



CROATIAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Geography of Croatia

Outline

- Regions and major cities
- Climate and vegetation
- Demographics
- Rivers
- Lakes
- Mountains
- Protected areas: National Parks and Nature Parks

Location and neighbouring countries



Quick Facts

6.278 km of coastline of the Adriatic Sea (Jadransko more)

1.245 islands (islets and rocks) / 48 inhabited islands

Population: 2011 – 4.284.889

2021 - 3.888.529

Capital: ZAGREB: 684,000

Highest peak: DINARA (1.831 m)

Longest rivers: SAVA (562 km in Cro / 945 km total length)
DRAVA (505 km in Cro / 707 km total length)

5 REGIONS

21 counties

8 NATIONAL PARKS AND 11 NATURE PARKS



5 regions:

1. KONTINENTALNA HRVATSKA
2. SLAVONIJA
3. ISTRA
4. KVARNER
5. DALMACIJA



Climate and vegetation

- Diverse vegetation and high biodiversity: 4500 various plants
- 40% of land is covered by forest (great natural resource + timber industry)
- Species in forests: brown bear, wolf, wild boar, fox, lynx, deer
- 3 types of climate:
 1. Mild-continental in the lowlands - warm and humid
 2. Mountainous - snowfall / Jan -4 C, July 20C
 3. Mediterranean in coastal areas - up to 35C in summer, very windy in winter
 - BURA** blows from mountains and brings clear weather
 - JUGO** – blows from the sea and brings rainy weather

Demographics

- Demographic decline continues since 1991 (Homeland war)
- 4,7 million in 1991 (highest population)
- 4,2 million in 2011
- 3,8 million in 2021 (immigration due to poor social and economic conditions and the so called “brain-drain”)
- Estimated 2-3 million Croats live outside Croatia: EU - Switzerland, France, Germany, Austria, Sweden, Italy; overseas: the USA, Canada, Argentina, Chile, Australia and NZ)

Population

Ethnic composition: homogenic

Croats – 90.4%

Serbs – 4.4%

Minorities: Italians, Hungarians, Bosniaks, Albanians...

Religious composition:

Roman Catholics – 86.3%

Ortodox Christians (Serbs) – 4.4%

Muslims (Bosniaks, Albanians) – 1.5%

Biological composition:

Population is ageing (only 20.9% young people)

Dominance of females (51.5%)

Population distribution: Zagreb area and NW Cro – most densely populated, $\frac{1}{4}$ of Cro population lives in 4 major cities (strong urban tradition with 60% of people living in the cities)



Major cities

- Zagreb (769.944)
- Split (161.312)
- Rijeka (108.622)
- Osijek (96.848)



Zagreb

- **Zagreb is the capital of Croatia.**
- Founded in the Middle Ages (1094)
- a city of green parks and walks
- a rich historical and cultural heritage that has roots in Central European urban culture, enriched by Mediterranean and Balkan traditions.



Split

- **Split** is the main city in Dalmatia.
- Second largest city in Croatia, and the largest city on the Croatia Adriatic coast.
- Roman Emperor Diocletian built his palace on the site of today's Split in 305 AD. **Diocletian's Palace** is well preserved Roman palace located now in the very heart of Split.
- **Brodosplit** is the largest shipyard in Croatia
- **Jadrolinija** – ferries to nearby islands and Italy (Ancona)



Rijeka

- **Rijeka** is the main seaport and the third-largest city
- traces back to 150 AD
- Italian name: Fiume (river)
- famous for shipyards
- The Rijeka Carnival (Croatian: *Riječki karneval*) is held each year in February since 1982, it has become the biggest carnival in Croatia
- A very “hip” city



Osijek

- Osijek is the largest city in the east of Croatia and is economic and cultural centre of Slavonia
- River port; located on the right bank of the Drava River
- First mentioned in 2nd century AD, but most famous for TVRĐA (tvrđava=fortress) from 17th century (built by Austrians against the Turks)
- The greenest city in Croatia – 17 parks



