



Croatia

A long, sunny Adriatic coast with more than a thousand islands, Roman palaces, walled medieval towns and turquoise lakes in the hills.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Zagreb

POPULATION

About 3.9 million

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Croatian

CURRENCY

Euro, since 1 January 2023

AREA

About 56,600 km²

GOVERNMENT

Parliamentary republic

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Dinara, 1,831 m, at its Sinjal peak near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina

LONGEST RIVER IN CROATIA

The Sava, about 562 km within Croatia, flowing from Slovenia through Zagreb towards the Danube

NEIGHBOURS

Slovenia, Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro by land. Across the Adriatic it shares a sea border with Italy

DRIVES ON THE

Right

CALLING CODE

+385

A 45-minute trip to Croatia

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Croatia together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: 384 BC: Greeks settle on Hvar; 1808: The end of the Republic of Ragusa; 2023: The euro and Schengen. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Peka (dishes cooked under the bell) and Zagorje štrukli. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Dobro jutro" (Good morning), "Dobar dan" (Good day, hello), "Dobra veer" (Good evening). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/croatia/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Croatia and its cities



- Zagreb (City of Zagreb): St. Mark's Church with its tiled roof, The Museum of Broken Relationships, Its Christmas market
- Split (Split-Dalmatia County): Diocletian's Palace, The seafront Riva, The Split Summer Festival
- Rijeka (Primorje-Gorski Kotar County): The Rijeka Carnival before Lent, Shipbuilding and the port, Trsat Castle above the city
- Osijek (Osijek-Baranja County): The baroque Tvra fortress, Kulen and fiš paprikaš, Kopaki Rit nature park nearby
- Zadar (Zadar County): The Sea Organ, The Roman forum, Maraschino cherry liqueur
- Pula (Istria County): The Pula Arena, Roman temples and gates, Beaches of southern Istria
- Dubrovnik (Dubrovnik-Neretva County): The city walls, The Stradun, the main street of the Old City, Filming locations of Game of Thrones

- Varaždin (Varaždin County): Baroque palaces and churches, Its old fortress, Music and theatre
- Šibenik (Šibenik-Knin County): The Cathedral of St. James, St. Nicholas Fortress, Trips to the Krka waterfalls
- Pore (Istria County): The Euphrasian Basilica and its mosaics, Istrian wine and olive oil, Summer holidays by the sea
- Hvar (Split-Dalmatia County): The Spanish Fortress above the town, Its Venetian-era harbour and walls, Lavender and olive groves
- Karlovac (Karlovac County): Its star-shaped old town, Four rivers and many parks, The road south to Plitvice Lakes

A short history of Croatia

Croatia's story runs from Greek farmers on the islands and a Roman emperor's palace, through a medieval kingdom and the rich city republic of Dubrovnik, to centuries within larger states and independence in 1991.

384 BC **Greeks settle on Hvar**

Greek colonists from the island of Paros founded Pharos, today's Stari Grad on Hvar. They divided the nearby plain into fields with stone walls that are still farmed today.

AD 305 **Diocletian retires to Split**

The Roman emperor Diocletian gave up his throne and retired to the huge palace he had built by the sea near his home region. The city of Split later grew up inside its walls.

AD 925 **Tomislav, the first king**

Tomislav, who had ruled as duke, is called king of the Croats in a letter from Pope John X in 925. He is remembered as the first king of Croatia.

1102 **Union with Hungary**

After the native royal line died out, Croatia entered a personal union with Hungary under King Coloman. Croatia kept its own parliament, the Sabor, and a viceroy called the Ban.

1358 **Dubrovnik becomes a free republic**

Venice gave up its claims to Dalmatia, and Dubrovnik, then called Ragusa, began its long life as a self-governing republic. It grew rich from trade and skilled diplomacy.

1527 **Croatia chooses the Habsburgs**

After the Hungarian king died fighting the Ottomans, the Croatian parliament met at Cetin and elected Ferdinand of Habsburg as king, hoping for protection against the Ottoman advance.

1593 **The Battle of Sisak**

Croatian and Habsburg troops defeated an Ottoman army at Sisak, south of Zagreb. The battle started a long war, after which the Ottoman advance into Croatia was largely stopped.

