

# Regional Directory

## CONTENTS

Accommodation	385
Activities	387
Business Hours	388
Children	388
Climate Charts	388
Customs	389
Dangers & Annoyances	389
Disabled Travellers	391
Discount Cards	391
Embassies & Consulates	391
Gay & Lesbian Travellers	392
Holidays	392
Insurance	392
Internet Access	393
Money	393
Photography & Video	394
Post	395
Solo Travellers	395
Telephone	395
Time	396
Tourist Information	396
Visas & Documents	396
Women Travellers	397

The regional directory gives a general overview of conditions and information that apply to the whole of the Western Balkans. Given the diversity of the region, this has meant some generalisation, so for specifics on any given topic see the relevant directory for the country you require information on.

## ACCOMMODATION

As a rule, for each accommodation listing we have used the currency in which the hotel, hostel or guesthouse quotes their prices. This means that for some hotels we give hotel prices in local currency, others are listed in euros or US dollars. In this book the accommodation suggestions and reviews are listed in three broad categories: budget, midrange and top end. These vary quite a lot across the region (Slovenia being in a very different class economically from Albania), so they are ordered according to local price ranges, not by some regional

standard. Within the budget, midrange and top-end categories the reviews are ordered from what we thought was the best down to what's still good, just not (in our opinion) quite as good. This is of course a highly subjective ordering, so just because Slava's place is listed before Mira's place doesn't necessarily mean there's a huge difference – it's just that Slava's might have had a minor advantage like a bigger bathroom or being a bit closer to the centre of town.

In most of the Western Balkans the cheapest places to rest your head are camping grounds, followed by hostels and student accommodation. Guesthouses, *pensjons*, private rooms and cheap hotels are also good value. Self-catering flats in the city and cottages in the countryside are worth considering if you're in a group, especially if you plan to stay put for a while.

During peak holiday periods, accommodation can be hard to find; unless you're camping, it's advisable to book ahead where possible. Even some camping grounds can fill up, particularly popular ones near large towns and cities.

Hostels and cheap hotels in popular tourist destinations such as Dubrovnik, Hvar and Ljubljana can fill up very quickly – especially the well-run ones in desirable neighbourhoods. It's a good idea to make reservations as many weeks ahead as possible, at least for the first night or two. A two- or three-minute international phone call to book a bed or room is a more sensible use of time than wasting your first day in a city searching for a place to stay.

If you arrive in a country by air, there is often an accommodation-booking desk at the airport, although it rarely covers the lower strata of hotels. Tourist offices often have extensive accommodation lists, and the more helpful ones will go out of their way to find you something suitable.

## Camping

The cheapest way to go is camping, and there are lots of camping grounds throughout most of the region. Many are large sites intended for motorists, though they're often easily accessible by public transport and

there's almost always space for backpackers with tents. Many camping grounds rent small on-site cabins, bungalows or caravans for double or triple the regular camping fee. In the most popular resorts the bungalows will probably be full in July and August.

The standard of camping grounds varies quite a lot. They're crowded in Slovenia, and variable in Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia. Albania has no camping grounds outside of some old communist-era workers' holiday camps in the south. Croatia's coast has nudist camping grounds galore (signposted 'FKK', the German acronym for 'naturist'); they're excellent places to stay because of the secluded locations – if you don't mind letting it all hang out.

Camping grounds may be open from April to October, May to September, or perhaps only June to August, depending on the category of the facility, the location and demand. A few private camping grounds are open year-round. You are sometimes allowed to build a campfire (ask first). Camping in the wild is usually illegal; ask locals about the situation before you pitch your tent on a beach or in an open field.

### Guesthouses & Pensions

Small private *pensions* are very common in the Western Balkans. Priced somewhere between hotels and private rooms, *pensions* typically have fewer than a dozen rooms and sometimes a small restaurant or bar on the premises. You'll get more personal service at a *pension* than you would at a hotel, though perhaps at the expense of a teensy bit of privacy. Call ahead to check prices and ask about reservations – someone will usually speak some halting English or German.

### Homestays & Private Rooms

Homestays are often the best and most authentic way to see daily life in the region. Make sure you bring some small gifts for your hosts – it's a deeply ingrained cultural tradition.

In most countries, travel agencies can arrange accommodation in private rooms at local homes. People will sometimes approach you at train or bus stations offering a private room or a hostel bed. This can be good or bad – it's impossible to generalise. Just make sure it's not in a mangy concrete apartment block next to an industrial estate

(unless you relish this sort of thing) and that you negotiate a clear price. Obviously, if you are staying with strangers like this, you shouldn't leave your valuables behind when you go out.

You don't have to go through an agency or an intermediary on the street for a room. Any house, cottage or farmhouse with *Zimmer frei*, *sobe* or *soba* displayed outside is advertising the availability of private rooms (these examples are in German, Slovene and Macedonian); just knock on the door and ask if any are available.

### Hostels

Hostels offer the cheapest (secure) roof over your head in the Western Balkans, and you don't have to be a youngster to take advantage of them. Most hostels are part of the national Youth Hostel Association (YHA), which is affiliated with the Hostelling International (HI) organisation.

Hostels affiliated with HI can be found in most of the countries and regions of the Western Balkans – Kosovo and Albania being the exceptions, though Tirana should have one soon. A hostel card is seldom required, though you sometimes get a small discount if you have one. If you don't have a valid HI membership card, you can buy one at some hostels.

To join the HI, you can ask at any hostel or contact your local or national hostelling office. There's a very useful website at [www.iyh.org](http://www.iyh.org), with links to most HI sites.

At a hostel, you get a bed for the night plus use of the communal facilities, often including a kitchen where you can prepare your own meals. You may be required to have a sleeping sheet – simply using your sleeping bag is often not allowed. If you don't have a sleeping sheet, you can sometimes hire one for a small fee.

There are many available hostel guides with listings, including the bible, HI's *Europe*. Many hostels accept reservations by phone, fax or email, but not always during peak periods (though they might hold a bed for a couple of hours if you call from the train or bus station). You can also book hostels through national hostel offices.

### Hotels

At the bottom of the bracket, cheap hotels may be no more expensive than private

rooms or guesthouses, while at the other extreme they extend to five-star hotels. Categorisation varies from country to country and the hotels recommended in this book try to accommodate every budget. We have provided a combination of budget, mid-range and top-end accommodation in each city or town. Where the choice is between a cheap and cheerful guesthouse and a mouldering Stalinist-style Hotel Turizmi, we recommend the guesthouse. There are quite a few communist-era hotels and holiday resorts across the region, and while many are now in private hands they sometimes haven't had any maintenance done since Tito or Hoxha died and went to meet Marx. We generally don't list them unless they're the only option, though they are quite an experience.

Single rooms can be hard to find in the region, where you are generally charged by the room and not by the number of people in it; many local people still refuse to believe that anyone would actually take to the road alone. The cheapest rooms sometimes have a washbasin but no bathroom, which means you'll have to go down the corridor to use the toilet and shower. Breakfast may be included in the price of a room or be extra – and mandatory.

### University Accommodation

Some universities rent out space in student halls during July and August. This is quite popular in Croatia and Slovenia. Accommodation will sometimes be in single rooms (but is more commonly in doubles or triples), and cooking facilities may be available. Inquire at the college or university, at student information services or at local tourist offices.

## ACTIVITIES

### Canoeing & Kayaking

Special kayaking and canoeing tours are offered in Croatia, especially around the Elafiti and Kornati Islands (see p220 for details on how to get to these islands). Kayaking is really only in its infancy further south in Montenegro and Albania.

### Cycling

The hills and mountains of the Western Balkans can be heavy going, but this is offset by the abundance of things to see.

Physical fitness is *not* a major prerequisite for cycling on the plains of Slavonia and northern Serbia but the wind might slow you down. Most airlines will allow you to put a bicycle in the hold for a surprisingly small fee.

See p405 for more information on bicycle touring, and the individual destination sections for rental outfits.

### Diving

The sparkling waters and varied marine life of the Adriatic support a thriving diving industry, in Croatia in particular. Cave diving is a Croatian speciality, and most of the coastal resorts have dive shops. There is also scuba diving at Piran in Slovenia.

### Hiking

There's excellent hiking in the Western Balkans, with trails through forests, mountains and national parks. Public transport will often take you to the trailheads, and chalets or mountain huts offer dormitory accommodation and basic meals. The most popular hiking destination is the Julian Alps of Slovenia, but there are many other hiking areas that are less well known, including the Paklenica and Risnjak National Parks in Croatia. The three national parks of Macedonia and its spectacular gorges at Lake Matka near Skopje are some more options. Mt Tomorri National Park in Albania really is a hiking frontier. The best months for hiking are from June to September, especially late August and early September when the summer crowds will have disappeared.

### Skiing

The region's premier skiing area is Slovenia's Julian Alps, though there are a dozen or so lesser-known ski resorts around the Western Balkans. The skiing season generally lasts from early December to late March, though at higher altitudes it may extend an extra month either way. Snow conditions can vary greatly from year to year and region to region, but January and February tend to be the best (and busiest) months. Sarajevo hosted the Winter Olympics in 1984, and the ski resorts of Jahorina and Bjelašnica are open again for business. Macedonia's Mavrovo ski resort is also building a name for itself. Serbia has ski resorts at Kopaonik and Zlatibor, while

Montenegro's candidate for the next skiing discovery is at Durmitor.

### Yachting

The most famous yachting area is the passage between the long rugged islands off Croatia's Dalmatian coast. Yacht tours and rentals are available, although this is certainly not for anyone on a budget.

### White-Water Rafting

Rafting is possible from March to October on a growing number of scenic rivers, including the Una River near Bihać in Bosnia, the Tara River in Montenegro's World Heritage-listed Durmitor National Park and the Soča River in Slovenia. Even Albania is starting to get in on the action.

### BUSINESS HOURS

The Western Balkans tends to have similar working patterns to Western Europe and North America. Saturdays and Sundays are usually days off, although only banks and offices are shut – most shops, restaurants and cafés are open everyday of the week. Even the regions where Muslim culture predominates tend to take Sunday off rather than Friday (the Muslim day of prayer).

Banks are usually open from 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday, often with an hour or two off for lunch. During the hot summer months, some enterprises will shut for two or three hours in the early afternoon, reopening at 3pm or 4pm and working into the evening when it's cooler. See the directory of whichever country you are in for more specific detail.

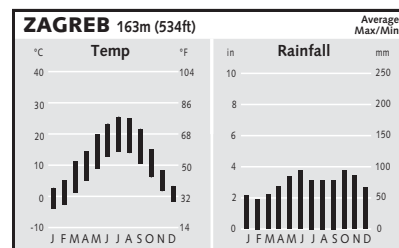
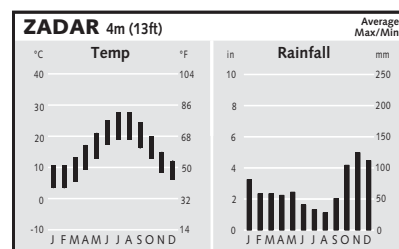
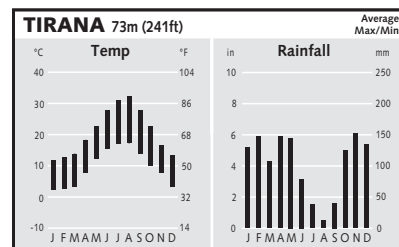
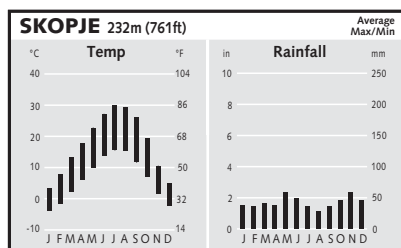
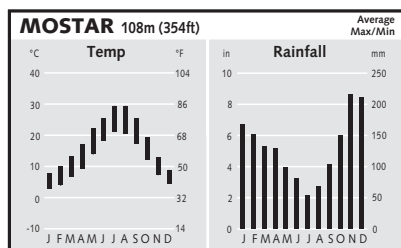
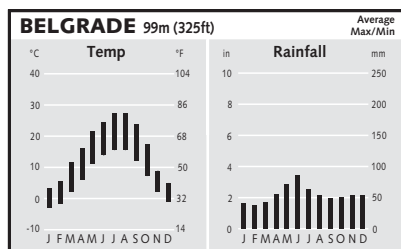
### CHILDREN

Travelling with the kids can add a new dimension to a trip to the Western Balkans, but successful travel with young children requires planning and effort. It might be best to avoid the high summer, as the sometimes extreme heat can make the little darlings very uncomfortable (and grumpy). Don't try to overdo things, and try to include the kids in the activities as well. Dragging children around too many churches and museums can be a deadening experience for everyone. Most car-rental firms have children's safety seats for hire at a small cost, but it is important that you book them in advance. The same goes for high chairs

and cots (cribs): they're standard in many restaurants and hotels but numbers are limited. The choice of baby food, infant formulas, soy and cow's milk, disposable nappies (diapers) and the like can be as great in local supermarkets as it is back home, but the opening hours may be quite different to what you are used to. Don't get caught out on the weekend.

### CLIMATE CHARTS

The weather in the Western Balkans can be fairly extreme at times, but never enough to prevent travel. It's a fascinating place to visit any time of year – even during the icy winter. July and August can be uncomfortably hot, particularly in the cities, but this is the time when the alpine areas such as the Julian Alps and the mountains of western Macedonia are at their best, not to mention the beaches. All in all, May, June and September are the best times to visit from



a climatic point of view, as nowhere will be too warm or too cool.

### CUSTOMS

The usual allowances for tobacco (200 to 250 cigarettes), alcohol (2L of wine, 1L of spirits) and perfume (50g) apply to duty-free goods purchased at airports or on ferries. It's fair to say that on the tobacco quota in particular you can usually take more – the locals understand how expensive cigarettes are in the wider world. Customs checks are pretty cursory and you probably won't even have to open your bags, but don't be lulled into a false sense of security. There may also be restrictions on the import/export of local currency, although the amounts allowed these days are actually quite large.

While there's no problem with bringing in and taking out personal effects, be aware that antiques, books printed before 1945, crystal glass, gemstones and precious

metals (gold, silver, platinum), securities and valuable works of art may still have to be declared in writing or even accompanied by a 'museum certificate' (available from the place of purchase) in many countries.

### DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The Western Balkans is generally slightly safer than the developed world. Putting aside the lurid horrors of the recent wars, personal safety is better than in the big cities of Western Europe, North America or Australia, and personal safety is what affects travellers the most. If you know how to handle yourself in the metropolises of the developed world, your street smarts should see you through the region without any problems. At the risk of sounding like a nanny, you're going to be less of a target if you dress in a similar style to the locals, don't flash around expensive cameras and jewellery, and don't stagger home through dark streets alone after a night out. There is, of course, a Mafia/underworld scene in the Western Balkans, but you really have to go looking for trouble to find it – they have bigger things on their mind. However, you may still find that your friends and relatives will be worried that the past wars mean anarchy today. The best way to allay these fears is to let them know where you are and how to get in touch, and to contact them regularly via phone or email.

Some locals will regale you with tales of how dangerous their city is and recount various cases of muggings and break-ins. Mostly they're comparing the present situation with that under communism when the crime rate was almost zero (or at least that's what the newspapers said). Bosnia and Kosovo have a unique form of danger: land mines – see those destinations for details. The regions where Muslim culture predominates (Kosovo, Albania and parts of Bosnia, Serbia and Macedonia) have less of a heavy drinking culture and less street crime. Something like 50% of street crime and violence is alcohol related.

