	Daily/weekly services
Belgrade	107	3½	5 daily
Tuzla	112	4	1 daily
Vienna	302	10	2 weekly
Zürich	675	7½	1 weekly

The following domestic buses depart from Osijek:

Destination	Fare (KN)	Duration (hr)	Daily services
Bizovačke Toplice	22	½	3 (weekdays only)
Đakovo	32	¾	17
Dubrovnik	300	14	1
Požega	78	2¼	5 (2 on Sun)
Rijeka	235	7	1
Slavonski Brod	67	1¾	20
Split	283	11	1
Vukovar	31	¾	11
Zagreb	128	4	9



## ĐAKOVO CATHEDRAL & HORSES

The peaceful provincial town of Đakovo is just 35km to the south of Osijek and makes for an easy day trip. There are three major reasons to visit: its impressive cathedral, the Lipizzaner horses and a wonderful folk festival every summer.

The town's pride and glory is the red-brick **cathedral** (☎ 031-802 200; Trg Strossmayera 6; 🕒 6am-noon & 3-7pm), which dominates the town centre with its two 84m-high belfries. Commissioned by Bishop Strossmayer in 1862, this neo-Romanesque structure features a three-nave interior colourfully painted with biblical scenes.

Đakovo is famous for its Lipizzaner horses, a noble pure breed with a lineage that can be traced back to the 16th century. They are bred on a farm outside town and trained at **Ergala** (☎ 031-813 286; www.ergala-djakovo.hr; Augusta Senoe 45; adult/student 20/10KN; 🕒 7am-5.30pm Mon-Fri), a short walk from the cathedral. About 50 horses undergo daily training for their eventual work as high-class carriage horses.

**Đakovački Vezovi** (Đakovo Embroidery) in early July each year features a display by the Lipizzaner horses and a folklore show complete with folkloric dancing and traditional songs.

## TRAIN

There's one train a day in either direction between Pećs and Osijek (56KN, two hours). The train from Osijek connects to Budapest (207KN, six hours). There is a daily train to Sarajevo (138KN, seven hours).

The following domestic trains depart from Osijek:

Destination	Fare (KN)	Duration (hr)	Daily services
Bizovačke			
Toplice	17	¼	12
Đakovo	23	½	8
Požega	53	2½	3
Rijeka	200	9-10	2
Šibenik	242	14	1 (change in Perković)
Slavonski Brod	45	1½	7 (only 2 direct)
Zagreb	130	4-5	7

## Getting Around

A shuttle bus takes people from the airport to the city centre for 25KN. It also departs from the bus station 2½ hours before each flight.

Osijek has a tram line that dates from 1884 and makes transportation within the city easy. The fare is 8KN each way from the driver, or 7KN from a *tisak* (newsstand). On Saturday, a **tourist tram** (tickets 10KN; 🕒 10am-1pm) with a guide makes an hour-long circuit of the city centre (for an English-speaking guide, contact the tourist office in advance).

For visitors, the most useful tram lines are 2, which connects the train and bus station with Trg Ante Starčevića in the centre, and 1, which goes to Tvrđa.

There is a bus line that connects Osijek to Bilje in Baranja. Take bus 6 (route 24, 25 or 27) with the sign Darda-Bilje.

## BARANJA

☎ 031

A small triangle in the far northeast of Croatia at the confluence of the Drava and Danube Rivers, Baranja ('wine mother' in Hungarian) stretches east of Osijek towards Serbia, north towards the town of Beli Manastir and southwest towards Đakovo. The Hungarian influence is strongly felt in this largely agricultural area; even all the towns have bilingual names.

In the last few years, this scenic area of swamps, vineyards, orchards and wheat fields (without a single street light) has been on the rise as eastern Croatia's most interesting tourist destination. That's thanks in part to its star attraction, the bird sanctuary of Kopački Rit, but also to a clutch of authentic farm stays, regional restaurants and up-and-coming wineries.

## Kopački Rit Nature Park

Only 12km northeast of Osijek, **Kopački Rit Nature Park** (Park Prirode Kopački Rit; www.kopacki-rit.com; adult/child 10/5KN) is one of the largest wetlands in Europe, home to 141 bird species throughout its 23,000 hectares. Formed by the meeting of the Drava and Danube Rivers, this vast floodplain has two main lakes, Sakadaško and Kopačevo, surrounded by a remarkable variety of vegetation – from aquatic and grassland flora to willow, poplar and oak forests. Depending on the season, you can find water lilies, sedges, water ferns, duckweeds, reeds and ryegrass.