- 1667** **The great Dubrovnik earthquake**
A powerful earthquake destroyed much of Dubrovnik and killed several thousand people. The city was rebuilt, largely in the Baroque style seen today.
- 1808** **The end of the Republic of Ragusa**
Napoleon's forces had occupied Dubrovnik in 1806, and in 1808 the French marshal Marmont formally abolished the Republic of Ragusa after about 450 years.
- 1918** **Croatia joins a South Slav state**
On 29 October 1918, as Austria-Hungary collapsed, the Croatian parliament cut its ties with it and joined a new state of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. In December this state united with Serbia in the kingdom later called Yugoslavia.
- 1945** **Part of socialist Yugoslavia**
After the Second World War, in which Axis powers occupied Yugoslavia and partisans led by Josip Broz Tito fought them, Croatia became one of the six republics of socialist Yugoslavia.
- 1991** **Croatia declares independence**
On 25 June 1991 the Croatian parliament declared independence from Yugoslavia. Fighting soon broke out, and the war that followed is known in Croatia as the Homeland War.
- 1992** **International recognition**
On 15 January 1992 the countries of the European Community recognised Croatia as an independent state. It joined the United Nations later the same year.
- 1995** **The war ends**
Most of the fighting ended in August 1995. The last area in the east was returned peacefully under a United Nations mission that ended in January 1998. Around 20,000 people died in the war, and many more lost their homes.
- 2013** **Croatia joins the EU**
On 1 July 2013 Croatia became the 28th member of the European Union, ten years after it applied. It had joined NATO in 2009.

2023

The euro and Schengen

On 1 January 2023 the euro replaced the kuna, and Croatia joined the Schengen area, so checks at its land and sea borders with other Schengen countries ended.

What people eat in Croatia

Croatian food is a cuisine of regions. On the coast and islands it is Mediterranean, with olive oil, fish, herbs and wine, and a clear Venetian and Italian touch. Inland, in Zagreb, Zagorje and Slavonia, it is heartier, with lard, paprika, sausages, fresh cheese and cream, shaped by Hungarian, Austrian and Turkish neighbours. A family Sunday lunch usually starts with a clear soup, followed by roast or stewed meat and ends with cake.

Peka (dishes cooked under the bell) (ispod peke)

Dalmatia and the islands, also found across the Balkans

Lamb, veal or octopus with potatoes, slowly cooked in a shallow dish under a heavy metal or clay bell covered with hot embers. The meat cooks in its own juices and comes out very tender.

Zagorje štrukli (zagorski štrukli)

Hrvatsko Zagorje and Zagreb, in the north

Very thin pastry rolled around a filling of fresh cottage cheese, eggs and sour cream, cut into pieces and either boiled or baked with cream until golden.

Pašticada (dalmatinska pašticada)

Dalmatia

A festive dish of beef marinated overnight in wine vinegar, studded with garlic, cloves and bacon, then slowly braised for hours with prunes and sweet prošek wine. It is served in slices in its rich, sweet and sour sauce, usually with gnocchi.

Black risotto (crni rižot)

The Adriatic coast, especially Dalmatia

Rice cooked with cuttlefish, or sometimes squid, and its own ink, which turns the whole dish a deep, glossy black. It is flavoured with garlic, onion, parsley and wine, and usually served without cheese.

Fritule (fritule)

The coast and islands, especially at Christmas

Small, round fried doughnuts flavoured with citrus zest and a splash of rum, often with raisins inside, and dusted with icing sugar.

Soparnik (soparnik)

The Poljica area between Split and Omiš

A thin, round pie of Swiss chard and onion between two sheets of unleavened dough, baked on an open hearth under hot embers and then brushed with olive oil and garlic.

Pasta with Istrian truffles (tjestenina s tartufima)

Istria, especially the forests around Motovun and Buje

The damp forests around Motovun in Istria are known for black and prized white truffles. Istrian restaurants are famous for truffle dishes, above all fresh pasta topped with shaved truffle.

Pršut (pršut)

Dalmatia, Istria and the island of Krk

Dry-cured ham, sliced thin and served with cheese and olives as a starter. Dalmatian pršut is lightly smoked, while Istrian pršut is not smoked.

Pag cheese (paški sir)

The island of Pag

A hard, salty and aromatic sheep's milk cheese, aged for months, often served in thin slices with pršut and olives.

Kulen (slavonski kulen)

Slavonia and Baranja, in the east

A thick, firm pork sausage, spiced with hot red paprika and garlic and slowly dried for months. It is sliced thin and eaten with bread, fresh cheese and peppers.