Relief

1. LOWLANDS (plains and hills)
2. MOUNTAINOUS CROATIA
3. COASTAL CROATIA



Rivers

- All minor rivers flow into the SAVA and the DRAVA (2 biggest rivers in Cro)
- The DRAVA forms a natural border with Hungary
- The SAVA and DRAVA flow into the DANUBE -
The DANUBE flows into the Black Sea
- The KRKA, the CETINA and the NERETVA flow into the Adriatic Sea
- City of KARLOVAC is famous as “city of 4 rivers” – used for kayaking, rafting and swimming – pristine nature close to ZG
- RIVERS ARE “THE GREEN BLOODLINE” OF CROATIA – THE MOST PRESERVED AND DIVERSE RIVERS IN EU, STILL FLOW IN FREEDOM



The Sava River

- Flows through Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (natural border) and Serbia (where it flows into the Danube)
- 6 hydroelectric power plants on the Sava in Slovenia
- Navigable for ships from Sisak (eastern Cro) to Belgrade (Serbia)
- Polluted and no longer used for swimming, only fishing



The Sava in modern Zagreb

- Separates NOVI ZAGREB (south of the Sava) with ZAGREB
- Has total of 11 bridges in Zagreb, but most famous 2 bridges accross the Sava:
 1. JADRANSKI MOST – trams connect Zagreb with Novi Zagreb
 2. DOMOVINSKI MOST – newest (2007.) and longest (879 m long, 35 m wide) has 4 car lanes, bike lanes, and planned for future railway

The Sava bridges in Zagreb

JADRANSKI MOST



DOMOVINSKI MOST



The Sava in the 1920s – 1960s Zagreb



The Drava

- Its source is in Italy – flows through Austria and Slovenia – then through Croatia (border between Croatia and Hungary) before it joins the Danube near Osijek.
- one of the most exploited rivers in the world in terms of hydropower, with almost 100% of its water potential energy being exploited (22 hydroelectric power plants on the Drava)
- Also used for swimming, fishing and navigation
- **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve “Mura-Drava-Danube”**, which, once established (by 2024), will be Europe’s largest riverine protected area (700 km)

The Drava Biodiversity

- critically endangered plant species is the green-winged orchid – (used to be a common river plant, but it has gone extinct due to human activities)
- The Drava is home to numerous animal species, especially birds – such as white-tailed eagle and bee-eaters
- The Drava also hosts the greatest fish biodiversity in Croatia, with 70 recorded fish species.
- dragonflies, otters, beavers





The beauty is in the diversity

- **slow lowland rivers** flood huge floodplains
- **short and fast mountainous rivers** that flush on rapids
- rivers in Karlovac region with **travertine waterfalls** and slow, almost **marshy parts with lush vegetation**;
- big Adriatic **rivers in deep barren canyons with waterfalls** that meet the sea
- diverse and untouched oases of life containing preserved biotopes with rare and endangered species on the European level (many endemic species)

Slow lowland rivers

The Drava – one of the last natural lowlands river



The Mura



Karlovac - city that lies on 4 rivers

- The Mrežnica – a river with hundreds of waterfalls:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yONmJXwhrdg>

Activities: rafting, fishing,
swimming, boating

Pristine nature



Picturesque river canyons



THE ZRMANJA CANYON



THE UNA CANYON

Famous for adventure sports

Lakes

There are many natural lakes all over Croatia

Largest lake is VRANSKO JEZERO (in Dalmatia)

Lakes are relatively small, but are an important part of CRO natural heritage:

1. 16 connected lakes in the National Park THE PLITVICE LAKES
2. 7 BAĆINA LAKES in the Neretva region
3. CRVENO I MODRO JEZERO (Red and Blue Lake) in Imotski
4. VISOVAČKO JEZERO (Visovac Lake) on the Krka River



The Vrana Lake (Vransko Jezero)

- The biggest natural lake in Croatia
- Located in Dalmatia
- Part of the Nature Park
- Mixed fresh and salty-water lake
- Fishing, swimming



The Baćina Lakes (Baćinska Jezera)

- authentic cargo boats called "lađa"
- 10km bicycle macadam track around them.
- hotspots for swimming
- natural water spring (the freshest water you've ever tasted)



