

Know before you go!



Welcome to Croatia!

Our Croatian daily lifestyle

Country Facts:

- OFFICIAL NAME:** Republic of Croatia
- NAME IN LOCAL LANGUAGE:** Hrvatska
- OFFICIAL LANGUAGE:** Croatian
- OTHER LANGUAGES:** Serbian, English, German & Italian widely spoken
- ALPHABET:** Latin
- TYPE OF GOVERNMENT:** Republic/Democracy
- MEMBERSHIP:** EU, SCHENGEN & NATO
- POPULATION:** 3.85 million (2021 census)
- ETNICITY:** Croats (85%) Serbs (10%), Other ethnicities (5%)
- RELIGION:** Catholic (85%) Christian Orthodox (10%), Other (5%)
- CAPITAL:** Zagreb (population:350,000)
- OTHER MAJOR CITIES:** Split (200k), Rijeka (150k), Osijek (100k), Pula (100k), Dubrovnik (40k)
- CURRENCY:** Euro (since January 1, 2023)
- VISA:** Visa required for Asian, African and South American countries/ No Visa for EU, US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia.
Yes for all nationals except EU (<https://etias.com/etias-application>)
- ETIAS:** European Travel Information and Authorization System permit will be required in the future. Please inquire before you make any plans.
- INTERNET CODE:** .hr
- COUNTRY CODE (phone):** +385
- PRINCIPAL INDUSTRIES:** Agriculture, shipbuilding, tourism, tools & machinery mfg.
- PRINCIPAL EXPORTS:** Skilled labor, agricultural products, ships and vessels, tools & machinery
- PRINCIPAL IMPORTS:** Food, Automobiles, Machinery, IT products
- MAJOR ATTRACTIONS:** Adriatic Sea, Plitvice Lakes, Istrian Peninsula, Dalmatian islands and coastline, Dubrovnik
- MUST SEE:** Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Roman Amphitheater in Pula, Plitvice Lakes N.P., Central Istria, Peljesac wine country, Mljet N.P., Diocletian's Palace in Split, Islands of Hvar, Brač, Korčula, Losinj,
- THINGS TO BUY:** Truffle products, leather goods, crystal, genuine Adriatic slat,

Our Croatian Life — A Journey Through the Heart of *Hrvatska*

When you first set foot in Croatia — or *Hrvatska*, as we call it — you'll hear the name roll off the tongue like a gentle wave: *hur-wat-ska*. It's a name steeped in history, once spoken within the borders of former Yugoslavia alongside Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Northern Macedonia, and Kosovo. We share deep roots with our neighbors, though, like any old family, there are still a few lingering disagreements.

Since gaining independence, Croatia has found its place in the modern world — joining the European Union in 2013, and more recently, adopting the Euro in 2023. Yet, despite these milestones, life here still moves to its own rhythm: slower, warmer, and deeply connected to tradition.

Language, Letters & Local Quirks

Croatian is our mother tongue — a Slavic language that dances closely with Serbian, though we proudly write in the Latin alphabet. You'll notice our special letters: *š* (sh), *ž* (zh), *č* (ch), *j* (y), and *c* (zz, like in “pizza”). Street signs can be elusive, especially in rural areas where “BB” (*Bez Broja*) means “No Number.” GPS will help, but it's wise to double-check — sometimes it has a mind of its own.

The Coastline That Stays With You

The Dalmatian coast is a masterpiece of nature — over 1,200 islands scattered like jewels along the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea. Sunlight glints off the water, fishing boats bob in quiet harbors, and stone villages cling to the shoreline as if they've been there forever.

Money Matters & Market Moments

Here, every transaction comes with a receipt — a habit born from our post-Communist shift toward transparency. Credit cards work in most hotels and restaurants, but in tiny cafés, farmers' markets, and family-run shops, cash is king. ATMs are everywhere, but stick to bank-owned ones and watch the fees.

Flavors of Croatia

Croatia is a feast for the senses. You'll taste prosciutto cured to perfection, homemade cheeses, fresh seafood pulled from the Adriatic that morning, and truffle-infused dishes that will make you close your eyes in bliss. Don't miss *štrukli* (cheese dumplings), *ćevapčići* (grilled minced meat), roast lamb, and — of course — Croatian ice cream, found on nearly every corner.

People & Hospitality

You'll find that Croatians are generous with their time and kindness. Ask for directions, and someone might not just tell you — they'll walk or even drive ahead to show you. Younger Croatians often speak English fluently, thanks to subtitled movies, music, and the internet.

Staying Here

Hotels offer all the comforts you'd expect, often with breakfast included. Dress is casual, though respectful attire is appreciated in religious spaces. And if you're visiting from North America, you'll be met with extra warmth — Croatians value your taste for quality and your generous tipping habits.

Staying Connected

Wi-Fi is easy to find, and calling home is straightforward: +385 for Croatia, +1 for the U.S. or Canada. Your cell phone will likely work here, but check with your provider before you travel.

Croatia isn't just a place you visit — it's a place you feel. It's in the salty breeze off the Adriatic, the clink of coffee cups in a sunlit square, the laughter of strangers who treat you like family. And once you've been here, a part of you will always want to come back.