Most of the countries in the region have relatively high rates of traffic accidents because of cavalier driving habits, badly maintained vehicles and extra road hazards such as wandering livestock. See p405 for more information, and the country chapters for local peculiarities.

Low-level corruption is disappearing fast as the back-scratching system so common during the communist regimes claims its rightful place in the dustbin of history, so do *not* pay bribes to persons in official positions, such as police, border guards, train conductors or ticket inspectors. Threatening to call your embassy is always a good move; if the situation is brought to the attention of the officer's superiors, they will, unsurprisingly, get in trouble.

Don't worry at all if you're taken to the police station for questioning as senior officers will eventually let you go (assuming, of course, you haven't committed a real crime). If you do have to pay a fine or supplementary charge, insist on a proper receipt before turning over any money. In all of this, try to maintain your cool, as any threats from you will only make matters worse.

### Drugs

Always treat drugs with a great deal of caution. There are drugs available in the region, but none of them are legal. The local penalties are severe and prison conditions are not good.

### Scams

A word of warning about credit cards: fraudulent shopkeepers have been known to make several charge-slip imprints with your credit card when you're not looking and then simply copy your signature from the authorised slip. There have also been reports of unscrupulous people making quick and very high-tech duplicates of credit- or debit-card information with a machine. If your card leaves your possession for longer than you think necessary, consider cancelling it.

Now that local currencies have reached convertibility, the days of getting five times the official rate for cash on the streets of Belgrade and Tirana are well and truly over. Essentially there is no longer a black market in currencies in any of these countries except for Albania; elsewhere anyone offering such a deal is your average garden-variety thief.

### Theft

Theft can be a problem in the Western Balkans, and the threat comes from both local

thieves and fellow travellers. The most important things to guard are your passport, other documents, tickets and money – in that order. It's always best to carry these next to your skin. Bum bags or fanny packs not only look awful and scream 'tourist' but also publicly advertise where you're carrying your valuables – not recommended. Train-station lockers or luggage-storage counters are useful to store your luggage (but not valuables) while you get your bearings in a new town. Carry your own padlock for hostel lockers.

You can lessen the risks further by being wary of snatch thieves. Cameras or shoulder bags are great for these people, who sometimes operate from motorcycles or scooters and slash the strap before you have a chance to react. A small day-pack is better, but watch your rear. Be very careful at cafés and bars; loop the strap around your leg while seated. While it makes pick-pocketing harder, carrying a backpack on your front will let everyone know you are a tourist (and one who thinks everyone is a thief) as well as make you look like a prize idiot. Far better is to keep all your valuables in inside pockets and only have things you could stand to lose in easily accessible pockets.

Pickpockets are most active in dense crowds, especially in busy train stations and on public transport during peak hours.

Be careful even in hotels; don't leave valuables lying around in your room.

Parked cars containing luggage or other bags are prime targets for petty criminals in most cities, and cars with foreign number plates and/or rental-agency stickers attract particular attention. While driving in cities, beware of snatch thieves when you pull up at the lights – keep doors locked and windows rolled up.

In case of theft or loss, always report the incident to the police and ask for a written statement. Otherwise your travel-insurance company won't pay up.

### Violence

Though it's unlikely that travellers will encounter any violence, skinheads and neo-Nazis have singled out local Roma as scapegoats. Avoid especially run-down areas in cities and *never* fight back. These people can be extremely dangerous.

## DISABLED TRAVELLERS

The Western Balkans can be unpredictable when it comes to facilities for the disabled. The general pattern seems to be that the further south you go, the harder it gets. Slovenian hotels and restaurants (particularly upmarket ones) are often ready to cater for disabled travellers, while Albania's ripped-up pavements are hard enough for the able-bodied. The golden rule is never to expect much and you won't be disappointed, which is not exactly encouraging. Most major museums and sites have disabled access, although there are exceptions. Hotels outside the top bracket and public transport are still universally poor, and it's fair to say that access for the disabled has not been a regional priority in the past decade.

If you have a physical disability, get in touch with your national support organisation (preferably the travel officer if there is one) and ask about the countries you plan to visit. They often have complete libraries devoted to travel, with useful things like access guides, and they can put you in touch with travel agencies who specialise in tours for the disabled. The **Royal Association for Disability & Rehabilitation** (RADAR; ☎ 020-7250 3222 in UK; www.radar.org.uk; 12 City Forum, 250 City Rd, London EC1V 8AF) is a very helpful association with a number of publications for the disabled on sale.

## DISCOUNT CARDS

### Camping Card International

The Camping Card International (CCI) is a camping ground ID valid for a year that can be used instead of a passport when checking in to camping grounds, and includes third-party insurance. As a result, many camping grounds will offer a small discount (usually 5% to 10%) if you have one. CCIs are issued by automobile associations, camping federations and, sometimes, on the spot at camping grounds. See www.campingcardinternational.org for a list of national bodies that issue the cards. The CCI can also sometimes serve as a guarantee, so that you don't have to leave your passport at reception.

### Hostel Cards

A hostelling card is useful, if not mandatory, for staying at hostels. Most hostels

don't require that you be a hostelling association member, but they sometimes charge less if you have a card. Some hostels will issue one on the spot or after a few days' stay, though this might cost a bit more than getting one at home.

## International Student, Youth & Teacher Cards

An International Student Identity Card (ISIC), a plastic ID-style card with your photograph, provides discounts on many forms of transport (including airlines and local transport), cheap or free admission to museums and sights, and inexpensive meals in some student cafeterias and restaurants. If you're under 26 but not a student, you are eligible to apply for an International Youth Travel Card (IYTC, formerly GO25), issued by the Federation of International Youth Travel Organisations, or the Euro26 card (the latter card may not be recognised in Albania and Serbia and Montenegro). Both go under different names in different countries and give much the same discounts and benefits as an ISIC. An International Teacher Identity Card (ITIC) identifies the holder as an instructor and offers similar deals. All these cards are issued by student unions, hostelling organisations or youth-oriented travel agencies.

## Senior Cards

Many attractions offer reduced-price admission for people over 60 or 65 (sometimes as low as 55 for women). Make sure you bring proof of age. For a fee of around €20, European residents aged 60 and over can get a Railplus Card as an add-on to their national rail senior pass. This card entitles the holder to train-fare reductions of around 25%.

In your home country, a lower age may already entitle you to all sorts of interesting travel packages and discounts (on car hire, for instance) through organisations and travel agents that cater for senior travellers. Start hunting at your local senior citizens' advice bureau.

## EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

It's important to realise what your embassy can and cannot do to help if you get into trouble while abroad. Generally speaking, it won't be much help in emergencies if



the trouble you're in is remotely your own fault. You are bound by the laws of the country you are visiting.

In genuine emergencies you might get some assistance, but only if other channels have been exhausted. For example, if you need to get home urgently, a free ticket back is exceedingly unlikely – the embassy would expect you to have insurance. If you have all your money and documents stolen, it might assist with getting a new passport, but a loan for onward travel is almost always out of the question.

See the individual country chapters for the addresses of embassies and consulates both in the Western Balkans and in your home country.

## GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

While no longer illegal in any of the countries of the Western Balkans, homosexuality is still not completely socially acceptable, so it pays to be careful about public displays of affection. The most progressive attitudes towards gay life and gay travellers can be found in Slovenia, Croatia and Belgrade (Serbia). The majority of local gay men and women are reluctant to admit their sexual orientation, outside of a small but thriving bar and club scene in Zagreb (Croatia), Ljubljana (Slovenia) and Belgrade in particular. The gay scene in Tirana (Albania), Skopje (Macedonia) and Sarajevo (Bosnia) is deep underground, and outside of the large population centres, gay and lesbian life is almost nonexistent.

Good resources for gay travellers include websites such as [www.queeria.org.yu](http://www.queeria.org.yu) (for Serbia and Montenegro), [www.touristinfo.gay.hr](http://www.touristinfo.gay.hr) (for Croatia), [www.ljudmila.org/siqrd/guide.php](http://www.ljudmila.org/siqrd/guide.php) (for Slovenia) and international sites such as [www.gaydar.com](http://www.gaydar.com) and [www.gay.com](http://www.gay.com). Listings are given wherever possible in the individual country sections.

## HOLIDAYS

The Western Balkans' school calendar is nothing unusual – children get the summer months off (usually July and August) as well as breaks for Easter and Christmas. These dates are generally followed even in countries with a large Muslim population, such as Bosnia and Hercegovina and Albania. See the relevant country's directory for details of local holidays and festivals.

The Muslim regions of the Western Balkans celebrate two major festivals or *bajrams*: the end of Ramadan and the Feast of the Sacrifice. Muslim religious holidays follow the lunar calendar, which is 11 or 12 days shorter than the Gregorian calendar, so the dates of the *bajrams* fall 11 or 12 days earlier each (Gregorian) year. To make it even more interesting, the exact dates depend on the sighting of the new moon. In some cases, an imam from one town will spot a sliver of the moon a day earlier or later than his colleagues, so the local faithful will celebrate on a different day, which means the dates below are only approximate.

Year	End of Ramadan	Feast of the Sacrifice
2006	24 October	31 December
2007	13 October	20 December
2008	1 October	8 December

## INSURANCE

It is important to be insured against theft, loss and medical problems in the Western Balkans. If your finances are limited and you're planning a low-cost trip in the region, it is tempting to take your chances with no insurance, but the consequences if something does go wrong can be disastrous. The policies written by STA Travel and other student travel organisations are usually good value. Some policies offer lower and higher medical expense options; the higher ones are chiefly for countries like the USA that have extremely expensive medical costs. There are a wide variety of policies available, so check the fine print.

Some insurance policies will specifically exclude 'dangerous activities', which can include scuba diving, motorcycling, horse riding, skiing and even short treks. Some even exclude entire countries (eg Bosnia and Hercegovina or Serbia and Montenegro). It pays to compare the fine print.

You may prefer a policy that pays doctors or hospitals directly rather than requiring you to pay on the spot and claim later. If you have to claim later make sure you keep all documentation. Some policies ask you to call back (reverse charges) to a centre in your home country where an immediate assessment of your problem is made. Check that the policy covers ambulances and an

emergency flight home. For more information on health insurance, see p410.

For details on car insurance, see p406.

## INTERNET ACCESS

Practically every decent-sized town has Internet access. The connections may be slow, Internet 'cafés' may not serve coffee or other drinks, and sometimes you'll be limited to a monitor in a dark, smelly, smoky room full of teenage boys playing war games or looking up morally suspect websites – but one way or another you'll never be far from your email account. The hourly rates are generally quite low. Indeed, in some more developed cities, Internet cafés can be a social hub and a great way of meeting locals as well as travellers. Make sure you have a web-based email account so you can pick up email on the road without your own laptop. In the less developed corners of the region you may find that while Internet cafés do exist, their connections can be down for days at a time.

If you're travelling with a notebook or hand-held computer, be aware that your modem may not work once you leave your home country. The safest option is to buy a reputable 'global' modem before you leave home, or buy a local PC-card modem if you're spending an extended time in any one country. Wi-fi spots are beginning to appear in some hotels and trendy cafés in the region. For more information on travelling with a portable computer, see [www.teleadapt.com](http://www.teleadapt.com).

## MONEY

The main problem you'll face as you travel around the region is constant currency changes as you flit between the denar, dinar, lek, convertible mark, kuna, tolar and euro. Most of the local currencies are impossible to change once you're outside the particular country (with the partial exception of the Slovenian tolar), so remember to spend them all or change them into euros before you head onwards. There is no longer any particular desire for 'hard' currency (long gone are the days where hoteliers would slash the rates if you paid in US dollars) and the convertibility of all currencies makes them stable and reliable ways to carry cash.

## ATMs & Credit Cards

All the countries and territories of the Western Balkans have plenty of ATMs in

cities, major regional centres and tourist spots. Albania was the last country to adopt ATMs. The irritation of trying to change travellers cheques at the weekend and rip-off *bureaux de change* is history.

As purchase tools, credit cards are still not as commonly used as in Western Europe but they're gaining ground, especially Amex, Visa and MasterCard. You'll be able to use them at upmarket restaurants, shops, hotels, car-hire firms, travel agencies and many petrol stations, though cash is still preferred.

Cash or debit cards, which you use at home to withdraw money directly from your bank account or savings account, can be used throughout the Western Balkans at those ATMs linked to international networks like Cirrus and Maestro. Some local ATMs aren't linked to these networks, and some suggest they are but never seem to work. Don't panic, just go looking for another bank. The major advantage of using ATMs is that you don't pay commission charges to exchange money and the exchange rate is usually at a better interbank rate than that offered for travellers cheques or cash exchanges.

Charge cards like Amex, and to a lesser extent Diners Club, have offices in most countries and they can generally replace a lost card within 24 hours. That's because they treat you as a customer of the company rather than of the bank that issued the card. Their major drawback is that they're not widely accepted off the beaten track. Charge cards may also be hooked up to some ATM networks. Credit and credit/debit cards like Visa and MasterCard are more widely accepted because they tend to charge merchants lower commissions.

If you choose to rely on plastic, go for two different cards; this allows one to be used as backup in the case of loss. Better still is a combination of credit card, travellers cheques and cash so you have something to fall back on if an ATM swallows your card or the banks in the area won't accept it (a not uncommon and always inexplicable occurrence).

## Cash

This is, of course, the easiest way to carry money, but obviously if you lose it, that's it. The most favoured currency throughout

the Western Balkans is the euro. In Montenegro and Kosovo the euro is to all intents the official currency. The US dollar and the British pound are also accepted, though pounds can sometimes only be exchanged in major cities. It is also possible to exchange virtually any other major world currency in big cities, but you are inevitably at the mercy of the exchange office and its rates. It's best to change your money into euro before you leave home and you'll have no problems whatsoever.

### Moneychangers

Shop around, never stop at the first place you see, and if you happen to be in a tourist area you can rest assured you'll be offered lower rates everywhere. Some airports, such as Nënë Tereza airport in Albania, also offer rather unfavourable rates. Before handing over any cash always check the commission and rate.

### Tipping

Throughout the Western Balkans you tip by rounding up restaurant bills and taxi fares to the next whole figure. In some countries restaurants will already have added a service charge to your bill, so you don't have to round it up much (if at all). A tip of 10% is quite sufficient if you feel you have been well attended. Waiters in any place catering mostly to foreign tourists will usually expect such a tip. If 'rounding up' means you're only giving honest waiters a couple of cents, add a few more coins to keep them happy.

### Travellers Cheques

The main idea of using travellers cheques rather than cash is the protection they offer from theft, though they have lost their once enormous popularity as more and more travellers withdraw cash through ATMs as they go along. This means that travellers cheques are becoming increasingly unfamiliar to bank staff, and are becoming more and more of a hassle to change. With travellers cheques you also generally do worse on fees, commissions and exchange rates than you do by using an ATM.

Banks usually charge from 1% to 2% commission to change travellers cheques. Their opening hours are sometimes limited. In the individual chapters, we recommend

the most efficient banks of each country. Before signing a travellers cheque always check the commission and rate.

Amex and Thomas Cook representatives cash their own travellers cheques without commission, but both give poor rates of exchange. If you're changing more than US\$20, you're usually better off going to a bank and paying the standard 1% to 2% commission to change there.