Fisherman's stew with paprika (fiš paprikaš)

Slavonia and Baranja, along the Drava and Danube

A red, hot river-fish stew made with carp, catfish or pike and plenty of paprika, often cooked outdoors in a kettle over an open fire.

Brudet (brudet or brodet)

Dalmatia, Kvarner and Istria

A fish stew made in one pot with several kinds of fish, tomato, onion, wine and a little vinegar, usually served with polenta to soak up the sauce.

Turkey with mlinci (purica s mlincima)

Zagorje and Slavonia

Roast turkey served with mlinci, thin dried flatbread broken into pieces, softened in hot water and then soaked in the roasting juices.

Samobor cream slice (samoborska kremšnita)

Samobor, near Zagreb

A tall square of light vanilla custard between layers of puff pastry, dusted with icing sugar. Zagreb has its own version with a chocolate glaze on top instead of pastry.

Rakija (rakija)

All of Croatia

A strong fruit brandy made from grapes (loza), plums (šljivovica) or pears, or flavoured with herbs (travarica) or walnuts. It is offered to guests as a sign of welcome.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Before eating, people wish each other 'Dobar tek' (enjoy your meal).
- When glasses are raised, people say 'Živjeli' (cheers).
- Wine is often mixed with water: red wine with still water is called bevanda on the Dalmatian coast, and white wine with sparkling water is gemišť in the north.
- A family Sunday lunch almost always begins with a soup, usually a clear broth with thin noodles.
- Croatians are keen coffee drinkers, and Viennese-style coffee houses can be found all over the country.

Peka (dishes cooked under the bell)

Lamb, veal or octopus with potatoes, slowly cooked in a shallow dish under a heavy metal or clay bell covered with hot embers. The meat cooks in its own juices and comes out very tender.

Ingredients

- 1.2 kg lamb or veal on the bone, in large pieces
- 1 kg waxy potatoes, peeled and cut in large chunks
- 2 onions, cut in wedges, and 1 whole head of garlic, cloves separated
- 2 carrots, cut in chunks
- 2 sprigs of rosemary and a few bay leaves
- 100 ml olive oil and 150 ml dry white wine
- Salt and black pepper

Method

1. Without a real peka, use a heavy casserole dish with a tight lid in the oven. Heat the oven to 180°C.
2. Put the meat, potatoes, onions, garlic and carrots in the dish. Pour over the olive oil and wine, add the herbs and season well with salt and pepper. Toss everything together.
3. Cover with the lid and cook for about 2 hours, stirring gently once or twice, until the meat is very tender.
4. Take off the lid, raise the heat to 200°C and cook for another 20 to 30 minutes so that the potatoes and meat turn golden.
5. Serve straight from the dish with bread and a green salad.

Zagorje štrukli

Very thin pastry rolled around a filling of fresh cottage cheese, eggs and sour cream, cut into pieces and either boiled or baked with cream until golden.

Ingredients

- For the dough: 300 g plain flour, 1 egg, 1 tablespoon oil, a pinch of salt and about 150 ml lukewarm water
- For the filling: 500 g fresh cottage cheese (well drained), 2 eggs, 150 ml sour cream and a pinch of salt
- For baking: 200 ml single cream and 30 g butter

Method

1. Mix the flour, egg, oil, salt and water into a soft, smooth dough. Knead for 5 minutes, brush with oil, cover and rest for 30 minutes.
2. Mix the cottage cheese, eggs, sour cream and salt into a thick filling.
3. On a floured cloth, roll and then gently stretch the dough with your hands until it is very thin and almost see-through.
4. Spread the filling along one long edge, then roll up the dough using the cloth. Cut into pieces about 10 cm long, pressing the ends closed with the edge of a plate.
5. Put the pieces in a buttered baking dish, pour over the cream, dot with butter and bake at 200°C for about 35 to 40 minutes, until golden. Serve hot.

Black risotto

Rice cooked with cuttlefish, or sometimes squid, and its own ink, which turns the whole dish a deep, glossy black. It is flavoured with garlic, onion, parsley and wine, and usually served without cheese.