Beneath the waters lie 44 species of fish, including carp, bream, pike, catfish and perch. Above the water buzz 21 kinds of mosquito (bring a tonne of repellent!) and roam red deer, wild boar, pine marten and red foxes. But it's really about the birds here – look for the rare black storks, white-tailed eagles, great crested grebes, mallard ducks, purple herons, cormorants, falcons and wild geese. The best time to come is during the spring and autumn migrations, when hundreds of thousands of birds rest here before continuing their flight.

The park was heavily mined during the war and closed for many years as a result. Most mines have now been cleared, safe trails have been marked, and the park has a spanking new **visitor centre** (☎ 752 320; 🕒 9am–5pm), located at the main entrance along the Bilje–Kopačevo road.

You can walk the two educational trails nearby, but the best way to take in the wetlands is on a **boat tour** (adult/child Apr–Jun & Sep–Nov 60/45KN, Jul & Aug 40/25KN). These one-hour trips around the southern section of Sakadaško depart several times daily from an embarkation point about 1km from the visitor centre. Although the boat fits 54, book in advance, especially during spring and autumn.

At the northern end of the park, 12km from the visitor centre, is an Austro-Hungarian castle complex, Dvorac Tikveš. It's home to the renovated **bio-ecological research station** (☎ 752 320; s/d 200/400KN), the park's only lodging. The ground floor has labs used by scientists; accessed from the verandah upstairs are seven pleasant en suite rooms with leafy views. Once used by Tito as a hunting lodge, the castle was occupied by the Serbian paramilitary leader Arkan in the early 1990s, and used as the training centre for his infamous troops. The forests around the complex are still mined, so don't wander off by yourself. Don't miss lunch at the restaurant (mains 42KN to 86KN) where carp is roasted on a forked branch and *fiš paprikaš* slow-cooked in the open-fire kitchen.

There is no public transport to the park, but you can take a local Osijek bus to Bilje and walk the remaining 3km. Alternatively, rent a bike in Osijek at **CetraTour** (☎ 031-372 920; www.cetratour.hr; Ružina 16; 🕒 8.30am–3.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat) or take a day trip with Zlatna Greda (p109).

## AROUND KOPAČKI RIT

The low-key town of Bilje, just 5km north of Osijek, is a good alternative base for Kopački

Rit. The prime source of information here is **Bilje Plus** (☎ 750 264; www.biljeplus.hr), an association of five rural B&Bs that rents rooms and bikes (70KN per day). One of those is **Crvendac** (☎ 750 264; www.crvendac.com; Biljske Satnije ZNG RH 5; s/d 155/310KN), run by two outgoing women, Anka and Marija. As biking enthusiasts, they will inform you of the cycle paths in the area, such as the 80km **Pannonian Peace Trail**, which connects Osijek and the Serbian city of Sombor. The three rooms inside this red-themed house are simple and clean, with one shared bathroom; there's also an internet kiosk (1KN per minute).

The quiet village of Kopačevo on the edge of Kopački Rit is home to an outstanding regional restaurant, **Zelena Žaba** (☎ 752 212; Ribarska 3; mains from 40KN), or 'green frog', after the thousands of squatters bellowing in the backyard swamp. The specialities are *fiš paprikaš* and *fiš perkelt*, a fish stew with homemade noodles, soft cheese and bacon.

## Karanac Ethno-Village

Located in the far north of Baranja, 8km east of Beli Manastir, the ethno-village of Karanac provides an authentic slice of Slavonian village life. In fact, 95% of its inhabitants still work in agriculture. Lined with cherry trees and lovingly tended gardens, home to three churches (Reformist, Catholic and Orthodox) and proud of its well-preserved Pannonian architecture, it's a success story of 'ethnotourism'.

Several accommodation options are available, but the man who started it all still offers the real-deal experience at his restored 1910 farmhouse, **Sklepić** (☎ 720 271; www.sklepic.hr, in Croatian; Kolodvorska 58; s/d 230/338KN). The en suite rooms here are small, rustic and charming, and breakfast is a delicious affair of homemade jams, *kulen* and free-range eggs.

Sklepić also has an **ethno-museum** (☎ 720 271; admission 15KN; 🕒 by appointment) in an 1897 rural estate at the end of the village. He greets groups on a horse and with his family shows off 2000 traditional objects in the string of old-fashioned rooms, workshops, a wine cellar and stables. For an extra 10KN, you get homemade snacks thrown in.