### Western Union

If it all goes horribly wrong and everything gets stolen don't despair. While it's a horrid (and highly unusual) situation, as long as you know the phone number of a friend or relative back home, they will be able to wire money to you anywhere in the region via Western Union. We don't bother listing WU representatives in this guide, as there are literally thousands of them catering to locals working overseas and sending money home. Just look for the distinctive yellow and black sign, and if you're somewhere remote, ask the person sending you the money to ask WU for the nearest office to you. The sender will be given a code that they then communicate to you and you take to the nearest office, along with your passport, to receive your cash.

## PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

Film and camera equipment are available everywhere, but shops in the bigger cities have a wider choice. The region was once notorious for its photographic restrictions – taking shots of anything 'strategic' such as bridges or train stations was strictly forbidden. These days local officials are much less paranoid (at least the Albanian security forces won't send you to work in the chrome mines for the rest of your truncated life), but you need to use common sense when it comes to this issue. It is never a good idea to photograph military installations, for example (unless, of course, you really are spying). This is particularly true in Kosovo – the US army at Camp Bondsteel won't look on happy snaps too favourably. It is also sometimes risky (and in questionable taste) to photograph war-damaged areas. Photographing images of poverty and urban decay might also offend people. Extend the usual courtesies before taking close-up photos of people – generally

people are happy to pose if you ask, and it's a good way to break the ice. If you want to give people a souvenir, having a Polaroid-style camera that pops out a photo instantly is much easier than taking down an address and remembering to post them a copy later.

In most countries, it is easy to obtain video cartridges in large towns and cities, but make sure you buy the correct format. It is usually worth buying at least a few cartridges duty-free at the start of your trip.

Be aware that museums often demand that you buy permission to photograph or video their displays, and it's often quite expensive, especially for video cameras. Do this when you buy your tickets, if you think you will, as you'll have to retrace your steps if you don't.

Anyone using a digital camera should check that you have enough memory to store your snaps – two 128MB cards will probably be enough. If you do run out of memory space your best bet is to burn your photos onto a CD. Increasing numbers of processing labs now offer this service. While it is possible to track down repair shops if you have a film camera that goes bung, there's not much you can do if a digital camera starts to malfunction, except wait until you get home and send it to the manufacturer's service centre.

To download your pics at an Internet café you'll need a USB cable and a card reader. Some places provide a USB on request but be warned that many of the bigger chain cafés don't let you plug your gear into their computers, meaning that it's back to plan A – the CD.

### POST

Details of post offices are given in the information sections of each city or town in the individual country chapters, and postage costs given in the country directory. Both efficiency and cost vary enormously. There seem to be no set rules, but Slovenia and Croatia are likely to be faster, more reliable and more expensive than the rest of the region. The other former Yugoslav countries and territories are pretty good, but Albania is a step behind the rest of the region.

Poste restante (having letters sent to you care of local post offices) is unreliable, not to mention an increasingly unnecessary

communication method in the 21st century. If you desperately need something posted to you, do your research: find a friend of a friend who could receive the mail at their address, or ask nicely at a hotel you plan to stay at.

To send a parcel from the Western Balkans you usually have to take it unwrapped to a main post office. Parcels weighing over 2kg often must be taken to a special customs post office. They will usually wrap the parcels for you. They may ask to see your passport and note the number on the form. If you don't have a return address within the country put your name care of any large tourist hotel to satisfy them.

### SOLO TRAVELLERS

Travelling alone can be a fantastic experience. You can do exactly what you want to do, see what you want to see and travel at your own pace. You are also more likely to meet locals and socialise with people you'd otherwise never speak to. When you meet up with other solo travellers it's amazing how quickly you can click with certain people and become travelling companions for a day, a week or however long you're on the same trail. But it can also be lonely and less fun when things get frustrating or don't work out. However, backpacking and hostel culture is very adapted to people travelling alone and hostels are great places to meet others. The best advice for solo travellers therefore is to head for your nearest hostel if you feel like some company. All the capitals have expat bars (usually the ubiquitous Irish pubs) if you are missing some convivial company. The Western Balkans is a terrific place for solo travellers because there's such a good mix of places with a developed hostel and tourism scene as well as lots of lesser-known sights and delights which you can soak up in happy isolation.

### TELEPHONE

Telephone service has improved throughout the Western Balkans in a very short time. Cities throughout the region have a huge number of call centres, increasingly the domain of entrepreneurs who offer discounted rates. Many Internet cafés offer cheap overseas phone calls – the quality can be a bit variable but at such low prices, you

can't complain too much. There are also state-run call centres, which are often in the same building as the main post office. Here you can often make your call from one of the booths inside an enclosed area, paying the cashier as you leave. Public telephones are almost always found at post offices.

### Mobile Phones

The expansion of mobile phones has been nothing short of breathtaking in the region and this can be great for travellers. All the mobile phone networks in the region use the GSM standard. If you plan to spend more than a week or so in one country, seriously consider buying a SIM card to slip into your phone (check before you leave with your provider at home that your handset has not been blocked). SIM cards can cost as little as €10 and can be topped up with cards available at supermarkets and any mobile phone dealers. Alternatively, if you have roaming, your phone will usually switch automatically over to a local network. This can be expensive if you use the phone a great deal, but can be very useful for ad hoc use on the road.

### Phone Codes

Every country's international dialling code and international access code is given in the Fast Facts section at the beginning of each chapter. To call abroad you simply dial the international access code for the country you are calling from.

Every town has its local code within the country listed directly underneath its chapter heading. To make a domestic call to another city in the same country in the Western Balkans dial the area code with the initial zero and the number.

### Phonecards

Local telephone cards, available from post offices, telephone centres, newsstands or retail outlets, are popular everywhere in the region. In fact, in many countries they have become the norm.

There's a wide range of local and international phonecards. For local calls you're usually better off with a local phonecard.

### TIME

The Western Balkans lies within one time zone: central European time (GMT+1). This

means it's in the same time zone as Italy, Austria and Hungary, but if you are entering the region from Greece, Bulgaria or Romania you need to put your clock back one hour. Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) is five hours ahead of New York, eight hours ahead of Los Angeles and 10 hours behind Sydney. See World Time Zones (p425) for more information. All countries employ daylight savings. Clocks are put forward an hour usually on the last Sunday in March. They are set back one hour on the last Sunday in September.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

The quality and presence of tourist information across the Western Balkans varies enormously. While Slovenia and Croatia have successfully developed a network of excellent Tourist Information Centres (TICs), the rest of the region is lagging behind. However, things look set to improve and even Albania should have a TIC in Tirana by the time the next edition of this book is published. Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia fall in a middle category of places actively trying to encourage tourism, but whose efforts remain rather obscure at the moment. See individual country directories for more specific information.

### VISAS & DOCUMENTS Passport

Your most important travel document is your passport, which should remain valid until well after you return home. If it's just about to expire, renew it before you travel. Some countries insist your passport remain valid for a specified period (usually three to six months) beyond the expected date of your departure from that country. In practice, this is rarely checked.

Once you start travelling, carry your passport (or a copy of it) at all times and guard it carefully. Some countries have laws requiring you to carry official documentation at all times. This is because the Western Balkans has become an important transit route for illegal immigrants into the EU, and the bureaucrats of Brussels are putting a lot of heat on regional governments to crack down on this. The hassles created by losing your passport can be considerably reduced if you have a record of its number and issue date or, even better, photocopies

### THE VISA GAME

Citizens of the EU, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand won't need visas in advance for any country in the Western Balkans (except Macedonia, where Canadians and Australians are required to have one; Australians can get a visa on arrival at Skopje's Petrovec airport, but not at any land border). In Albania, you are required to buy a tourist visa (€10) on arrival at a border, a port or the airport. Albania also has an exit charge of €10, so in effect a visit to Albania costs €20: €10 to get in, €10 to get out. However, visa regulations do change, so you should check with the individual embassies or a reputable travel agency before travelling. See individual country directories for more detail.

of the relevant data pages. A photocopy of your birth certificate can also be useful.

Camping grounds and hotels sometimes insist that you hand over your passport for the duration of your stay, which is very inconvenient, but a driving licence or Camping Card International (CCI) usually solves the problem.

### Visas

A visa is a stamp in your passport or a separate piece of paper permitting you to enter the country in question and stay for a specified period of time. Often you can get the visa at the border or at the airport on arrival, but not always, especially if you're travelling by train or bus and the procedure is likely to hold up others. Check first with the embassies or consulates of the countries you plan to visit; otherwise you could find yourself stranded at the border. With a valid passport and visa (if required) you'll be able to visit all Western Balkans countries for up to three months. You are also required to have some sort of onward or return ticket and/or 'sufficient means of support', which in practice is rarely checked unless you turn up at a border or airport immigration control looking like you've been sleeping in a dumpster for a week. Appearances do make a difference, even if it's the least dirty T-shirt you can find.

For those who do require visas, it's important to remember that these will have

a 'use-by' date, and you'll be refused entry after that period has elapsed.

Consulates sometimes issue visas on the spot, although some levy a 50% to 100% surcharge for 'express service'. If there's a choice between getting a visa in advance and on the border, go for the former option if you have the time. They're sometimes cheaper in your home country and this can save bureaucratic procedure. In the Western Balkans, the only embassy most people will have to visit is a Macedonian one, and then only if you're Canadian or Australian. Macedonian embassies generally accept visa applications in the morning, do the paperwork and have passports ready to be collected in the afternoon.

Decide in advance if you want a tourist or transit visa. Transit visas, usually valid for just 48 or 72 hours, are often cheaper and issued faster, but it's usually not possible to extend a transit visa or change it to a tourist visa.

The visa form may instruct you to report to police within 48 hours of arrival. If you're staying at a hotel or other official accommodation (camping ground, hostel, private room arranged by a travel agency etc), this will be taken care of for you by the travel agency, hotel or camping ground. If you're staying with friends or relatives, or in a private room arranged on the street or at the train station, you're supposed to register with the police yourself. During the communist days these regulations were strictly enforced, but things are pretty casual in most countries nowadays. However, consult the visa section in the relevant country's directory for full information.

### WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Travel for women in the Western Balkans is not particularly challenging if you follow the usual precautions: keep your street smarts about you, remember that flirting may be interpreted as serious angling for sex, and try to maintain a sense of the ridiculous. There's really no way to explain how some women sail through the region without any irritations while others receive regular unwanted attention, but it just seems to happen like that. As long as you dress and behave sensibly when it's warranted, you shouldn't have any serious problems.

In general terms, the degree of difficulty for women travellers in the Western Balkans

is a bit higher than Western Europe but much lower than Turkey or Morocco. There is also a certain amount of regional variation. The most culturally conservative part of the region regarding the place of women in society is probably Kosovo, followed by the Muslim areas of Macedonia and Serbia, and then Albania and Bosnia. Women travelling with a male companion in these regions might find that a mysterious cloak of invisibility descends around them. People will address your companion and seemingly not acknowledge you – this isn't out of rudeness but out of a rather quaint code of respect and politeness. It is not necessary to wear a headscarf anywhere besides a mosque or Muslim shrine.

These regions don't have the heavy male drinking culture that prevails in non-Muslim parts of the region, which cuts down on the blindly enthusiastic suitors. Of course, there's also a huge difference

between urban and rural attitudes towards female travellers. Bars and restaurants with a regular foreign clientele in Prishtina are quite used to solo women customers, but dropping into a men-only café in the backwoods of Serbia may well bring some disapproving stares. In rural areas it pays to follow local customs such as sitting next to another woman on buses, minivans and trains, and sitting closer to the front than to the back. Hopefully the more women that travel, whether alone, in pairs or in groups, the less unwanted attention lone female travellers in the region will attract.

Despite feminism's advances in many countries in the region, women remain underrepresented in positions of power, in both governmental and corporate spheres. At the risk of generalising, women in the Western Balkans still prefer to wield influence rather than the levers of power themselves.



# Transport in Western Balkans

## CONTENTS

<b>Getting There &amp; Away</b>	<b>399</b>
Entry Requirements	399
Air	399
Land	402
River	403
Sea	403
<b>Getting Around</b>	<b>404</b>
Air	404
Bicycle	405
Bus	405
Car & Motorcycle	405
Hitching	407
Local Transport	407
Train	408

### THINGS CHANGE

The information in this chapter is particularly vulnerable to change. Check directly with the airline or a travel agent to make sure you understand how a fare (and ticket) works and be aware of the security requirements for international travel. Shop carefully. The details given in this chapter should be regarded as pointers and are not a substitute for your own careful, up-to-date research.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

This section covers getting to and from the countries of the Western Balkans from outside the region. For information about getting from, say, Croatia to Slovenia and back again, consult the Transport sections at the end of those chapters.

Most of the countries of the Western Balkans aren't served by low-cost 'no frills' airlines, the exception being Slovenia. Flights within the region tend to be expensive and not terribly competitive with buses or trains. Flights from Western Balkans coun-

tries to non-EU countries (eg Romania) are fiercely expensive. But public transport on the ground is cheap and plentiful, though generally the conditions of buses are reminiscent of the 1980s at best and rattling 1950s country buses at worst.

The Western Balkans has flocks of flights to the rest of Europe, but not so many further afield. With severe competition between long-haul airlines and the explosion in no-frills carriers in Europe and the USA, there are plenty of cheap tickets available to gateway cities. Most people arriving from outside Europe will probably end up travelling through Western Europe, simply because the best fares and most frequent connections go through a number of Western European gateway cities. Some travellers choose to reach the region by train – a far more exciting and atmospheric way to enter than flying. There are lots of bus connections from neighbouring countries, as well as many services to Austria, Switzerland and Germany, where generations of people from the Western Balkans have gone to work.

There are many ferry services linking Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and Albania with Italy, plus a couple of short rides connecting Greece and Albania.

### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

You won't be surprised to learn that all countries require visitors to have valid passports with at least six months' validity. EU travellers from countries that issue national identity cards can visit Slovenia with just their identity card. Visitors from most countries can visit most of the countries and territories in the region for up to 90 days without needing to get a visa in advance, and entry is usually free. The main exception to the freebie rule is Albania, where visas from all entry points cost €10 for everybody. Check the Visa section in the directory of each country chapter for more information.

### AIR

All of the capitals and quite a few regional cities are served by a range of European airlines, though Slovenia's Ljubljana airport is

the only one in the region served by low-cost carriers such as easyJet. Broadly speaking, the less touristy the country or region the more expensive the flight, so flying into Prishtina (Kosovo) and Tirana (Albania) is poor value compared to landing in Ljubljana (Slovenia), Zagreb (Croatia) or Belgrade (Serbia). For departure taxes out of particular countries, check the Transport section of the country chapter. Travellers from anywhere outside of Europe should look at getting a flight on a busy route to Western Europe and then a connecting flight into the region. Airlines such as Austrian Airlines, Swiss International Air Lines and Lufthansa may have deals where you fly from North America or Australia and get a flight to the Western Balkans for free. These airlines may also offer open-jaw tickets, where you can fly into, say, Ljubljana and out of Belgrade, which saves a bit of backtracking.

### Airports & Airlines

The Western Balkans has six major airports and a host of smaller ones. The biggest in the region are in Belgrade and Zagreb, though Ljubljana punches above its weight as well. See the country chapters for more information about the airports in each country. The following are airlines that fly to and from the Western Balkans.