Ingredients

- 600 g cleaned cuttlefish or squid, cut in small pieces
- 2 to 3 sachets of cuttlefish or squid ink (about 8 g), from a fishmonger
- 300 g risotto rice
- 1 onion, finely chopped, and 3 garlic cloves, crushed
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- 150 ml dry white wine
- About 1 litre hot fish stock
- A handful of chopped parsley, salt and pepper

Method

1. Warm the olive oil in a wide pan and cook the onion gently until soft. Add the garlic for one minute.
2. Add the cuttlefish and cook for about 10 minutes, stirring, until it releases its juices and they start to reduce.
3. Pour in the wine and let it bubble for 2 minutes. Stir in the rice so that every grain is coated.
4. Add the ink and a ladle of hot stock. Keep adding stock a ladle at a time, stirring often, for about 18 to 20 minutes, until the rice is tender and creamy.
5. Season with salt and pepper, stir in the parsley and a little more olive oil, and rest for 2 minutes before serving.

Fritule

Small, round fried doughnuts flavoured with citrus zest and a splash of rum, often with raisins inside, and dusted with icing sugar.

Ingredients

- 250 g plain flour and 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 2 eggs and 50 g sugar
- 150 ml milk or plain yogurt
- Grated zest of 1 lemon and 1 orange
- 1 tablespoon rum (optional) and a handful of raisins
- A pinch of salt
- Sunflower oil for deep frying and icing sugar for dusting

Method

1. Beat the eggs and sugar, then stir in the milk or yogurt, zest, rum and salt.
2. Add the flour and baking powder and mix to a thick, sticky batter. Fold in the raisins.
3. Heat the oil in a deep pan to about 170°C. Never leave hot oil alone, and keep children away from the pan.
4. Drop small spoonfuls of batter into the oil and fry for 2 to 3 minutes, turning, until puffed and golden.
5. Drain on kitchen paper and dust with icing sugar while still warm.

Useful phrases

Dobro jutro

DOH-broh YOO-troh · Good morning

Dobar dan

DOH-bahr dahn · Good day, hello

Dobra veer

DOH-brah VEH-cher · Good evening

Laku no

LAH-koo nohch · Good night

Do vjenja

doh vee-JEH-nyah · Goodbye

Kako ste?

KAH-koh steh · How are you? (polite)

Dobro sam, hvala

DOH-broh sahm, HVAH-lah · I'm fine, thank you

Drago mi je

DRAH-goh mee yeh · Nice to meet you

Hvala lijepa

HVAH-lah LYEH-pah · Thank you very much

Nema na emu

NEH-mah nah CHEH-moo · You're welcome

Oprostite

oh-PROHS-tee-teh · Excuse me

Govorite li engleski?

GOH-voh-ree-teh lee EN-glehs-kee · Do you speak English?

Ne razumijem

neh rah-ZOO-mee-yem · I don't understand

Koliko košta ovo?

KOH-lee-koh KOHSH-tah OH-voh · How much is this?

Gdje je bankomat?

GDYEH yeh BAHN-koh-maht · Where is a cash machine?

Dobar tek

DOH-bahr TEHK · Enjoy your meal

Živjeli!

ZHEE-vyeh-lee · Cheers!

Bilo je ukusno

BEE-loh yeh OO-koos-noh · It was delicious

Raun, molim

RAH-choon, MOH-leem · The bill, please

Things you might not know

1. The word 'cravat' is traced to Croatian soldiers who served in France during the Thirty Years' War (1618 to 1648). Parisians admired their knotted neckerchiefs, and the French word for Croats, 'Croates', became 'cravate'. Croatia celebrates International Necktie Day every 18 October.
2. The spotted Dalmatian dog is named after Dalmatia, the coastal region of Croatia where the breed's origins can be traced.
3. Croatia has more than 1,000 islands, islets, rocks and reefs. One official count gives 1,185, of which 48 islands are inhabited.
4. A 20 km stretch of coast around the town of Neum belongs to Bosnia and Herzegovina and separates Dubrovnik by land from the rest of Croatia. Since 2022 the 2.4 km Pelješac Bridge lets drivers go around it without crossing a border.
5. Croatia's old currency, the kuna, was named after the marten, a small forest animal whose furs were once used in trade. It was replaced by the euro on 1 January 2023 at 7.5345 kuna to the euro.
6. In Zagreb, the engineer Slavoljub Eduard Penkala patented an improved mechanical pencil in 1906 and developed a solid-ink fountain pen in 1907.
7. Ivan Vueti, born on the island of Hvar in 1858, emigrated to Argentina and, as Juan Vucetich, pioneered the use of fingerprints to identify criminals.
8. The inventor Faust Vrani from Šibenik drew a parachute called 'Homo Volans', the Flying Man, in his book of machines published in the early 1600s.
9. Dubrovnik's walls and fortresses played King's Landing in the TV series Game of Thrones.
10. Zagreb has a Museum of Broken Relationships, filled with objects donated by people after a break-up, each with its story. In 2011 it won the Kenneth Hudson Award for Europe's most innovative museum.
11. Croatia's football team, famous for its red and white checked shirts, finished third at the World Cup in 1998 and 2022 and reached the final in 2018.
12. The Baška tablet, a stone slab from around 1100 found on the island of

Krk, is written in the old Glagolitic alphabet. It names King Zvonimir, 'king of the Croats', the first time a Croatian king and the Croatian name appear in the Croatian language.