Tipping in Croatia

Tipping is customary but not mandatory; it is seen as a reward for excellent service rather than an obligation. General tipping guidelines:

- **Tour guides:** \$30–50 for 2–3 hours, \$75–100 for a full day
- **Drivers:** \$10 per hour, max \$80, or up to \$250 for a multi-day trip
- **Waiters:** 10–15% of the bill
- **Skippers:** \$150–200 per week
- **Bellboys/baggage porters:** \$2–3 per bag
- **Taxi drivers:** 10% of the fare
- **Hotel maids:** \$10–20 per day per room

Tipping is welcomed in any currency, with U.S. dollars always appreciated.

Dining & Reservations

High-end restaurants require reservations during peak season (June–September), though off-season dining is more flexible. If you haven't pre-booked through Mediterra, your hotel can assist with reservations. If no concierge is available, front desk personnel are usually happy to help.

Want to impress your chef? Offering a drink to the person who prepared your meal often results in a warm greeting and even complimentary desserts or special off-menu treats.

Keeping notes on your dining experiences is encouraged—share your favorite finds with us upon your return!

Croatian Culture & Daily Life

Croatians enjoy discussing politics and lamenting high prices, yet our cafés remain full from morning onward—it's a cultural ritual. If a local invites you for "coffee," it might turn into a cocktail or even a meal.

In Dalmatia, “marenda” is the meal between breakfast and lunch, featuring some of the best food and wine. These gatherings often end with live music, as someone will likely start playing a guitar or mandolin, encouraging everyone to sing along.

If you're invited to a Croatian home for a meal, bring flowers for the hostess—it's a cherished gesture.

Football (soccer) is our passion—don't expect us to be available when a match is on! We also love our cars and driving fast. Passing in dangerous zones? It's part of the thrill.

Our Croatian Life

Croatia, known as “Hrvatska” in Croatian (pronounced hur-wat-ska), was once part of former Yugoslavia alongside Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Northern Macedonia, and Kosovo. While we share deep-rooted connections with our neighboring nations, lingering disputes remain. Croatia joined the European Union on July 1, 2013, as its 28th member—coincidentally, Texas was the 28th state to join the United States. More recently, on January 1, 2023, Croatia adopted the Euro as its official currency, retiring its former “Kuna.”

Today, Croatia is an independent democracy governed by a National Assembly, President, and Prime Minister. Our language, Croatian, is a Slavic language nearly identical to Serbian, though we prefer to view it as distinct—especially since we use the Latin alphabet, while Serbian uses Cyrillic. A helpful guide to our letters: “š” sounds like “sh,” “ž” like “zh,” “č” like “ch,” “j” is always pronounced as “y,” and “c” is pronounced “zz,” as in “pizza.” Everything is written in the Latin alphabet, so reading signs will be easy, though street signs can be difficult to find or read, especially while driving. In rural areas, many homes lack house numbers altogether; if you encounter an address with “BB,” it stands for “Bez Broja,” meaning “No Number.”

GPS is useful but not infallible, sometimes leading travelers to incorrect locations—double-check your entries carefully. Croatia boasts stunning coastal scenery, with the Dalmatian region stretching along the Adriatic Sea, home to over 1,200 islands.

Having emerged from a Communist regime, some merchants developed a habit of bypassing official sales records. To combat this, Croatian Financial Authorities now require every transaction to be registered, receipts handed out to consumers, and even consumers can be checked for proof of purchase—so always retain receipts of your purchases.

Major credit cards are widely accepted at larger hotels, restaurants, and shops, but expect to pay cash in smaller establishments, taxis, farmers’ markets, and family-run businesses. Foreign ATM cards generally work here, though notifying your bank in advance is wise. ATMs are everywhere, but not all are trustworthy—stick to bank-owned machines and read the posted fees before withdrawing money.

Croatia is known for its excellent wines, olive oil, crystal, embroidery, leather goods, processed truffles, and handicrafts. Notable figures born here include scientist Nikola Tesla, sculptor Ivan Meštrović (who taught at Syracuse and Notre Dame), IndyCar racer Mario Andretti, chemist Leo Sternbach (inventor of Valium), and Slavoljub Penkala (who invented the writing pen).

Croatian cuisine is rich and diverse, featuring world-class prosciutto, homemade cheeses, fresh seafood, shellfish, olive oil, and Croatian ice cream (which you’ll find on almost every corner). Other specialties include štrukli (cheese dumplings), ćevapčići (grilled finger-shaped meat sticks), roast lamb, roast veal, and truffle-infused dishes.

English is not our official language, but younger Croatians generally speak it fluently, thanks to the internet, social media, and American entertainment with subtitles. We’re also incredibly hospitable—if you ever need directions, many Croatians will go out of their way to help, sometimes even driving ahead to guide you.

Life in Croatia is relaxed and informal, with no strict dress codes. Even in religious spaces, we trust that visitors will dress appropriately. Wi-Fi is widely available, free in most hotels, and accessible in internet cafés for a small fee. Croatia’s internet country code is **.hr** (for “Hrvatska”), and social media use is widespread.

To call Croatia from abroad, dial +**385**, followed by the city code and phone number. Calling the U.S. or Canada from Croatia requires +**1** before the area code and number. U.S. and Canadian cell phones generally work here, but checking with your carrier beforehand is advisable.

Hotels provide standard amenities, including towels, soap, shampoo, lotion, hairdryers, irons, and laundry service. Breakfast is typically included unless specified otherwise.

North American travelers are especially welcome—Croatians appreciate their preference for quality accommodations, restaurants, and tours, as well as their generosity in tipping.

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