**Adria Airways** (airline code ZY; www.adaair.com; hub Tirana)

**Adria Airways** (airline code JP; www.adria-airways.com; hub Ljubljana)

**Aer Lingus** (airline code EI; www.aerlingus.com; hub Dublin)

**Aeroflot** (airline code SU; www.aeroflot.com; hub Moscow Sheremetyevo)

**Air Baltic** (airline code BT; www.airbaltic.com; hub Riga)

**Air France** (airline code AF; www.airfrance.com; hub Paris)

**Air India** (airline code AI; www.airindia.com; hub New Delhi/Mumbai)

**Albanian Airlines** (airline code LV; www.flyalbanian.com; hub Tirana)

**Albatros Airways** (airline code 4H; www.albatrosair.com; hub Tirana)

**Alitalia** (airline code AZ; www.alitalia.it; hub Rome)

**Austrian Airlines** (airline code OS; www.aa.com; hub Vienna)

**British Airways** (airline code BA; www.britishairways.com; hub London Heathrow)

**Croatia Airlines** (airline code OU; www.croatiaairlines.hr; hub Zagreb)

**ČSA** (Czech Airlines; airline code OK; www.csa.cz; hub Prague)

**EasyJet** (airline code EZY; www.easyjet.com; hub London Luton)

**Emirates** (airline code EK; www.emirates.com; hub Dubai)

**Hemus Air** (airline code DU; www.hemusair.bg; hub Sofia)

**JAT** (airline code JU; www.jat.com; hub Belgrade)

**KLM** (airline code KL; www.klm.com; hub Amsterdam)

**Kosova Airlines** (airline code KOS; www.kosovaairlines.com in Albanian; hub Prishtina)

**LOT Polish Airlines** (airline code LOT; www.lot.com; hub Warsaw)

**Lufthansa** (airline code LH; www.lufthansa.com; hub Frankfurt)

**Macedonian Airlines** (MAT; airline code IN; www.mat.com.mk; hub Skopje)

**Malév Hungarian Airlines** (airline code MA; www.malev.hu; hub Budapest)

**Montenegro Airlines** (airline code YM; www.montenegro-airlines.com; hub Podgorica)

**Olympic Airways** (airline code OA; www.olympicairlines.com; hub Athens)

**Royal Jordanian** (airline code RJ; www.rja.com.jo; hub Amman)

**Ryanair** (airline code FR; www.ryanair.com; hub London Stansted)

**SAS Scandinavian Airlines** (airline code SK; www.scandinavian.net; hub Copenhagen)

**Scandjet** (airline code FLY; www.scandjet.se; hub Gothenburg)

**SkyEurope Airlines** (airline code NE; www.skyeurope.com; hub Warsaw/Bratislava/Budapest)

**SN Brussels Airlines** (airline code SN; www.flysn.com; hub Brussels)

**Swiss International Air Lines** (airline code LX; www.swiss.com; hub Zurich)

**Turkish Airlines** (airline code TK; www.turkishairlines.com; hub Istanbul)

### Tickets

In times past there wasn't much to gain by buying tickets directly from an airline – discounted tickets were released to selected travel agencies and specialist discount agencies, and these were usually the cheapest deals going. While this is still the case for long-haul flights, shorter European routes are now routinely sold at decent prices by the airlines themselves. If dealing with the expanding number of no-frills carriers, this is often the only way to purchase tickets.

It's often easiest and cheapest to book airline tickets online. Even scheduled flights on commercial airlines can be profitably booked online through a number of websites, see right. Shop around but always make sure that the price you are quoted includes the relevant taxes, as these can make the difference between a good price and a great price. For recommended travel agencies in the Western Balkans, see the Information sections for each capital city.

### Albania

Albania is served by a small but steadily growing number of airlines, including its first home-grown budget carrier, Albatros Airways. Tirana's Nënë Tereza airport is the only international gateway. The oldest local airline is Albanian Airlines, which connects Tirana to Frankfurt, Rome and Istanbul. Ada Air flies to regional destinations such as Thessaloniki, Athens, Bari and Sofia, while the new budget carrier Albatros Airways flies to eight cities in Italy for as low as €60 one way. Major foreign airlines flying to Albania include Austrian Airlines from Vienna, Alitalia from Rome, Olympic Airways from Athens and Turkish Airlines

### ONLINE TICKETS

Some recommended websites to book air tickets include those listed below. They usually levy a booking fee on any flights bought, but even if you don't buy through them, their software can be very useful for checking that the flight prices offered to you by other travel agents are the best ones available.

- www.ebookers.com
- www.flybudget.com
- www.itassoftware.com
- www.opodo.com
- www.statravel.com

from Istanbul, and British Airways from London Gatwick (starting March 2006). A budget flight to Bari or Brindisi on Italy's Adriatic coast followed by a ferry to the Albanian ports of Vlora or Durrësi combines good value with a certain romanticism.

### Bosnia & Hercegovina

Sarajevo is served by Austrian Airlines, Lufthansa, Swiss International Air Lines and Adria Airways, who pick up at intercontinental hubs such as Frankfurt, Vienna and Zurich. No discount airlines fly into Bosnia and Hercegovina, but cheap flights to Dubrovnik, Zagreb or Split in Croatia and a bus trip into the country is a possibility.

### Croatia

Zagreb is connected to most European capitals as well as Frankfurt, Munich, Istanbul and Tel Aviv. Elsewhere in the country there are these scheduled flights: Dubrovnik has direct flights to Frankfurt, Glasgow, London, Manchester and Vienna; Split has flights to London, Lyon, Manchester, Munich, Nottingham, Rome and Rotterdam; Rijeka has flights to London; and Pula has a direct flight to Manchester. Some of the flights to coastal cities are in the summer only.

### Macedonia

Macedonia has two international airports, at Skopje and Ohrid. Skopje's Petrovec airport is served by a smallish number of airlines. Macedonian Airlines (MAT) has direct flights to Skopje from Amsterdam,

### TRAVELLING TO WESTERN BALKANS ON THE CHEAP

If saving money is more important than saving time, then consider a cheap flight to Western Europe and then a low-cost carrier to Slovenia or to the edge of the region, then travelling overland by bus, train or boat. It can work out very reasonably if you fly from London, Amsterdam or Paris to Austria, Hungary, Italy's Adriatic coast (eg Bari, Brindisi or Ancona) or to Thessaloniki or Corfu in Greece. Lots of Italian Adriatic ports have ferries to Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and Albania, and there are ferries from Corfu to Albania as well. Austria, Hungary, Greece and northern Italy also offer many routes into the region by bus and train.

For cheap flights to the edge of the Western Balkans and into Ljubljana, check with budget airlines such as **Ryanair** (www.ryanair.com), **easyJet** (www.easyjet.com), **Air Berlin** (www.airberlin.com), **Germania Express** (www.gexx.de), **Wizz Air** (www.wizzair.com), **bmi baby** (www.bmibaby.com) and **SkyEurope Airlines** (www.skyeurope.com) for their cheapest deals.

Vienna, Rome, Zurich and Düsseldorf. Malév Hungarian Airlines flies from Budapest, ČSA (Czech Airlines) from Prague, Alitalia from Milan, Austrian Airlines from Vienna and Turkish Airlines from Istanbul. Ohrid airport has weekly flights from Vienna and Zurich year-round and extra services in summer.

### Serbia & Montenegro

Connections from Belgrade throughout Europe include Amsterdam, Athens, Copenhagen, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt, London, Milan, Munich, Paris, Rome and Zürich. There are also flights to Cairo. The city is well served by regional airlines that pick up at intercontinental hubs, so travellers from Australia and New Zealand can fly to Dubai and pick up a JAT flight to Belgrade or fly with Lufthansa via Frankfurt or Austrian Airlines via Vienna. Travellers from North America are most likely to pick up connecting flights in London or Frankfurt. Malév Hungarian Airlines flies to Montenegro from Budapest, while Prishtina has quite good connections to London, Frankfurt, Istanbul and Vienna.

### Slovenia

For a little country, Slovenia's Brnik airport is surprisingly well connected throughout Europe, notably on Adria Airways, which serves Amsterdam, Brussels, Copenhagen, Dublin, Frankfurt, Istanbul, London, Manchester, Munich, Vienna and Zürich direct. EasyJet has low-cost flights from London Stansted. Ryanair serves several airports just across the Italian and Austrian borders, such as Trieste and Graz.

### LAND

For details of overland transport in and out of individual countries refer to the Transport sections in the country chapters. With the advent of the EU, border crossing in the region has never been simpler. The region can be entered from all sides with no problems at all. Some of the major routes are from Italy and Austria into Slovenia, into Serbia from Hungary and into Macedonia from Greece.

### Austria

Austria has been a popular destination for guest workers from the Western Balkans

for decades, and there are lots of bus and train services heading south into the region. Eurolines (www.eurolines.com) runs buses from Vienna to Zagreb (€29, six hours, two daily), Rijeka (€47, 8¼ hours), Split (€51, 15 hours) and Zadar (€43, 13 hours).

To reach Slovenia, there are buses from Graz to Slovenska Bistrica (€21, 2¼ hours), Rogaška Slatina (€27, three hours) and Ljubljana (€29, 4½ hours).

The *Ljubljana* express travels daily from Vienna to Rijeka (€65, 11½ hours) through Graz, Maribor, Ljubljana (€52, 6¼ hours) and Koper while the *EuroCity Croatia* travels from Vienna to Zagreb (€60, 6½ hours) stopping in Graz and Maribor and going on to Split. There is also a daily train from Vienna to Belgrade (€65, 11 hours).

### Bulgaria

There's a daily train from Sofia to Belgrade (€12 to €18, 11 hours). There are four buses a day between Sofia and Skopje (€10, six hours) in Macedonia.

### Germany

Deutsche Touring (a division of Eurolines) handles bus connections between German and Croatian cities. As there are too many to list here, it's best to consult www.deutsche-touring.de.

### Greece

To Albania there are several daily buses from Thessaloniki (€35, 10 hours) and Athens (€50, 24 hours) to Tirana. There are also buses from Ioannina to Saranda (€6, 1½ hours) and Gjirokastra (€6, 1½ hours), and to Korça from Kastoria and Thessaloniki (€20, five hours).

The unneighbourly Greek policy towards Macedonia means that there are no regular buses between Greece and Macedonia. In the summer holiday season there are sometimes minibuses between Skopje and Thessaloniki (€15 to €20, four hours). But there are two daily trains between Thessaloniki and Skopje (€11, six hours).

To Belgrade there is one daily service from Thessaloniki (€30 to €41, 16 hours).

### Hungary

By train there is a daily service from Budapest to Belgrade (€37, seven hours), as well as two daily trains from Szeged in south-

ern Hungary to Subotica (€2.50, 1¼ hours) in Serbia's northern Vojvodina region. There is also a daily bus from Budapest to Subotica (€14, four hours). The four daily trains between Budapest and Zagreb (€35, 6½ hours) also stop in Nagykanizsa, the first main junction inside Hungary. There are three daily Budapest-Ljubljana trains (€60, 8¼ hours) that stop at Maribor, Ptuj and Celje.

There are big discounts on return train fares from Hungary to the Western Balkans – up to 65% to Slovenia and Croatia and 40% to Serbia and Montenegro.

### Italy

Monday to Saturday there are roughly hourly buses from Trieste in Italy to Koper (Capodistria in Italian; €3, one hour) and about six go on to Piran. There are also four daily buses direct from Trieste to Piran (€5, 1½ hours), and one direct Trieste-Ljubljana service (€10, three hours) at 6.25am.

Trieste is well connected with the Croatian coast. There are four daily buses to Pula (€14, 3¼ hours), three of which stop at Poreč (Parenzo in Italian) and Rovinj (Rovigno in Italian). There are six buses a day to Rijeka (€7.50, 2½ hours) that stop in Opatija (€7, two hours). There are fewer buses on Sunday. To Dalmatia there's a daily bus that leaves at 5.30pm and stops at Rijeka, Zadar (€32, 7½ hours), Split (€36, 10½ hours) and Dubrovnik (€64, 15 hours).

There's also a bus from Venice and Mestre from Monday to Saturday that stops in Rovinj (€21, three hours) and Pula (€23, 3½ hours). Plus there's a weekly bus in the summer from Milan to Pula (€49, 8½ hours).

Train routes include three daily from Venice to Ljubljana (€32, four to 5½ hours) via Trieste, and a direct morning train from Venice to Zagreb (€41, 6½ hours).

### Romania

By train there is a daily service between Belgrade and Bucharest (€27 to €38, 14 hours). Unfortunately there don't seem to be any regular bus services between Serbia and Romania.

### RIVER

There are no regular passenger ferries along the Serbian stretch of the Danube (Croatia also has a frontier on the river, but again

there are no regular services). After being closed by the NATO bombing campaign in 1999, the Danube has been open to traffic all the way from Germany to the Black Sea since 2002. There are international tourist cruises on the Danube but they're generally quite expensive. The **Danube Tourist Commission** (www.danube-river.org) is a great source of information on travelling on Eastern Europe's greatest inland waterway, and has lots of links to river cruise companies.

### SEA

There is a dazzling array of ferries between Italy and Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro and Albania, as well as a charming little jaunt between Corfu in Greece and southern Albania. Schedules change almost as frequently as the weather, but broadly speaking there are more boats across the Adriatic between May and October, and less from October until the end of April.

### Italy

This is one of the most popular ways to get to the Balkans. Catching cheap flights to Ancona, Venice, Brindisi or Bari and then taking the ferry can often work out cheaper than a direct flight to Tirana or Split. Regular boats from several companies connect Italy with Albania, Croatia and Montenegro.

### ALBANIA

A service run by **Adriatica di Navigazione** (www.adriatica.it) operates to Durrësi from Bari (€60, nine hours) daily. Cars cost €90.

**Agemar** (www.agemar.it) runs a car ferry three times a week to Durrësi from Trieste (€80, 22 hours) and three times a week to Durrësi from Ancona (€85, 17 hours). Cars cost €110 for both routes.

**Skenderbeg Lines** (www.skenderbeglines.com) runs daily except Sunday between Brindisi and Vlora (€40, 4½ hours).

**Agoudimos Line** (www.agoudimos-lines.com) also has daily services, except Sunday, between Brindisi and Vlora (€40, seven hours). It has three ferries a week between Bari and Durrësi (€60, nine hours).

### CROATIA

**Agestea** (www.agemar.com), **Azzurraline** (www.azzurraline.com) and **Jadrolinija** (www.jadrolinija.hr), Croatia's national boat line, have ferries between Dubrovnik and Bari (€42 for reclining seat,

eight to nine hours) but only Jadrolinija runs them all year.