The Red Lake (Crveno jezero)

- both lakes lie in deep sinkholes formed after the collapse of large caves in centuries past
- CRVENO JEZERO gets the colour from the reflection of the red rocks
- can only be seen from the small viewing platform next to the road (almost vertical cliffs)
- Numerous divers have tried to find the bottom of the red lake, until now they have only succeeded to determine that the red lake continues into a cave 280 meter below the surface.
- A funny thing about the red lake is that is **almost impossible to throw a stone into the water**



The Blue Lake (Modro Jezero)

- cliffs sides up to 900 meters high
- **there is a walking path**, so you can actually walk all the way down
- in the summer - swimming
- And special phenomenon is that it actually dries out from time to time and people play **football** at the bottom of the lake.





The Visovac Lake (Visovačko Jezero)

- Visovac is a little island owned by the Catholic Church, situated in the area of the lower flow of the river Krka between two waterfalls in Krka National Park
- Prior to human habitation of the island, it was only a "White rock" in the middle of the lake. It got today's shape thanks to the work of the priests that brought the land to the shallow water and separated it from the water with a wall, so the island with its vegetation became a "little paradise".



Mountains

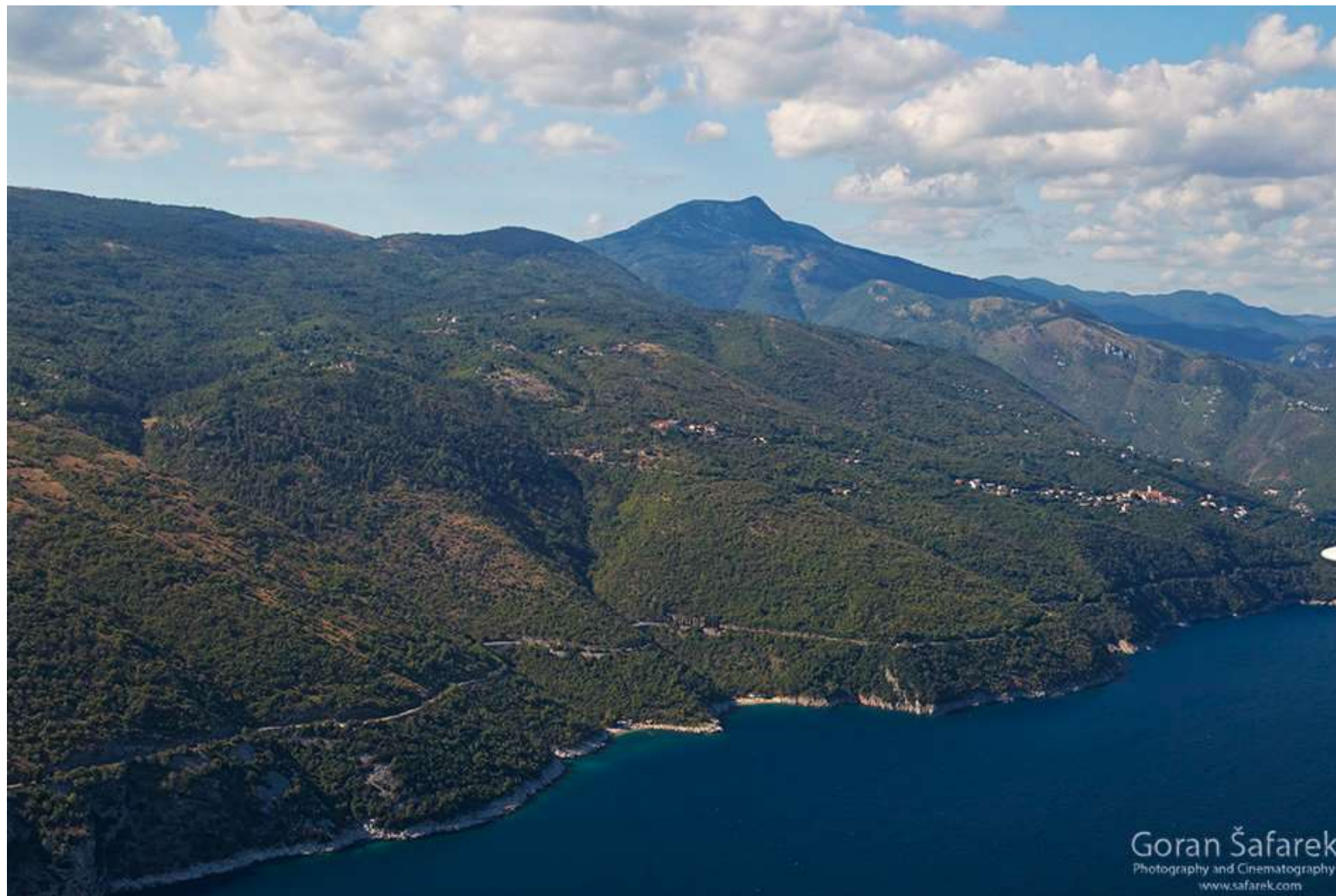
- form a natural “barrier” between lowlands/continental and coastal Croatia
- UČKA – separates Kvarner from Istria (5 km long tunnel – TUNEL UČKA)
- highest peak is DINARA (1831m)
- longest and most impressive mountain: VELEBIT (1757m, 145 km long) - protected nature park with unique vegetation – wealth of plant and animal life; and a UNESCO Biosphere reserve) – 2 tunnels: MALA KAPELA and SVETI ROK leading to Dalmatia
- 2 regions of mountainous Croatia:
 1. GORSKI KOTAR (north-west) – covered in thick evergreen forest
 2. LIKA (south-east) – less vegetation