Karanac has one of Baranja's best restaurants, **Baranjska Kuća** (☎ 720 180; Kolodvorska 99; mains from 45KN). The owners say they'll accept only as many guests as they can bake bread for – so reserve ahead, especially on weekends. You can sample traditional dishes, such as



## A SIP OF SLAVONIAN WINE

Known mainly for its whites such as *graševina* and *traminac*, the viticulture of Slavonia is undergoing a serious renaissance, so let's take a walk down the wine roads of eastern Croatia. You should call ahead at all these cellars to make sure somebody is there to receive you and show you around.

**Kutjevo** (☎ 034-255 002; www.kutjevo.com, in Croatian; Kralja Tomislava 1, Kutjevo; 📍 by appointment) is home to a medieval wine cellar dating from 1232, formerly of the Cistercian Abbey; you can visit on a guided tour (20KN). Nearby are two of Slavonia's top wineries: **Krauthaker** (☎ 034-315 000; www.krauthaker.hr; Ivana Jambrovića 6, Kutjevo; tasting & tour 40KN), famous for its fruity *graševina*, and **Enjingi** (☎ 034-267 201; www.enjingi.hr; Hrnjevac 87, Vetovo; tasting & tour 50KN), which has an award-winning ecological production and 51 years of winemaking experience.

In Baranja, grape cultivation has been revived on the gentle hills around Kneževi Vinogradi, long known for its wine production. A smattering of up-and-coming winegrowers, mainly in the villages of Zmajevac and Suza, work along these well-marked wine trails. Traditionalist in its approach to winemaking, **Gerstmajer** (☎ 031-735 276; Šandora 31, Zmajevac) offers tasting tours of its 11 vineyard hectares and the cellar. Just down the hill is the area's biggest producer, **Josić** (☎ 031-734 410; www.josic.hr; Planina 194, Zmajevac), which also has a restaurant on site. More commercial **Kolar** (☎ 031-733 006; Maršala Tita 141; 🕒 9am-5pm) offers wine tastings at the cellar and shop on the main road in Suza.

Slavonia also boasts the ancient cellars in Ilok (p116) as well as Croatia's first wine hotel, **Zdjelarević** (☎ 035-427 775; www.zdjelarevic.hr), located in Brodski Stupnik near Slavonski Brod. The hotel has marked educational paths through the vineyards, which you can visit with an agronomist who will teach you about pedology (soils) and the difference between grape varieties. At the hotel's restaurant, the chefs use Zdjelarević's wines in cooking and promote the many edible plants that grow here; for instance, they'll serve nettle soup, which is full of iron and was once used for cleaning people's organs. The owner, Višnja Zdjelarević, says that each winemaker in Croatia has a story and a philosophy – and they all think theirs is the right approach. The smell, taste and structure of wine from the same sort of grape can be entirely different. The great thing is, you can feel the hand of the winemaker in each wine that you sample.

catfish *perkelt* stew, and more offbeat ones, including snails in nettle sauce. Check out the chestnut-tree-shaded backyard with traditional barns, a blacksmith's workshop and a natural ice house.

## BIZOVAČKE TOPLICE

☎ 031

In the town of Bizovac, this vast **spa resort** (☎ 685 100; www.bizovacke-toplice.hr; Sunčana 39) comprises more than 10 pools, six of which are fed by thermal springs at 96°C, including a mineral-rich salt spring. The water park has a series of interconnected indoor and outdoor pools, as well as whirlpools, jacuzzis, a music cave and water slides. It's best tackled as a day trip from Osijek (30KN per day to use the pools), but should you decide to stay there are two options. The rooms at **Hotel Termia** (☎ 685 100; www.bizovacke-toplice.hr; Sunčana 39; s/d 294/478KN; 🚿) could use a freshening up but are clean and adequate. A nearby annexe, Hotel Toplice, has units with shared bathrooms for 144/238KN per single/double.

The spa, 20km west of Osijek, is connected to Osijek by train (17KN, 15 minutes, 12 daily); the train station is about 1km from the spa. There are buses from Osijek (22KN, 30 minutes, three daily) on weekdays only.

## VUKOVAR

☎ 032 / pop 31,670

When you visit Vukovar today, it's a challenge to visualise this town as it was before the war. A pretty place on the Danube, with historical roots that stretch back to the 10th century and a series of elegant baroque mansions, it once bustled with art galleries and museums. All that changed with the brutal siege of 1991 that destroyed its economy, culture, physical infrastructure and civic harmony.