**Enermar** (www.enermar.it) runs a car ferry from Venice to Split (€45, 11 hours) from May to September. **Jadrolinija** (www.jadrolinija.hr), **SEM** (www.sem-marina.hr) and **Tirrenia Navigazione** (www.tirrenia.it) run car ferries from Ancona to Split (€42, 10 hours) and Zadar (€39.50, eight hours) that stop at Stari Grad (Hvar) and Korcula in the summer. **SNAV** (www.snav.it) has a fast car ferry from Pescara and Ancona to Split and from Pescara to Hvar in the summer for about the same price. **Losinska Plovidba** (www.losinska-plovidba.hr) connects Koper, Slovenia with Pula (€10, 4½ hours), Mali Lošinj (on Lošinj Island; €20, 8½ hours) and Zadar (€25.50, 12½ hours), starting in late spring. **Miatours** (www.miatours.hr) runs passenger boats connecting Ancona with Zadar (€60, 3½ hours) and Hvar (€100, five hours) in summer. **Sanmar** (www.sanmar.it) has summer ferries from Pescara, Italy to Hvar (5½ hours) and Split (€64 to €84, seven hours). **Tirrenia Navigazione** (www.tirrenia.it) runs between Trieste and ports on Croatia's Istrian Peninsula, including Poreč and Rovinj, starting in late spring. **Venezia Lines** (www.venezialines.com) runs weekly and twice weekly passenger boats from Venice to Pula (three hours), Rovinj (2½ to four hours), Umag (just below the Slovenian border on the Istrian Peninsula, close to Koper; 2½ hours), Poreč (2½ hours), Rabac (between Pula and Rijeka on the Istrian Peninsula, very close to Labin; four hours) and Mali Lošinj (four hours) as well as from Rimini to Pula (2½ hours). It is about the same amount of time from Trieste to these destinations. Prices range from €43 to €63. The service runs from May to early October.

## MONTENEGRO

**Adriatica di Navigazione** (www.adriatica.it) connects Ancona and Bar every Thursday (€60, 16 hours).

**Montenegro Lines** (www.montenegrolines.net) sails from Bari to Bar three times a week (€44, 10 hours) and once a week from Ancona to Bar (€77, 16 hours).

## Greece

**Finikas Lines** (finikaslines@yahoo.com) has two ferries a day between Corfu and Saranda (€15, 90 minutes). From June to August the com-

pany also has boats between Himara and Corfu, usually two times a week, depending on demand.

**Petrakis Lines** (petrakis@hol.gr) has a daily hydrofoil between Corfu and Saranda (€15, 35 minutes).

## GETTING AROUND

This section covers getting between the different countries of the Western Balkans.

### AIR

The major Western Balkans cities are connected by a schedule of regular flights but tend to be fairly pricey. It costs around €150 to fly from Zagreb to Skopje, for example. Unless you are in a big hurry, taking the train is always a cheaper and more interesting option. The major regional air hubs are Zagreb, Ljubljana and Belgrade. Flights to the smaller cities such as Prishtina and Ohrid are even more expensive compared to land travel. Flights within particular countries aren't all that common, given the small size of the countries; the only route commonly used by visitors is within Croatia, from Zagreb to Dubrovnik. All of the airlines based in the region tend to be fairly small, and receive moderately good ratings for punctuality and service. See the country chapters for more details.

### Airlines in Western Balkans

**Adria Airways** (airline code JP; ☎ 386 1-36 91 010; www.adria-airways.com; hub Ljubljana) Flies to Ohrid, Prishtina, Podgorica, Sarajevo, Skopje, Split, Tirana and Zagreb.

**Albanian Airlines** (airline code LV; ☎ 355 4-235 162; www.flyalbanian.com; hub Tirana) Flies to Prishtina.

**Croatia Airlines** (airline code OU; ☎ 385 1-48 72 727; www.croatiaairlines.hr; hub Zagreb) Flies to Bol (the main town on Brač Island in Croatia), Dubrovnik, Osijek, Pula, Rijeka, Sarajevo, Skopje, Split and Zadar.

**JAT** (airline code JU; ☎ 381 11-311 2123; www.jat.com; hub Belgrade) Flies to Banja Luka, Ljubljana, Podgorica, Sarajevo, Skopje, Tirana and Tivat (Montenegro).

**Macedonian Airlines** (MAT; airline code IN; ☎ 389 2-329 23 33; www.mat.com.mk; hub Skopje) Flies to Belgrade, Banja Luka and Ljubljana.

**Montenegro Airlines** (airline code YM; ☎ 381 81-664 411; www.montenegro-airlines.com; hub Podgorica) Flies to Belgrade and Ljubljana.

### BICYCLE

Touring the region by bicycle varies quite a bit from country to country. Slovenia has a good setup for cycling as the roads are good and drivers are fairly sensitive to cyclists. Albania, at the other extreme, marries average to very bad road conditions with a populace of inexperienced drivers. The other countries and regions fall between these two extremes, though Croatia is pretty decent while Kosovo isn't so great. See under Bicycle in the Transport sections of the country chapters for more information on local conditions.

The key to a successful bike trip is to travel light, and don't overdo it on the first few days. Even for the shortest and most basic trip it's worth carrying the tools necessary for repairing a puncture. You might want to consider packing spare brake and gear cables, spanners, Allen keys, spare spokes and strong adhesive tape. At the risk of stating the bleeding obvious, none of the above are much use unless you know how to do basic repairs. Maintenance is also important (and obvious): check over your bike thoroughly each morning and again at night when the day's touring is over. Take a good lock and always use it when you leave your bike unattended.

The wearing of helmets is not compulsory but is certainly advised.

A seasoned cyclist can average about 80km a day but this depends on the terrain and how much weight is being carried. Again don't overdo it – there's no point burning yourself out during the initial stages.

If you want to bring your own bike, you should be able to take it on the plane. You can either take it apart and pack all the pieces in a bike bag or box, or simply wheel it to the check-in desk, where it should be treated as a piece of check-in luggage. You may have to remove the pedals and turn the handlebars sideways so that it takes up less space in the aircraft's hold; check all this with the airline before you pay for your ticket. If your bicycle and other luggage exceed your weight allowance, ask about alternatives or you may find yourself being charged a ransom for excess baggage.

Within Europe, bikes can usually be transported as luggage subject to a fairly small supplementary fee.

### BUS

Buses are a viable alternative to the rail network in the Western Balkans, but generally buses tend to be best for shorter hops such as getting around cities and reaching remote rural villages. They are often the only option in mountainous regions. The ticketing system varies in each country, but advance reservations are rarely necessary. It's always safest to buy your ticket in advance at the station, but on long-distance buses you often just pay upon boarding.

See the individual country chapters for more details about long-distance buses.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Travelling by car or motorcycle gives you an immense amount of freedom and is generally worry-free in most of the Western Balkans, though travelling by car can be tricky between EU and non-EU countries. Driving in Albania is particularly troublesome, and we wouldn't dare suggest it was a fun, safe and easy thing to do. But while Enver Hoxha was covering Albania in concrete bunkers, Tito was building a fairly decent highway system in Yugoslavia, and driving in the former Yugoslav countries and regions is fairly easy. Some insurance packages (especially those covering rental cars) do not include all European countries; for example hiring a car in Italy and driving it to Croatia will cause problems unless you have the correct insurance stamp (ask the agency to insure you for wherever you plan to travel). Cars can be inconvenient in city centres when you have to negotiate strange one-way systems or find somewhere to park in a confusing concrete jungle. Local parking habits are quite carefree in the southern part of the Western Balkans in particular, so it's possible you can be blocked in by someone double-parking next to you. Also, theft from vehicles can be a problem. Every country except Albania has a national automobile association which can help with on-road mishaps, maps and more.

UK motoring organisations such as the **RAC** (www.rac.co.uk) and the **Automobile Association** (www.theaa.com) have excellent information on their websites on driving tips and conditions for all the countries of the Western Balkans.



## Driving Licence

Proof of ownership of a private vehicle should always be carried (a Vehicle Registration Document for British-registered cars) when touring Europe. An EU driving licence is acceptable for driving throughout most of the Western Balkans, as are North American and Australian licences. But to be on the safe side – or if you have any other type of licence – you should obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) from your national motoring organisation.

## Fuel & Spare Parts

Finding the right type of fuel is no longer a problem in the Western Balkans. Fuel prices vary from country to country and may bear little relation to the general cost of living. Savings can be made if you check prices at a few service stations en route.

Unleaded petrol of 95 or 98 octane is widely available throughout the region. As usual, unleaded fuel is slightly cheaper than super (premium grade) and diesel is about 40% cheaper than unleaded. Petrol stations seem to be placed somewhat erratically. Several may be within a few kilometres of each other and then there may not be any for incredibly long stretches. Make sure you fill up your tank wherever possible – especially if you are travelling off the main highways.

## Hire

Hiring a car is quite straightforward. The big international firms will give you reliable service and a good standard of vehicle. Prebooked rates are generally lower than walk-in rates at rental offices, but either way you'll pay about 20% to 40% more than in Western Europe. However, renting from small local companies is nearly always cheaper.

You should be able to make advance reservations online. Check out the following websites:

**Avis** (www.avis.com)

**Budget** (www.budget.com)

**Europcar** (www.europcar.com)

**Hertz** (www.hertz.com)

If you're coming from North America, Australia or New Zealand, ask your airline if it has any special deals for rental cars in Europe. You can often find very competitive rates.

Although local companies not connected with any chain will usually offer lower prices than the multinationals, when comparing rates beware of printed tariffs intended only for local residents, which may be lower than the prices foreigners are charged. If in doubt, ask. The big chain companies sometimes offer the flexibility of allowing you to pick up the vehicle from one place and drop it off at another at no additional charge.

Minimum age requirements vary from country to country and from one company to another. Generally the rule is that you need to have held a full licence for a minimum of one year. You also generally need a major credit card, though a large wad of cash as a deposit can also be persuasive.

## Insurance

Third-party motor insurance is compulsory throughout Europe. For non-EU countries make sure you check the requirements with your insurer. For further advice and more information contact the **Association of British Insurers** (www.abi.org.uk).

In general you should get your insurer to issue a Green Card (which may cost extra), an internationally recognised proof of insurance, and check that it lists all the countries you intend to visit. You'll need this in the event of an accident outside the country where the vehicle is insured. The European Accident Statement (known as the 'Constat Amiable' in France) is available from your insurance company and is copied so that each party at an accident can record information for insurance purposes. The Association of British Insurers has more details. Never sign accident statements you cannot understand or read – insist on a translation and sign that only if it's acceptable.

If the Green Card doesn't list one of the countries you're visiting and your insurer cannot (or will not) add it, you will have to take out separate third-party cover at the border of the country in question. Generally this is only a problem if you plan to drive across to Bulgaria or into Albania.

Taking out a European vehicle breakdown assistance policy, such as the Five Star Service with **AA** (☎ 0870 550 0600 in UK; www.theaa.com) or the Eurocover Motoring Assistance with **RAC** (☎ 0800 550 055 in UK; www.rac.co.uk), is a good investment. Non-Europeans might

find it cheaper to arrange for international coverage with their own national motoring organisation before leaving home. Ask your motoring organisation for details about free and reciprocal services offered by affiliated organisations around Europe.

Every vehicle travelling across an international border should display a sticker that shows the country of registration. It's compulsory to carry a warning triangle almost everywhere in Europe, which must be displayed in the event of a breakdown. Recommended accessories are a first-aid kit (this is compulsory in Croatia, Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia and Montenegro) and a spare bulb kit (compulsory in Macedonia). Contact the RAC or the AA for more information.

## Road Rules

Motoring organisations are able to supply their members with country-by-country information on motoring regulations, or they may produce motoring guidebooks for general sale.

Driving at night can be particularly hazardous in rural areas as the roads are often narrow and winding, and you may encounter horse-drawn vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians and domestic animals. In the event of an accident you're supposed to notify the police and file an insurance claim. If your car has significant body damage from a previous accident, point this out to customs upon arrival and have it noted somewhere, as damaged vehicles may only be allowed to leave the country with police permission.

Standard international road signs are used throughout all of the Western Balkans, though they may appear sporadically in Albania. You drive on the right-hand side of the road throughout the region and overtake on the left. Keep right except when overtaking, and use your indicators for any change of lane and when pulling away from the kerb. You're not allowed to overtake more than one car at a time, whether they are moving or stationary (eg pulled up at a traffic light).

Speed limits are posted, and are generally 110km/h or 120km/h on motorways (freeways), 100km/h on highways, 80km/h on secondary and tertiary roads and 50km/h or 60km/h in built-up areas. Motorcycles are usually limited to 90km/h on motorways. In towns you may only sound the horn to avoid an accident.

Everywhere in the Western Balkans the use of seat belts is mandatory and motorcyclists (and their passengers) must wear a helmet. In some countries, children under 12 and intoxicated passengers are not allowed in the front seat. Driving after drinking *any* alcohol is a serious offence – most Western Balkan countries have a 0% blood-alcohol concentration (BAC) limit.

## HITCHING

Hitching is never entirely safe, and we wouldn't recommend it. There's always a risk when you catch a ride with strangers. It's safer to travel in pairs and to let someone know where you're planning to go. Once you've flagged down a vehicle, its safer if you sit next to a door you can open. Ask the driver where they are going before you say where you are going. Trust your instincts if you feel uncomfortable about getting in, and at the first sign of trouble do insist on getting out. You can find information on ride sharing and hooking up with drivers on websites such as www.hitchhikers.org and www.bugeurope.com.

## LOCAL TRANSPORT Boat

On Croatia's coast the national Jadrolinija car ferries operate year-round on the Bari-Rijeka–Dubrovnik coastal route, stopping at Zadar, Split and several islands. The ferries are more comfortable than buses on the same route, but also more expensive. Local ferries connect the bigger offshore islands with the mainland and with each other. Some of the ferries only operate a few times a day, and once they're full the remaining motorists must sit and wait for the next service. Montenegro and Albania do not have regular coastal ferry services, though in Albania it is sometimes possible to catch a ferry between Himara and Saranda on the Ionian Sea coast from June to August.

## Minibus

The shared minibus or  *furgon*  is a quick but slightly cramped form of both intercity and city transport, particularly in Albania. They leave when full, and you pay when you're on board. They will stop frequently to let passengers on and off. *Furgons* often have very limited space for luggage, which is when you'll thank yourself for packing light.

## TRAIN

Trains are the most atmospheric, comfortable and fun way to make long overland journeys in the Western Balkans. All major cities besides Tirana and Prishtina are on the rail network. The train line between Serbia and Montenegro is particularly spectacular, and is highly recommended. Overnight trains also have the benefit of saving you a night's accommodation, and it's a great way to meet locals.

When you travel overnight you'll get a bed reservation included in the price of your ticket, although you may have to pay a few euros extra for the bedding once on board. Each wagon is administered by a steward or stewardess who will look after your ticket and who will make sure that you get off at the correct stop – crucial, if you arrive during the small hours. Each wagon has a toilet and washbasin at either end, although their state of cleanliness can vary massively. Be aware that toilets may be closed while the train is at a station.

If you plan to travel extensively by train, it might be worth getting hold of the *Thomas Cook European Timetable*, which gives a complete listing of train schedules and indicates where supplements apply or where reservations are necessary. It is updated monthly and is available from **Thomas Cook** ([www.thomascook.com](http://www.thomascook.com)) outlets in the UK, and from **Forsyth Travel Library** (☎ 800-367 7984; [www.forsyth.com](http://www.forsyth.com)) in the USA. In Australia, look for it in a Thomas Cook outlet or one of the bigger bookstores, which can order in copies if they don't have any in stock. If you intend to stick to one or a handful of countries it might be worthwhile getting hold of the national timetable(s) published by the state railway(s). A particularly useful online resource for timetables in the Western Balkans is the DeutscheBahn website at [www.bahn.de](http://www.bahn.de) (in German). Train fares and schedules in US and Canadian dollars for the most popular routes in Europe, including information on rail and youth passes, can be found on [www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com). For fares in UK pounds go to [www.raileurope.co.uk](http://www.raileurope.co.uk).