Gorski kotar - “green mountains”



Učka



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Photography and Cinematography
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Velebit



National park – Sjeverni Velebit



Protected areas

8 NATIONAL PARKS

11 NATURE PARKS



Plitvička Jezera

- Oldest and largest NP in Cro
- Dense forest and 16 lakes cascading into each other with waterfalls
- <https://np-plitvicka-jezera.hr/en/plitvicefullexperience-come-for-the-lakes-stay-for-nature-and-adventure/>
- Beautiful in summer and winter



Mljet

- Known as “the green island” - 90% of the island is forest
- There are 2 salty lakes linked with the sea: Veliko jezero i Malo jezero



The Odysseus' Cave



Brijuni

- 14 islands, 15min boat ride from Pula; old Roman residence
- 1600 years old olive tree
- After WW2, Brijuni became Tito's summer residency - he hosted various world famous people such as **Elizabeth Taylor, Richard Burton, Indira Gandhi**. During Tito's time the island got its **Safari Park** with exotic animals he was given by world's leaders. For example, Tito got an elephant named Lanka (that still resides on the island) from Indira Gandhi.
- Rabbits, peacocks, deer and mouflons roam freely.



Krka

- The Krka river flows into the Adriatic sea through a 75 km long canyon
- 7 waterfalls and many lakes (Visovac Lake – Franciscan monastery)
- Pristine clear water, great for swimming



Risnjak

- Mountain (1528m)
- home to the brown bear the wolf and the lynx (CRO: RIS)
- The **Lynx** is probably the rarest and most hidden beast living in Europe. In Europe is hard to find huge unexploited mountain forests such as the Risnjak. It is one of the last shelters for the lynx in Europe.



Kornati

- The Kornati archipelago – a labyrinth of stone, with 89 islands, islets and rocks in the sea. It is the most indented island group in the Mediterranean.
- Rich underwater world – great for diving – “nautical treasure”





Quiz answers

The population of Croatia as of 2021 is around **400.000** less than in 2011, making a total of **3.8** million. The capital and the biggest city is Zagreb, with the population of **684,000**, out of which **90.4%** are Croats. Croatia has the most indented coastline in Europe (**6.278** km), with **1.245** islands, islets and rocks in the Adriatic sea. Croatia is a low-lying country with **53%** of its territory at an altitude of 0 or more than 200m. The highest peak is Dinara at an altitude of **1.831** m, but the most impressive mountain is definitely Velebit – a national and nature park almost **200** km long. Croatia has **8** national parks.

**You did
great!**