Since the return of Vukovar to Croatia in 1998, there has been much progress in repairing the damage. In the centre, there are new buildings, but many pock-marked and blasted facades remind you of the violent past. The former water tower on the road to Ilok has been left as a living testament to destruction.

Less progress has been made in restoring civic harmony. Local Serbs and Croats live in parallel and hostile universes, socialising in separate spheres. Even their children attend separate Serb or Croat schools. A bevy of international organisations is trying to encourage harmony and integration, but forgiveness comes hard to those who have lost family members and livelihoods.

The city needs a boost to its economy so consider making a contribution – you can do so by visiting, spending and paying homage.

## Orientation & Information

The bus station is at the northern end of town, opposite the daily market and a block south of the town's main street, Strossmayera. Leading into the town centre, Strossmayera turns into Ulica Dr Franje Tuđmana once you've crossed the Vuka River. There are ATMs at several locations along Strossmayera.

The **tourist office** (☎ /fax 442 889; www.turizam.vukovar.hr; J1 Strossmayera 15; ⌚ 7am–4pm Mon–Fri) has few brochures but can be a useful source of information. For biking tours, kayaking on the Danube and various activities in Vukovar and Ilok, turn to **Danubium Tours** (☎ /fax 445 455; www.danubiumtours.hr; Trg Republike Hrvatske 1; ⌚ 8am–3pm Mon–Sat).

## Sights

The **Town Museum** (Gradski Muzej; ☎ 441 270; Županijska 2; adult/child 10/5KN; ⌚ 7am–3pm Mon–Fri) is lodged in the 18th-century Eltz Palace at the end of Strossmayera. Badly damaged and

looted during the war, it currently has temporary exhibits on the 2nd floor and a tiny permanent display on the ground floor.

However emotionally wrenching an experience it may be, it's important to visit the war memorial sites in and around town. At **Place of Memory: Vukovar Hospital** (☎ 452 011; www.ob-vukovar.hr/mjesto-sjecanja; Županijska 37; admission 10KN; ⌚ 1–3pm Mon–Fri, by appointment), a ground-floor section has been turned into a multimedia museum recreating the tragic events that took place in the hospital during the 1991 siege (see boxed text, below). The stirring tour takes you through a series of sandbag-protected corridors with video projections of war footage, bomb holes and the claustrophobic atomic shelter where newborn babies and the nurses' children were kept. There are small cubicles where you can listen to interviews and speeches by the victims and survivors.

About 3.5km out of town along the main road to Ilok is the **Memorial War Cemetery**, a heartbreaking place with 938 white crosses that symbolise the victims of the siege.

A further 2.5km en route to Ilok is the turn-off to the **Ovčara Memorial** (⌚ 10am–5pm), which is another 4km down the road. This is the hangar where the 200 victims from the hospital were tortured. Inside the dark room are projections of the victims' photos, with a single candlelight burning in the middle. The memorial is free, but consider buying a souvenir at the shop to support the project. The victims met their death in a cornfield

### THE SIEGE OF VUKOVAR

Before the war, Vukovar had a multiethnic population of about 44,000, of which Croats constituted 44% and Serbs 37%. As Croatia edged away from former Yugoslavia in early 1991, tensions mounted between the two groups. In August 1991, the federal Yugoslav force launched a full-scale artillery and infantry assault in an attempt to seize the town.

By the end of August all but 15,000 of Vukovar's original inhabitants had fled. Those who remained cowered in bomb-proof cellars, living on tinned food and rationed water while bodies piled up in the streets above them. For several months of the siege, the city held out as its pitifully outnumbered defenders warded off the attacks.

After weeks of hand-to-hand fighting, Vukovar surrendered on 18 November. On 20 November, Serb-Yugoslav soldiers entered Vukovar's hospital and removed 400 patients, staff and their families. Two hundred of those people were massacred near the village of Ovčara (see above), their bodies dumped in a mass grave nearby. In 2007 at the War Tribunal in The Hague, two Yugoslav army officers, Mile Mrkić and Veselin Šljivančanin, were sentenced to 20 and five years in prison respectively for their role in this massacre.