### Classes

Throughout the Western Balkans there exists a similar system of classes on trains as there is in Western Europe. Short trips, or longer ones that don't involve sleeping

on the train, are usually seated like a normal train: benches (on suburban trains) or aeroplane-style seats (on smarter intercity services).

There are generally three classes of sleeping accommodation on trains; some countries have a different name for them, but for the sake of simplicity, we'll call them 3rd, 2nd and 1st class.

Third-class accommodation is not available everywhere, but it's the cheapest way to sleep, although you may feel your privacy has been slightly invaded. The accommodation consists of six berths in each compartment.

Second class has four berths in a closed compartment. If there are two of you, you will share your accommodation with two strangers. However, if there are three of you, you'll often not be joined by anyone.

First class is a treat, although you are paying for space rather than décor or unsurly service in most countries. Here you'll find two berths in a compartment, usually adorned with plastic flowers to remind you what you've paid for.

### Costs

While it's reasonable, train travel is pricier than bus travel in some countries. First-class tickets are double the price of 2nd-class tickets, which are in turn approximately twice the price of 3rd-class tickets.

### Reservations

It is always advisable to buy a ticket in advance. Seat reservations are also advisable but only necessary if the timetable specifies one is required. Out of season, reservations can be made pretty much up to an hour before departure, but never count on this. On busy routes and during the summer, always try to reserve a seat several days in advance. For peace of mind, you may prefer to book tickets via travel agencies before you leave home, although this will be more expensive than booking on arrival in the Western Balkans.

### Train Passes

#### INTERRAIL

These passes are available to European residents of more than six months' standing (passport identification is required). Terms and conditions vary slightly from country to country, but when travelling in the country

where you bought the pass, there is only a discount of about 50% on normal fares. The InterRail pass is split into zones – somewhat inconveniently, the countries of the Western Balkans are divided into three different zones: Slovenia is in Zone G with Italy, Greece and Turkey; Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina are in Zone D with Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland; Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro are in Zone H with Bulgaria and Romania. This makes InterRail rather expensive for travel across the entire region. Albania is not covered by any InterRail pass.

The normal InterRail pass is for people under 26, though travellers 26 and over can get the InterRail 26+ version. The price for any single zone is €195/286 for those aged

under 26/26 and over for 16 days of travel. Two-zone passes are valid for 22 days and cost €275/396, and the all-zone Global Pass is €385/546 for one month of travel.

### BALKAN FLEXIPASS

The Balkan Flexipass offered by **Rail Europe** ([www.raileurope.com](http://www.raileurope.com)) covers rail travel in Macedonia and Serbia and Montenegro, as well as Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Turkey. It covers travel in 1st class only, and costs from US\$189 for five days' travel in one month to US\$397 for 15 days' travel in one month. There are special flexipasses for certain age groups. For people under 26 or over 60, five days' travel in one month costs US\$112/152, and 15 days' travel in one month costs US\$238/318.

# Health

## CONTENTS

<b>Before You Go</b>	<b>410</b>
Insurance	410
Recommended Vaccinations	410
Internet Resources	410
<b>In Western Balkans</b>	<b>410</b>
Availability & Cost of Health Care	410
Infectious Diseases	411
Traveller's Diarrhoea	411
Environmental Hazards	411
Travelling With Children	412
Women's Health	412
Sexual Health	412

Travel health depends on your predeparture preparations, your health care while travelling and how you handle any medical problem that does develop. The Western Balkans is generally an exceptionally safe place in terms of staying healthy, with no tropical diseases and an extensive, if sometimes basic, healthcare system.

Prevention is the key to staying healthy while abroad. A little planning, particularly for pre-existing illnesses, will save trouble later: see your dentist before a long trip, carry spare contact lenses or glasses, and take your optical prescription with you.

## BEFORE YOU GO

Bring medications in their original, clearly labelled containers, along with a signed and dated letter from your physician describing your medical conditions and medications, including generic names. If carrying syringes, be sure to have a physician's letter documenting their medical necessity.

### INSURANCE

If you're an EU citizen, an E111 form, available from health centres, covers you for most medical care. E111 will not cover you for nonemergencies or emergency repatriation home. If you do need health insurance, strongly consider a policy that covers you

### TRAVEL HEALTH WEBSITES

It's usually a good idea to consult your government's travel health website before departure, if one is available.

**Australia** [www.dfat.gov.au/travel/](http://www.dfat.gov.au/travel/)  
**Canada** [www.travelhealth.gc.ca](http://www.travelhealth.gc.ca)  
**UK** [www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/](http://www.doh.gov.uk/traveladvice/)  
**US** [www.cdc.gov/travel/](http://www.cdc.gov/travel/)

for the worst possible scenario, such as an accident requiring emergency flight home. Find out if your insurance plan will make payments directly to providers or reimburse you later for overseas health expenditures. The former option is preferable.

### RECOMMENDED VACCINATIONS

The World Health Organisation (WHO) recommends that all travellers should be covered for diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella and polio, regardless of their destination. Since most vaccines don't produce immunity until at least two weeks after they're given, visit a physician at least six weeks before departure.

### INTERNET RESOURCES

The WHO's useful publication *International Travel and Health* is revised annually and is available on line at [www.who.int/ith/](http://www.who.int/ith/). Some other useful websites include [www.mdtravelhealth.com](http://www.mdtravelhealth.com) (travel health recommendations for every country, updated daily), [www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.fitfortravel.scot.nhs.uk) (general travel advice for the layperson), [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk) (advice on travel for the elderly) and [www.mariestopes.org.uk](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk) (information on women's health and contraception).

## IN WESTERN BALKANS

### AVAILABILITY & COST OF HEALTH CARE

Good basic health care is readily available and for minor illnesses pharmacists can give advice and sell over-the-counter medication. They can also advise when more specialised help is required and point you in

the right direction. The standard of dental care is usually good.

Medical care is not always readily available outside of major cities but embassies, consulates and five-star hotels can usually recommend doctors or clinics.

### INFECTIOUS DISEASES

#### Poliomyelitis

Poliomyelitis is spread through contaminated food and water, and its vaccine is one of those given in childhood and should be boosted every 10 years, either orally (a drop on the tongue) or as an injection.

#### Rabies

Spread through bites or licks on broken skin from an infected animal, rabies is always fatal unless treated promptly. Animal handlers should be vaccinated, as should those travelling to remote areas where a reliable source of postbite vaccine is not available within 24 hours. Three injections are needed over a month. If you have not been vaccinated, you will need a course of five injections starting 24 hours or as soon as possible after the injury. If you have been vaccinated, you will need fewer injections and have more time to seek medical help.

#### Tickborne Encephalitis

Spread by tick bites, tickborne encephalitis is a risk in Croatia and Slovenia in the summer months. It is a serious infection of the brain and vaccination is advised for those in risk areas who are unable to avoid tick bites (such as campers, forestry workers and walkers). Two doses of vaccine will give a year's protection, three doses up to three years'.

#### Typhoid & Hepatitis A

Both of these diseases are spread through contaminated food (particularly shellfish) and water. Typhoid can cause septicaemia; hepatitis A causes liver inflammation and jaundice. Neither is usually fatal. Typhoid vaccine (typhim Vi, typherix) will give protection for three years. In some countries, the oral vaccine Vivotif is also available. Hepatitis A vaccine (Avaxim, VAQTA, Havrix) is given as an injection; a single dose gives protection for up to a year, and a booster gives 10 years' protection. Hepatitis A and typhoid vaccines can also be given as a single dose vaccine, hepatrix or viatim.

### TRAVELLER'S DIARRHOEA

To prevent diarrhoea, avoid tap water unless it has been boiled, filtered or chemically disinfected (with iodine tablets) and steer clear of ice. Only eat fresh fruits or vegetables if cooked or peeled; be wary of dairy products that might contain unpasteurised milk. Eat food which is heated through and avoid buffet-style meals. If a restaurant is full of locals the food is probably safe.

If you develop diarrhoea, be sure to drink plenty of fluids, preferably an oral rehydration solution (eg dioralate). If you start having more than four or five stools a day, you should take an antibiotic (usually a quinolone drug) and an anti-diarrhoeal agent (such as loperamide). If diarrhoea is bloody, persists for more than 72 hours or is accompanied by fever, shaking, chills or severe abdominal pain you should seek medical attention.

### ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

#### Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion occurs following excessive fluid loss with inadequate replacement of fluids and salt. Symptoms include headache, dizziness and tiredness. Dehydration is already happening by the time you feel thirsty – drink sufficient water to produce pale, diluted urine. To treat heat exhaustion, replace lost fluids by drinking water and/or fruit juice, and cool the body with cold water and fans. Treat salt loss with salty fluids such as soup or Bovril, or add a little more table salt to foods than usual.

#### Insect Bites & Stings

Mosquitoes are found in most parts of Europe. They may not carry malaria but can cause irritation and infected bites. Use a DEET-based insect repellent.

Bees and wasps only cause real problems to those with a severe allergy (anaphylaxis). If you have a severe allergy to bee or wasp stings carry an 'epipen' or similar adrenaline injection.

Sandflies are found around the Mediterranean beaches. Usually, they cause only a nasty itchy bite, but they can carry a rare skin disorder called cutaneous leishmaniasis.

#### Water

Tap water is generally safe to drink in the main cities and resorts. Do not drink water from rivers or lakes as it may contain

bacteria or viruses that can cause diarrhoea or vomiting.

### **TRAVELLING WITH CHILDREN**

All travellers with children should know how to treat minor ailments and when to seek medical treatment. Make sure the children are up to date with routine vaccinations, and discuss possible travel vaccines well before departure as some are not suitable for children less than one year old.

### **WOMEN'S HEALTH**

Travelling during pregnancy is possible, but there are important things to consider.

Always have a medical check up before planning your trip. The most risky times for travel are during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy and after 30 weeks. Antenatal facilities vary greatly between countries and you should think carefully before travelling to a country with poor medical facilities or where there are major cultural and language differences from home.

### **SEXUAL HEALTH**

Emergency contraception is most effective if taken within 24 hours after unprotected sex. Safe condoms are available throughout the region.



# Language

## CONTENTS

<b>Albanian</b>	<b>413</b>
<b>Bosnian, Croatian &amp; Serbian</b>	<b>414</b>
<b>Macedonian</b>	<b>417</b>
<b>Slovene</b>	<b>419</b>

This language guide offers basic vocabulary to help you get around the Western Balkans. For more extensive coverage of the languages listed in this guide, pick up a copy of Lonely Planet's *Eastern Europe Phrasebook*.

Some of the languages in this chapter use polite and informal modes of address (when shown, the informal is indicated by the abbreviation 'inf'). Use the polite form when addressing older people, officials or service staff.

## ALBANIAN

### PRONUNCIATION

Written Albanian is phonetically consistent and pronunciation shouldn't pose too many problems for English speakers. Each vowel in a diphthong is pronounced and the **rr** is trilled. However, Albanian possesses certain letters that exist in English but are rendered differently.

<b>ë</b>	often silent; at the beginning of a word it's like the 'a' in 'ago'
<b>c</b>	as the 'ts' in 'bits'
<b>ç</b>	as the 'ch' in 'church'
<b>dh</b>	as the 'th' in 'this'
<b>gj</b>	as the 'gy' in 'hogyard'
<b>j</b>	as the 'y' in 'yellow'
<b>q</b>	between 'ch' and 'ky', similar to the 'cu' in 'cure'
<b>th</b>	as in 'thistle'
<b>x</b>	as the 'dz' in 'adze'
<b>xh</b>	as the 'j' in 'jewel'

### ACCOMMODATION

<b>hotel</b>	<i>hotel</i>
<b>camping ground</b>	<i>kamp pushimi</i>

### EMERGENCIES – ALBANIAN

<b>Help!</b>	<i>Ndihmë!</i>
<b>Call a doctor!</b>	<i>Thirrni doktorin!</i>
<b>Call the police!</b>	<i>Thirrni policinë!</i>
<b>Go away!</b>	<i>Zhduku!/Largohuni!</i>
<b>I'm lost.</b>	<i>Kam humbur rrugë.</i>

<b>Do you have any rooms available?</b>	<i>A keni ndonjë dhomë të lirë?</i>
<b>a single room</b>	<i>një dhomë më një krevat</i>
<b>a double room</b>	<i>një dhomë më dy krevat</i>
<b>How much is it per night/person?</b>	<i>Sa kushton për një natë/njeri?</i>
<b>Does it include breakfast?</b>	<i>A e përfshin edhe mëngjesin?</i>

### CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS

<b>Hello.</b>	<i>Tungjatjeta/Allo.</i>
<b>Goodbye.</b>	<i>Lamtumirë.</i>
	<i>Mirupafshim. (inf)</i>
<b>Yes.</b>	<i>Po.</i>
<b>No.</b>	<i>Jo.</i>
<b>Please.</b>	<i>Ju lutem.</i>
<b>Thank you.</b>	<i>Ju falem nderit.</i>
<b>That's fine.</b>	<i>Ehtë e mirë.</i>
<b>You're welcome.</b>	<i>S'ka përse.</i>
<b>Excuse me.</b>	<i>Me falni. (to get past)</i>
	<i>Më vjen keq. (before a request)</i>
<b>I'm sorry.</b>	<i>Më falni, ju lutem.</i>
<b>Do you speak English?</b>	<i>A flisni anglisht?</i>
<b>How much is it?</b>	<i>Sa kushton?</i>
<b>What's your name?</b>	<i>Si quheni ju lutem?</i>
<b>My name is ...</b>	<i>Unë quhem .../Mua më quajnë ...</i>

### SHOPPING & SERVICES

<b>a bank</b>	<i>një bankë</i>
<b>chemist/pharmacy</b>	<i>farmaci</i>
<b>the ... embassy</b>	<i>... ambasadën</i>
<b>the market</b>	<i>pazarin</i>
<b>newsagency</b>	<i>agjensia e lajmeve</i>
<b>the post office</b>	<i>postën</i>
<b>the telephone centre</b>	<i>centralin telefonik</i>
<b>the tourist office</b>	<i>zyrën e informimeve turistike</i>
<b>What time does it open/close?</b>	<i>Në ç'orë hapet/mbyllet?</i>

### TIME, DAYS & NUMBERS

<b>What time is it?</b>	<i>Sa është ora?</i>
<b>today</b>	<i>sot</i>

## SIGNS – ALBANIAN

Hyrje	Entrance
Dalje	Exit
Informim	Information
Hapur	Open
Mbyllur	Closed
E Ndaluar	Prohibited
Policia	Police
Stacioni i Policisë	Police Station
Nevojtorja	Toilets
Burra	Men
Gra	Women

tomorrow *nesër*  
 yesterday *dje*  
 in the morning *në mëngjes*  
 in the afternoon *pas dreke*

Monday *e hënë*  
 Tuesday *e martë*  
 Wednesday *e mërkurë*  
 Thursday *e enjte*  
 Friday *e premte*  
 Saturday *e shtunë*  
 Sunday *e diel*

1 *një*  
 2 *dy*  
 3 *tre*  
 4 *katër*  
 5 *pesë*  
 6 *gjashtë*  
 7 *shtatë*  
 8 *tetë*  
 9 *nëntë*  
 10 *dhjetë*  
 100 *njëqind*  
 1000 *njëmijë*

## TRANSPORT

What time does the ... leave/arrive? *Në ç'orë nisjet/arrin ...?*

boat	<i>barka/lundra</i>
bus	<i>autobusi</i>
tram	<i>tramvaji</i>
train	<i>treni</i>

I'd like ... *Dëshiroj ...*  
 a one-way ticket *një biletë vajtje*  
 a return ticket *një biletë kthimi*

(1st/2nd) class *klas (i parë/i dytë)*  
 timetable *orar*  
 bus stop *stacion autobusi*

## Directions

Where is ...? *Ku është ...?*  
 Go straight ahead. *Shko drejt.*  
 Turn left. *Kthehu majtas.*  
 Turn right. *Kthehu djathtas.*  
 near/far *afer/larg*

## BOSNIAN, CROATIAN &amp; SERBIAN

## WHO SPEAKS WHAT WHERE?

From a linguistic perspective, the differences between Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian are slight (they are all classed as Southern Slavonic languages), and the three are mutually intelligible. From a cultural perspective, the story is significantly different, with distinctions based on religion, ethnicity and geography all contributing to create a heady mix of official and preferred languages and writing systems. In effect, the resolution of the Balkan conflict meant that each new nation had a strong desire to reflect their independence through the recognition of their own official languages.