- 13.** Zadar's Sea Organ has no keyboard and no player: the waves of the Adriatic play it day and night.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Croatia, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Peka (dishes cooked under the bell) or Zagorje štrukli? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- International recognition (1992). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- The war ends (1995). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen The Old City and Walls of Dubrovnik, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Croatia, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Croatia?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. Croatia's old currency, the kuna, was named after the marten, a small forest animal.

- A) True
- B) False

2. Soparnik, a speciality from near Split, is a thin pie filled with Swiss chard.

- A) True
- B) False

3. Croatia adopted the euro as its currency on 1 January 2023.

- A) True
- B) False

4. In Croatian, 'ne' means yes.

- A) True
- B) False

5. What is the classic filling of Zagorje štrukli?

- A) Swiss chard and garlic
- B) Plums and cinnamon
- C) Cottage cheese with eggs and sour cream
- D) Minced meat and rice

6. Croatia's football team reached the final of the 2018 World Cup.

- A) True
- B) False

7. What is the best way to get into Plitvice Lakes National Park in summer?

- A) Buy a ticket online for a set entrance and time
- B) Bring a swimsuit to swim in the lakes
- C) Arrive by boat from the coast
- D) Apply for a special park visa

8. Which piece of clothing takes its name from Croatian soldiers who served in France in the 1600s?

- A) The blazer
- B) The cardigan
- C) The beret
- D) The cravat

9. What is the highest mountain in Croatia?

- A) Dinara
- B) Biokovo
- C) Triglav
- D) Velebit

10. Pag cheese, from the island of Pag, is made from which milk?

- A) Cow's milk
- B) Goat's milk
- C) Buffalo milk
- D) Sheep's milk

11. In several Croatian coastal towns you can be fined for walking around the town centre in swimwear.

- A) True
- B) False

12. What opened in 2022 so that drivers can reach Dubrovnik without crossing the border at Neum?

- A) A tunnel under Neum
- B) A car ferry to Italy
- C) The Pelješac Bridge
- D) A new railway line

Quiz answers

1. True

True. Kuna means marten in Croatian. Marten furs were used in trade in the Middle Ages.

2. True

True. Soparnik is filled with Swiss chard and onion, baked on an open hearth and finished with olive oil and garlic.

3. True

True. The euro replaced the kuna on 1 January 2023, and Croatia joined the Schengen area on the same day.

4. False

False. 'Ne' means no, and 'da' means yes.

5. C) Cottage cheese with eggs and sour cream

Štrukli are thin pastry rolled around cottage cheese with eggs and sour cream, then boiled or baked.

6. True

True. Croatia played France in the 2018 final in Moscow. It also finished third in 1998 and 2022.

7. A) Buy a ticket online for a set entrance and time

Buy a ticket online for a set entrance and time: you must arrive at the entrance you chose within your time slot.

8. D) The cravat

The cravat: the French word for Croats, 'Croates', became 'cravate', after the knotted neckerchiefs of Croatian soldiers in the Thirty Years' War.

9. A) Dinara

Dinara, 1,831 m at its Sinjal peak near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina, is the highest mountain in Croatia. Triglav is the highest mountain of Slovenia.

10. D) Sheep's milk

Pag cheese is a hard sheep's milk cheese. The salty herbs the sheep graze on give it its special taste.

11. True

True. Swimwear and bare chests in town centres can bring on-the-spot fines. Put on a shirt and shorts or a dress when you leave the beach.

12. C) The Pelješac Bridge

The Pelješac Bridge, 2.4 km long, opened in July 2022 and links the mainland with the Pelješac peninsula, bypassing the Neum strip.

Croatia visa page

Name: _____ Date: _____



Next stops

Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____
Country: _____	Country: _____	Country: _____

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<https://worldstroll.com/countries/croatia>