It's estimated that 2000 people – including 1100 civilians – were killed in the defence of Vukovar. There were 4000 wounded, several thousand who disappeared, presumably into mass graves, and 22,000 who were forced into exile.

another 1.5km down the road, now marked with a black marble gravestone, covered with candles and flowers.

## Festivals & Events

A good time to visit is during the annual **Vukovar Film Festival** ([www.vukovarfilmfestival.com](http://www.vukovarfilmfestival.com)) in July, which shows features, docs and shorts from Danubian countries.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Dunav** (☎ 441 285; Trg Republike Hrvatske 1; s/d 250/420KN; (P)) On the Danube, this place has basic rooms, some with river views.

**Hotel Lav** (☎ 445 100; [www.hotel-lav.hr](http://www.hotel-lav.hr); JI Strossmayera 18; s/d 590/900KN; (P) (Q)) This more luxurious four-star option is in a modern structure with all the expected trappings, such as wireless internet and a restaurant.

**Vrške** (☎ 441 788; Parobrodarska 3; mains from 35KN) The interior here is nondescript, but the meat and river-fish specialities are tasty and the location on a tree-shaded terrace along the river is particularly lovely.

## Getting There & Away

Vukovar has good bus connections to Osijek (31KN, 45 minutes, 16 daily) and all around Croatia, including Zagreb (151KN, five hours, four to five daily). There's a bus that runs from Vukovar to Belgrade (92KN, 2½ hours, five daily) in Serbia. There's also a recently introduced direct train from Vukovar to Zagreb (114KN, four hours).

## ILOK

☎ 032 / pop 8350

The easternmost town of Croatia, 37km from Vukovar, Ilok sits perched on a hill overlooking the Danube and the Serbian region of Vojvodina across the river. Surrounded by the gentle wine-growing hills of Fruška Gora, famous for wine production since Roman times, and with a pleasant riverfront below, this preserved medieval town is where East meets West.

Occupied by Serbia in the early 1990s, it was reintegrated into Croatia in 1998. Wine production has since been revived – the area now has 15 wineries you can tour – and the fortified town centre is being renovated following recent archaeological excavations. Even though it currently looks like a construction site (with plans to finish by 2010), the remote town is well worth a visit.

## Orientation & Information

The bus stops in the town centre, at Nazorova, just steps from the medieval town. The **tourist office** (☎ 590 020; [www.turizamilok.hr](http://www.turizamilok.hr); Trg Nikole Iločkog 2; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri) has many excellent brochures, but call ahead as it has sporadic hours. **Danubium Tours** (p115) organises biking trips and wine tours (140KN for a three-hour tour, with lunch and a wine cellar visit).

## Sights & Activities

The medieval town is a leafy place surrounded by the remains of the city walls. It has two rare specimens of Ottoman heritage: a 16th-century **hammam** and a **turbe**, the grave of a Turkish nobleman.

The centrepiece is the **Odescalchi Castle** (Šetalište Oca Mladena Barbarića bb), built on the foundations of a 15-century structure by King Nikola Iločki. In the late 17th century, it was given to the noble Italian family Odescalchi as a reward for their help in liberating Ilok from the Turks. They restored the medieval castle in the baroque-classicist style and built the wine cellars beneath it.

From spring 2009, the castle will house the **city museum** (Muzej Grada Iloka; ☎ 590 065), with a permanent exhibition of archaeological, ethnographic and art items, from old wine equipment to folk costumes. The ancient winery is now run by **Ilok Wine Cellars** (Iločki Podrumi; ☎ 590 088; [www.ilocki-podrumi.hr](http://www.ilocki-podrumi.hr); Dr Franje Tuđmana 72; tours 5KN; ☎ 8am–6pm) next door. It's famous for its *traminac*, a dry white wine served at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. The 20-minute tour takes you to the atmospheric underground cellar with its oak barrels; tours in English need to be arranged in advance.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Dunav** (☎ 596 500; [www.hoteldunavilok.com](http://www.hoteldunavilok.com); Julija Benešića 62; s/d 300/500KN; (P) (Q)) Ilok has its own excellent three-star Hotel Dunav on the Danube, featuring a set of recently renovated rooms with verdant views and a lovely riverfront café terrace. Danubium Tours has a branch here.

**Odescalchi Castle** (☎ 590 126; Šetalište Oca Mladena Barbarića 5; mains from 45KN) This is the town's best restaurant, serving regional specialities under a domed ceiling.

## Getting There & Away

Ilok is connected to Vukovar by 14 daily buses (31KN, 45 minutes).

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'