Croatia is perhaps the simplest to classify: the official language is Croatian and the official writing system is the Roman alphabet. Serbia is also fairly straightforward, with Serbian the official language title, but both Cyrillic and Roman alphabets recognised as official writing systems (and both in common use in schools and the media). Things become considerably more complicated in Bosnia and Hercegovina, however, where all three languages share official status. Bosnian itself is almost identical to Croatian (with a few lexical variations). It's spoken by the Muslim community (Bosniaks) and is written in the Roman alphabet. Croatian is spoken by the Bosnian Croats; it too is written in the Roman alphabet. Serbian (the Bosnian variety of which also sounds more like Croatian in pronunciation than Serbian) is spoken by the Bosnian Serbs and is written in the Cyrillic alphabet. So simple!

## PRONUNCIATION

The writing systems of these languages are phonetically consistent: every letter within a word is pronounced and its sound will not vary from word to word. With regard to the

position of stress, only one rule can be given: the last syllable of a word is never stressed. In most cases the accent falls on the first vowel in the word.

It's worth familiarising yourself with the Serbian Cyrillic alphabet (see p417). Bosnian and Croatian use a Roman alphabet and many letters are pronounced as in English – the following are some of the departures from the English alphabet and its pronunciation.

c	as the 'ts' in 'cats'
ć	as the 'tch' sound in 'future'
č	as the 'ch' in 'chop'
đ	as the 'dy' sound in 'verdure'
dž	as the 'j' in 'just'
j	as the 'y' in 'young'
lj	as the 'lli' in 'million'
nj	as the 'ny' in 'canyon'
š	as the 'sh' in 'hush'
ž	as the 's' in 'pleasure'

The principal difference between Serbian and Bosnian/Croatian is in the pronunciation of the vowel 'e' in certain words. A long **e** in Serbian becomes 'ije' in Bosnian/Croatian, eg *reka/rijeka* (river), and a short **e** in Serbian becomes 'je' in Bosnian/Croatian, eg *pesma, pjesma* (song). Sometimes, however, the vowel **e** is the same in both languages, as in *selo* (village). This chapter uses Bosnian/Croatian pronunciation for both languages. Any variation in vocabulary between the languages is indicated in the following phrase list by 'B/C/S' for Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian.

## ACCOMMODATION

hotel		
<i>hotel</i>		хотел
guesthouse		
<i>privatno prenočište</i>		приватно пренојиште
youth hostel		
<i>omladinsko prenočište</i>		омладинско пренојиште
camping ground		
<i>kamping</i>		кампинг

## Do you have any rooms available?

*Imate li slobodne sobe?*  
 Имате ли слободне собе?

## How much is it per night/per person?

*Koliko košta za jednu noć/po osobi?*  
 Колико кошта за једну ноћ/по особи?

## EMERGENCIES – BOSNIAN, CROATIAN &amp; SERBIAN

**Help!**  
*Упомоћ!*  
 Упомоћ!

**Call a doctor!**  
*Pozovite liječnika (C)/lekara! (B&S)*  
 Позовите лекара!

**Call the police!**  
*Pozovite policiju!*  
 Позовите полицију!

**Go away!**  
*Idite!*  
 Идите!

**I'm lost.**  
*Izgubljen/Izgubljena sam. (m/f)*  
 Изгубљен/Изгубљена сам. (m/f)

## Does it include breakfast?

*Da li je u cijenu uključen i doručak?*  
 Да ли је у цену укључен и доручак?

## I'd like ...

<i>Želim ...</i>	Желим ...
<b>a single room</b>	
<i>sobu sa jednim krevetom</i>	собу са једним креветом
<b>a double room</b>	
<i>sobu sa duplim krevetom</i>	собу са дуплим креветом

## CONVERSATION &amp; ESSENTIALS

**Hello.**  
*Bog (C)/Zdravo. (B/S)* Здраво.

**Goodbye.**  
*Zbogom (C)/*  
*Doviđenja. (B, S)* Довиђења.

**Yes.**  
*Da.* Да.

**No.**  
*Ne.* Не.

**Please.**  
*Molim.* Молим.

**Thank you.**  
*Hvala.* Хвала.

**That's fine/You're welcome.**  
*U redu je/*  
*Nema na čemu.* Нема на чему.

**Excuse me.**  
*Pardon.* Пардон.

**Sorry.**  
*Oprostite.* Опростите.

**Do you speak English?**  
*Govarite li engleski?* Говорите ли енглески?

**What's your name?**  
*Kako se zovete?* Како се зовете?

**My name is ...**

Zovem se ... Зовем се ...

**SHOPPING & SERVICES****I'm looking for ...**

Tražim ...

Тражим ...

**a bank**

banku банку

**the ... embassy**

... ambasadu ... амбасаду

**the market**

tržnicu (C) пијацу

**the post office**

poštu пошту

**the telephone centre**

telefonsku centralu телефонску централу

**the tourist office**

turistički biro туристички биро

**How much is it ...?**

Koliko košta ...? Колико кошта ...?

**TIME, DAYS & NUMBERS****What time is it? Koliko je sati? Колико је сати?****today** danas данас**tomorrow** sutra сутра**yesterday** jučer јуче**in the morning** ujutro ујутро**in the afternoon** popodne поподне**Monday** ponedjeljak понедељак**Tuesday** utorak уторак**Wednesday** srijeda среда**Thursday** četvrtak четвртак**Friday** petak петак**Saturday** subota субота**Sunday** nedjelja недеља**1** jedan један**2** dva два**3** tri три**4** četiri четири**5** pet пет**6** šest шест**7** sedam седам**8** osam осам**9** devet девет**10** deset десет**100** sto сто**1000** hiljada хиљада(B&S)/  
tisuću (C)**SIGNS – BOSNIAN, CROATIAN & SERBIAN****Ulaz/Izlaz** Entrance/Exit

Улаз/Изалз

**Otvoreno/Zatvoreno** Open/Closed

Отворено/Затворено

**Informacije** Information

Информације

**Policija** Police

Полиција

**Stanica Policije** Police Station

Станица Полиције

**Zabranjeno** Prohibited

Забрањено

**Toaleti/WC** Toilets

Тоалети/WC

**TRANSPORT****What time does the ... leave/arrive?**

Kada ... polazi/dolazi?

Када ... полази/долази?

**boat**

brod брод

**city bus**

gradski autobus градски аутобус

**intercity bus**

međugradski autobus међуградски аутобус

**train**

vlak (C)/voz (B&amp;S) воз

**tram**

tramvaj трамвај

**one-way ticket**

kartu u jednom pravcu карту у једном правцу

**return ticket**

povratnu kartu повратну карту

**1st class**

prvu klasu прву класу

**2nd class**

drugu klasu другу класу

**Where is the bus/tram stop?**

Gdje je autobuska/tramvajska postaja?

Где је аутобуска/трамвајска станица?

**Can you show me (on the map)?**

Možete li mi pokazati (na karti)?

Можете ли ми показати (на карти)?

**Directions****Go straight ahead.**

Idite pravo naprijed. Идите право напред.

**Turn left.**

Skrenite lijevo Скрените лево

**WAXING CYRILLICAL**

The following list shows the letters of the Macedonian and Serbian Cyrillic alphabets. The letters are common to both languages unless otherwise specified.

**CYRILLIC SOUND PRONUNCIATION****А а** a short as the 'u' in 'cut'  
long as in 'father'**Б б** b as in 'but'**В в** v as in 'van'**Г г** g as in 'go'**Д д** d as the 'd' in 'dog'**Ѓ ѓ** j as in 'judge'  
(Macedonian only)**Ђ ђ** j as in 'judge'  
(Serbian only)**Е е** e short as in 'bet'  
long as in 'there'**Ж ж** zh as the 's' in 'measure'**З з** z as in 'zoo'**С с** dz as the 'ds' in 'suds'  
(Macedonian only)**И и** i short as in 'bit'

long as in 'marine'

**Ј ј** y as in 'young'**К к** k as in 'kind'**Л л** l as in 'lamp'**Љ љ** ly as the 'lli' in 'million'**М м** m as in 'mat'**Н н** n as in 'not'**Њ њ** ny as the 'ny' in 'canyon'**О о** o short as in 'hot'  
long as in 'for'**П п** p as in 'pick'**Р р** r as in 'rub' (but rolled)**С с** s as in 'sing'**Т т** t as in 'ten'**Ќ к** ch as in 'check'  
(Macedonian only)**Ћ ћ** ch as in 'check'  
(Serbian only)**У у** u as in 'rule'**Ф ф** f as in 'fan'**Х х** h as in 'hot'**Ц ц** ts as in 'tsar'**Ч ч** ch as in 'check'**џ џ** j as the 'j' in 'judge'**Ш ш** sh as in 'shop'**Turn right.**

Skrenite desno. Скрените десно.

**near/far**

blizu/daleko близу/далеко

**MACEDONIAN**

It's well worth familiarising yourself with the Macedonian Cyrillic alphabet (above). In the pronunciation guides included with the following phrase list, stress within words is marked as italic.

**ACCOMMODATION****hotel**

хотел ho-tel

**guesthouse**

приватно сметување pri-vat-no sme-tu-van-ye

**youth hostel**

младинско mla-din-sko

пренокиште pre-no-chish-te

**camping ground**

кампинг kam-ping

**Do you have any rooms available?**

Да ли имате слободни соби?

da li i-ma-te slo-bod-ni so-bi?

**How much is it per night/per person?**

Која е цената по ноќ/по особа?

ko-ya e tse-na-ta po noch/po o-so-ba?

**Does it include breakfast?**

Да ли е вклучен појадок?

da li e vklyu-chen po-ya-dok?

**a single room**

соба со еден кревет

so-ba so e-den kre-vet

**a double room**

соба со брачен кревет

so-ba so bra-chen kre-vet

**for one/two nights**

за една/два вечери

za ed-na/dva ve-che-ri

**CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS****Hello.**

Здраво. zdravo

**Goodbye.**

Пријатно. pri-a-tno

**Yes.**

Да. da

**No.**

Не. ne

**Excuse me.**

Извинете. iz-vi-ne-te

**Please.**

Молам. mo-lam

**Thank you.**

Благодарам. bla-go-da-ram

**You're welcome.**Нема зошто/  
Мило ми е. ne-ma zosh-to/  
mi-lo mi e**Sorry.**

Опростете ве молам. o-pro-ste-te ve mo-lam

**Do you speak English?**Зборувате ли  
англиски? zbo-ru-va-te li  
ang-li-ski?**What's your name?**

Како се викаете? ka-ko se vi-ka-te?

**My name is ...**

Јас се викам ... yas se vi-kam ...

**SHOPPING & SERVICES****bank**

банка ban-ka

**chemist/pharmacy**

аптека ap-te-ka

**the embassy**

амбасадата am-ba-sa-da-ta

**my hotel**

мојот хотел mo-yot ho-tel

**the market**

пазарот pa-za-rot

**newsagents**

киоск за весници ki-osk za ves-ni-tsi

**the post office**

поштата posh-ta-ta

**stationers**

книжарница kni-zhar-ni-tsa

**the telephone centre**

телефонската te-le-fo-n-ska-ta

централа tsen-tra-la

**the tourist office**

туристичкото биро tu-ris-tich-ko-to bi-ro

**How much is it?**Колку чини тоа?  
kol-ku chi-ni to-a?**What time does it open/close?**Кога се отвора/затвора?  
ko-ga se ot-vo-ra/zat-vo-ra?**TIME, DAYS & NUMBERS****What time is it?**

Колку е часот? kol-ku e cha-sot?

today денес de-nes  
tomorrow утре u-tre  
yesterday вчера vche-ra  
morning утро u-tro  
afternoon попладне po-plad-ne**EMERGENCIES – MACEDONIAN****Help!**

Помош! po-mosh!

**Call a doctor!**

Повикајте лекар! po-vi-kay-te le-kar!

**Call the police!**

Викнете полиција! vik-ne-te po-li-tsi-ya!

**Go away!**

Одете си! o-de-te si!

**I'm lost.**

Јас загинав. jas za-gi-nav

<b>Monday</b>	понеделник	po-ne-del-nik
<b>Tuesday</b>	вторник	vtor-nik
<b>Wednesday</b>	среда	sre-da
<b>Thursday</b>	четврток	chet-vrtok
<b>Friday</b>	петок	pe-tok
<b>Saturday</b>	сабота	sa-bo-ta
<b>Sunday</b>	недела	ne-de-la

<b>0</b>	нула	nu-la
<b>1</b>	еден	e-den
<b>2</b>	два	dva
<b>3</b>	три	tri
<b>4</b>	четири	che-ti-ri
<b>5</b>	пет	pet
<b>6</b>	шест	shest
<b>7</b>	седум	se-dum
<b>8</b>	осум	o-sum
<b>9</b>	девет	de-vet
<b>10</b>	десет	de-set
<b>100</b>	сто	sto
<b>1000</b>	илада	i-la-da

**TRANSPORT****What time does the next ... leave/arrive?**

Кога доаѓа/заминува идниот ...?

ko-ga do-a-ja/za-mi-nu-va id-ni-ot ...?

**boat**

брод brod

**city bus**

автобус градски av-to-bus grad-ski

**intercity bus**

автобус меѓуградски av-to-bus me-ju-grad-ski

**train**

воз voz

**tram**

трамвај tram-vay

**I'd like ...**

Сакам ...

sa-kam ...

**a one-way ticket**

билет во еден правец bi-let vo e-den pra-vez

**SIGNS – MACEDONIAN**

<b>Влез</b>	Entrance
<b>Излез</b>	Exit
<b>Отворено</b>	Open
<b>Затворено</b>	Closed
<b>Информации</b>	Information
<b>Полиција</b>	Police
<b>Полициска Станица</b>	Police Station
<b>Забрането</b>	Prohibited
<b>Клозети</b>	Toilets
<b>Машки</b>	Men
<b>Женски</b>	Women

**a return ticket**

повратен билет pov-ra-ten bi-let

**1st class**

прва класа pr-va kla-sa

**2nd class**

втора класа vto-ra kla-sa

**timetable**

возен ред vo-zen red

**bus stop**

автобуска станица av-to-bus-ka sta-ni-tsa

**train station**

железничка станица zhe-lez-nich-ka sta-ni-tsa

**I'd like to hire a car/bicycle.**Сакам да изнајмам кола/точак.  
sa-kam da iz-nay-mam ko-la/to-chak**Directions****Where is ...?**

Каде је ...? ka-de je ...?

**Go straight ahead.**

Одете право напред. o-de-te pra-vo na-pred

**Turn left/right.**

Свртете лево/десно. svr-te-te le-vo/des-no

**near/far**

блиску/далеку blis-ku/da-le-ku

**SLOVENE****PRONUNCIATION**

Slovene pronunciation isn't difficult. The alphabet consists of 25 letters, most of which are very similar to English. It doesn't have the letters 'q', 'w', 'x' and 'y', but you will find ê, é, ó, ò, č, š and ž. Each letter represents only one sound, with very few exceptions. The letters **l** and **v** are both pronounced like the English 'w' when they

occur at the end of syllables and before vowels. Though words like *trn* (thorn) look unpronounceable, most Slovenes (depending on dialect) add a short vowel like an 'a' or the German 'ö' in front of the 'r' to give a Scot's pronunciation of 'tern' or 'tarn'. Here is a list of letters specific to Slovene:

<b>c</b>	as the 'ts' in 'its'
<b>č</b>	as the 'ch' in 'church'
<b>ê</b>	as the 'a' in 'apple'
<b>e</b>	as the 'a' in 'ago' (when unstressed)
<b>é</b>	as the 'ay' in 'day'
<b>j</b>	as the 'y' in 'yellow'
<b>ó</b>	as the 'o' in 'more'
<b>ò</b>	as the 'o' in 'soft'
<b>r</b>	a rolled 'r' sound
<b>š</b>	as the 'sh' in 'ship'
<b>u</b>	as the 'oo' in 'good'
<b>ž</b>	as the 's' in 'treasure'

**ACCOMMODATION**

<b>hotel</b>	hotel
<b>guesthouse</b>	gostišče
<b>camping ground</b>	kamping

<b>Do you have a ...?</b>	<i>Ali imate prosto ...?</i>
<b>bed</b>	posteljo
<b>cheap room</b>	paceni sobo
<b>single room</b>	enoposteljno sobo
<b>double room</b>	dvoposteljno sobo

<b>How much is it ...?</b>	<i>Koliko stane ...?</i>
<b>per night/person</b>	za eno noč/osebo
<b>for one/two nights</b>	za eno noč/za dve noči

**Is breakfast included?** *Ali je zajtrk vključen?***CONVERSATION & ESSENTIALS**

<b>Good day/Hello.</b>	Dober dan.
<b>Hi.</b>	Pozdravljen. (inf)
<b>Goodbye.</b>	Nasvidenje.
<b>Yes.</b>	Da/Ja. (inf)
<b>No.</b>	Ne.
<b>Please.</b>	Prosim.
<b>Thank you (very much).</b>	Hvala (lepa).

<b>You're welcome.</b>	Prosim/Ni za kaj!
<b>Excuse me.</b>	Oprostite.
<b>What's your name?</b>	Kako vam je ime?
<b>My name is ...</b>	Jaz sem ...
<b>Where are you from?</b>	Od kod ste?
<b>I'm from ...</b>	Sem iz ...



**EMERGENCIES – SLOVENE**

<b>Help!</b>	<i>Na pomoč!</i>
<b>Call a doctor!</b>	<i>Pokličite zdravnika!</i>
<b>Call the police!</b>	<i>Pokličite policijo!</i>
<b>Go away!</b>	<i>Pojdite stran!</i>

**SHOPPING & SERVICES**

<b>Where is the/a ...?</b>	<i>Kje je ...?</i>
<b>bank/exchange</b>	<i>banka/menjalnica</i>
<b>embassy</b>	<i>konzulat/ambasada</i>
<b>post office</b>	<i>pošta</i>
<b>telephone centre</b>	<i>telefonska centrala</i>
<b>tourist office</b>	<i>turistični informacijski urad</i>

**TIME, DAYS & NUMBERS**

<b>today</b>	<i>danes</i>
<b>tonight</b>	<i>nocoj</i>
<b>tomorrow</b>	<i>jutri</i>
<b>in the morning</b>	<i>zjutraj</i>
<b>in the evening</b>	<i>zvečer</i>

<b>Monday</b>	<i>ponedeljek</i>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<i>torek</i>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<i>sreda</i>
<b>Thursday</b>	<i>četrtek</i>
<b>Friday</b>	<i>petek</i>
<b>Saturday</b>	<i>sobota</i>
<b>Sunday</b>	<i>nedelja</i>

<b>1</b>	<i>ena</i>
<b>2</b>	<i>dve</i>
<b>3</b>	<i>tri</i>
<b>4</b>	<i>štiri</i>
<b>5</b>	<i>pet</i>
<b>6</b>	<i>šest</i>
<b>7</b>	<i>sedem</i>

<b>8</b>	<i>osem</i>
<b>9</b>	<i>devet</i>
<b>10</b>	<i>deset</i>
<b>100</b>	<i>sto</i>
<b>1000</b>	<i>tisoč</i>

**TRANSPORT**

**What time does the ... leave/arrive?** *Kdaj odpelje/pripelje ...?*

<b>boat/ferry</b>	<i>ladja/trajekt</i>
<b>bus</b>	<i>avtobus</i>
<b>train</b>	<i>vlak</i>

<b>timetable</b>	<i>spored</i>
<b>train station</b>	<i>železniška postaja</i>
<b>bus station</b>	<i>avtobusno postajališče</i>
<b>one-way (ticket)</b>	<i>enosmerna (vozovnica)</i>
<b>return (ticket)</b>	<i>povratna (vozovnica)</i>

**Directions**

<b>Where is ...?</b>	<i>Kje je ...?</i>
<b>Can you show me on the map?</b>	<i>A mi lahko pokažete na mapi?</i>
<b>How do I get to ...?</b>	<i>Kako pridem do ...?</i>
<b>Is it near/far?</b>	<i>Ali je blizu/daleč?</i>
<b>(Go) straight ahead.</b>	<i>(Pojdite) naravnost naprej.</i>
<b>(Turn) left/right.</b>	<i>(Obrnite) levo/desno.</i>

**SIGNS – SLOVENE**

<b>Vhod</b>	<i>Entrance</i>
<b>Izhod</b>	<i>Exit</i>
<b>Informacije</b>	<i>Information</i>
<b>Odperto</b>	<i>Open</i>
<b>Zaprto</b>	<i>Closed</i>
<b>Prepovedano</b>	<i>Prohibited</i>
<b>Stranišče</b>	<i>Toilets</i>



Also available from Lonely Planet:  
*Eastern Europe Phrasebook*

# Glossary

You may encounter some of the following words during your time in Albania (Alb), Bosnia and Hercegovina (B&H), Croatia (Cro), Macedonia (Mac), Serbia and Montenegro (S&M) and Slovenia (Slo). Some words of indeterminate Slavic origin are marked as (Sla).

**acropolis** – Classical Greek term for the ‘upper town’, often with a castle and temples

**amam** (Mac) – derived from the Turkish word *hammam*, meaning public baths

**an** (Mac) – derived from the Turkish word *han*, meaning inn

**bairam or bajram** – a Turkish word meaning feast, also used for the major Muslim religious festivals in the Western Balkans.

**ban** (Cro) – term for a duke or viceroy

**bb** (Sla) – *bez broja*, literally ‘without a number’, used in street addresses

**Bektashi** – a Muslim sect or Dervish order who revere the Prophet Mohammed’s son-in-law, Ali

**besa** (Alb) – sacred oath, often in relation to a blood feud

**bey** – Turkish term for a governor or lord

**bez broja** (Sla) – see *bb*

**bezistan, bezisten** – Turkish term for a covered market, often connected financially and/or physically to a mosque

**Bogumils** – a heretical sect of the medieval Christian church in Bosnia and Hercegovina

**bura** – cold northeasterly wind in winter

**buregdz/vinica** (B&H) – a bakery selling *burek*

**burek, byrek** – a pie made with various fillings and filo pastry

**burekdžinica** (Mac) – a bakery selling *burek*

**campanile** – bell tower

**čaršija** (Sla) – Slavic word from Turkish term for a market

**čevabdžinica** (B&H/Sla) – a shop selling *čevapčići*

**čevap, čevapčići** (Sla) – grilled minced lamb or beef

**convertible mark** (B&H) – the currency of Bosnia and Hercegovina

**Crna Gora** – Montenegrin name for Montenegro

**Dalmatia** – the half of Croatia bordering the Adriatic Sea

**denar** – Macedonia’s currency

**džamija** (Mac) – a main mosque, from the Arabic word *jami* meaning Friday; a mosque where Friday sermons are heard

**dnevna karta** (Cro) – ‘day ticket’ for public transport

**dolazak** (Cro) – arrival, as in train arrival time

**domaća rakija** (Sla) – homemade spirits

**fis** (Alb) – clan

**FKK** – ‘Freie Körper Kultur’, a German phrase meaning ‘free body culture’, or wear as little as you want. This acronym denotes nudist beaches in Croatia.

**furgon** (Alb) – a minivan which takes paying passengers on a fixed route

**FYROM** – Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, a name used by the UN for Macedonia because of Greek protests, much resented in Macedonia

**garderoba** (Sla) – left-luggage office

**Gheg** (Alb) – dialect of northern Albania and Kosovo

**gostilna** (Slo) – traditional inn serving food

**gostionica** (Sla) – guesthouse, inn

**gostišće** (Slo) – guesthouse, inn

**hammam** – Turkish word for public baths

**han** – Turkish word for an inn

**HDZ** (Cro) – Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica or Croatian Democratic Union, a Croatian political party

**Helveti** – a Muslim sect or brotherhood of Dervishes

**Hrvatska** (Cro) – the Croatian name for Croatia

**iconostasis** – in Orthodox churches, a wall highly decorated with icons separating the congregation from the inner sanctuary

**Illyrians** – early, pre-Slavic inhabitants of the Western Balkans

**Jadrolinija** (Cro) – Croatia’s national coastal ferry company

**kabas** (Alb) – instrumental Albanian polyphonic music

**kafana** (S&M) – café

**kajmak** (Sla) – devastatingly rich cream dish

**kale** – a Turkish word for a fortress

**kanun** (Alb) – a canon of traditional Albanian law and customs

**Karad/-ord/-e** – 19th-century Serbian royal family

**karst** – limestone

**kavana** (Cro) – café

**kebapčići** – a shop selling kebabs, grilled Turkish-style meat dishes

**KFOR** – Kosovo Force, the NATO-led international peacekeeping force in Kosovo

**klapa** (Cro) – Croatian a capella music

**Knez** (Slo) – Grand Duke

**konoba** (Cro) – small family-run bistro

**krstilnica** (Slo) – a baptistery or place for baptisms

**kuna** (Cro) – Croatian currency

**lek** (Alb) – Albanian currency

**maestral** – warm wind which blows over the Mediterranean from the Sahara

**mafil** (Alb) – an indoor balcony where women can watch guests in the guest room

**manastir** (Sla) – monastery or convent

**minaret** – the tower on a mosque from which the call to prayer (*azan*) is broadcast

**musaka** (Sla) – same as Greek moussaka, a baked dish made of layers of meat, potato and eggplant

**NDH** (Cro) – Nezavisna Država Hrvastka, Independent State of Croatia, the Fascist puppet state which nominally ruled half of the Western Balkans during WWII

**ne vozi nedjeljom ni praznikom** (Sla) – term in ferry schedules meaning no services on holidays or Sundays.

**Nevruz** – ancient spring festival of Persian origin, celebrated as a holiday by Bektashi followers

**odlazak** (Sla) – departure, as in departure time of a train

**pasha** – a Turkish term for a military governor

**pivo** (Sla) – beer

**plaža** (Sla) – beach

**polazak** (Sla) – arrival, as in arrival time of a train

**polje** (Sla) – field or plain

**poslovni** (Sla) – express, as in express train

**qilim** (Alb) – a woven rug or kilim

**raki** (Alb) – distilled spirits

**rakija** (Sla) – distilled spirits

**ražnjići** (Sla) – shish kebab

**restauracija** (Sla) – restaurant

**restauracija** (Slo) – restaurant

**ris** (Sla) – lynx

**Roma** – name for the Romany-speaking communities of the Western Balkans, sometimes called Gypsies

**rruga** (Alb) – street

**RS** – Republika Srpska (Serb Republic), the Serbian entity in Bosnia and Hercegovina

**salata** (Sla) – salad

**šar planinec** (Mac) – famously protective Macedonian sheep dog

**sevdah** (B&H) – traditional Bosnian folk music, sometimes dubbed the ‘Bosnian blues’

**SFOR** – Stabilisation Force, the NATO-led international peacekeeping effort in Bosnia and Hercegovina

**sheshi** (Alb) – square or plaza

**Shqipëria** (Alb) – the Albanian name for Albania

**Sigurimi** (Alb) – Albanian Communist-era secret police

**skara** (Mac) – barbecued meat, ubiquitous menu item in Macedonia

**Slavonia** – the inland half of Croatia, between Hungary and Bosnia and Hercegovina

**slivovka** (Slo) – a potent spirit made from plums

**šljivovica** (Sla) – a potent spirit made from plums

**sobe, soba** (Sla) – rooms, meaning rooms for rent

**sofra** – a large metal plate for serving food, from the Turkish word for dinner table

**solata** (Slo) – salad

**stanica** (Mac) – a bus station or train station

**stelae** – Roman funerary stones, a kind of gravestone

**stećci** (B&H) – medieval tombstones in Bosnia and Hercegovina

**sveti** (Sla) – saint and/or holy, eg Sveti Jovan (St John) or Sveti Bogorodica (Holy Mother of God)

**tartufe** (Sla) – truffle, underground fungus adored by gourmets

**tekija** (Sla) – shrine and/or place of worship for Muslim sects such as the Bektashi

**tekke** – see *tekija*

**teqe** (Alb) – see *tekija*

**Tosk** (Alb) – dialect of southern Albania

**Trg** (Sla) – square or plaza

**Trgovski Centar** (Mac) – shopping centre

**turbe** – Muslim gravestones and/or tombs

**turbofolk** – an unholy mix of folk tunes ‘updated’ with Europop music

**UÇK** (Alb) – Ushtria Çlirimtare Kombetare, National Liberation Army, an ethnic Albanian rebel group active in Kosovo and Macedonia in the late 1990s

**ulica** (Sla) – street, abbreviated to ‘ul’

**UNMIK** – United Nations Mission in Kosovo, the interim government of this territory

**Unprofor** – United Nations Protective Force, the UN force which tried to intervene in the Bosnia and Hercegovina war of the early 1990s

**Ustaša** (s), **Ustaše** (pl) – brutal Croatian fascist party installed in power by the Nazis during WWII

**Vlach** – a rural community, traditionally shepherds, who speak a Latin-derived language called Aromanian

**vladika** (S&M) – title of a Montenegrin prince-bishop

**VMRO** (Mac) – Vnatesno-Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija, Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation, early Macedonian liberation movement

**Vojvodina** – the part of Serbia north of the Danube River

**vozi svaki dan** (Cro) – means ‘service every day’ in ferry schedules

**xhamia** (Alb) – mosque

**xhiro** (Alb) – Albania’s highly social evening stroll

**Zimmer frei** – German word for room, meaning rooms for rent

© 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.’