

= Croatia =

Croatia (/ kroʊʃeɪ / kroh @-@ AY @-@ sh? ; Croatian : Hrvatska [x? ? ?aʔtska?]) , officially the Republic of Croatia (Croatian : Republika Hrvatska , listen) , is a sovereign state at the crossroads of Central Europe , Southeast Europe , and the Mediterranean . Its capital city is Zagreb , which forms one of the country 's primary subdivisions , along with its twenty counties . Croatia covers 56 @, @ 594 square kilometres (21 @, @ 851 square miles) and has diverse , mostly continental and Mediterranean climates . Croatia 's Adriatic Sea coast contains more than a thousand islands . The country 's population is 4 @. @ 28 million , most of whom are Croats , with the most common religious denomination being Roman Catholicism .

The Croats arrived in the area of present @-@ day Croatia during the early part of the 7th century AD . They organised the state into two duchies by the 9th century . Tomislav became the first king by 925 , elevating Croatia to the status of a kingdom . The Kingdom of Croatia retained its sovereignty for nearly two centuries , reaching its peak during the rule of Kings Petar Krešimir IV and Dmitar Zvonimir . Croatia entered a personal union with Hungary in 1102 . In 1527 , faced with Ottoman conquest , the Croatian Parliament elected Ferdinand I of the House of Habsburg to the Croatian throne . In 1918 , after World War I , Croatia was included in the unrecognized State of Slovenes , Croats and Serbs which seceded from Austria @-@ Hungary and merged into the Kingdom of Yugoslavia . The fascist Croatian puppet state backed by the Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany existed during World War II . After the war , Croatia became a founding member and a federal constituent of Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia , a constitutionally socialist state . On 25 June 1991 Croatia declared independence , which came wholly into effect on 8 October of the same year . The Croatian War of Independence was fought successfully during the four years following the declaration .

A unitary state , Croatia is a republic governed under a parliamentary system . The International Monetary Fund classified Croatia as an emerging and developing economy , and the World Bank identified it as a high @-@ income economy . Croatia is a member of the European Union (EU) , United Nations (UN) , the Council of Europe , NATO , the World Trade Organization (WTO) and a founding member of the Union for the Mediterranean . As an active participant in the UN peacekeeping forces , Croatia has contributed troops to the NATO @-@ led mission in Afghanistan and took a non @-@ permanent seat on the UN Security Council for the 2008 ? 2009 term .

The service sector dominates Croatia 's economy , followed by the industrial sector and agriculture . Tourism is a significant source of revenue during the summer , with Croatia ranked the 18th most popular tourist destination in the world . The state controls a part of the economy , with substantial government expenditure . The European Union is Croatia 's most important trading partner . Since 2000 , the Croatian government constantly invests in infrastructure , especially transport routes and facilities along the Pan @-@ European corridors . Internal sources produce a significant portion of energy in Croatia ; the rest is imported . Croatia provides a universal health care system and free primary and secondary education , while supporting culture through numerous public institutions and corporate investments in media and publishing .

= = Etymology = =

The name of Croatia derives from Medieval Latin Croātia ? compare DUX CRUATORVM [sic] (" Duke of the Croats ") attested in the Branimir inscription ? itself a derivation of North @-@ West Slavic * Xrovat- , by liquid metathesis from proposed Common Slavic period * Xorvat- , from proposed Proto @-@ Slavic * Xarw?t- (* Xʔrvat?) or * Xʔrvat? (* xʔrvat?) .

The origin of the name is uncertain , but is thought to be a Gothic or Indo @-@ Aryan term assigned to a Slavic tribe . The oldest preserved record of the Croatian ethnonym * xʔrvat? is of variable stem , attested in the Baška tablet in style zvʔnʔmirʔ kralʔ xrʔvatʔskʔ (" Zvonimir , Croatian king ") .

The first attestation of the Latin term is attributed to a charter of Duke Trpimir from the year 852 . The original is lost , and just a 1568 copy is preserved ? leading to doubts over the authenticity of

the claim . The oldest preserved stone inscription is the 9th @-@ century Branimir Inscription (found near Benkovac) , where Duke Branimir is styled as Dux Cruatorvm . The inscription is not believed to be dated accurately , but is likely to be from during the period of 879 @-@ 892 , during Branimir 's rule .

= = History = =

= = Prehistory and antiquity = =

The area known as Croatia today was inhabited throughout the prehistoric period . Fossils of Neanderthals dating to the middle Palaeolithic period have been unearthed in northern Croatia , with the most famous and the best presented site in Krapina . Remnants of several Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures were found in all regions of the country . The largest proportion of the sites is in the northern Croatia river valleys , and the most significant cultures whose presence was discovered include Star?evo , Vu?edol and Baden cultures . The Iron Age left traces of the early Illyrian Hallstatt culture and the Celtic La Tène culture .

= = Greek and Roman rule = =

Much later , the region was settled by Liburnians and Illyrians , while the first Greek colonies were established on the islands of Kor?ula , Hvar and Vis . In 9 AD the territory of today 's Croatia became part of the Roman Empire . Emperor Diocletian built a large palace in Split when he retired in AD 305 .

During the 5th century , one of the last Emperors of the Western Roman Empire , Julius Nepos , ruled his small empire from the palace . The period ends with Avar and Croat invasions in the first half of the 7th century and destruction of almost all Roman towns . Roman survivors retreated to more favourable sites on the coast , islands and mountains . The city of Dubrovnik was founded by such survivors from Epidaurum .

The ethnogenesis of Croats is uncertain and there are several competing theories , Slavic and Iranian being the most frequently put forward . The most widely accepted of these , the Slavic theory , proposes migration of White Croats from the territory of White Croatia during the Migration Period . Conversely , the Iranian theory proposes Iranian origin , based on Tanais Tablets containing Greek inscription of given names ??????? [??] , ????????? and ????????? (Khorouáthos , Khoróáthos , and Khoróathos) and their interpretation as anthroponyms of Croatian people .

= = Middle Ages = =

According to the work De Administrando Imperio written by the 10th @-@ century Byzantine Emperor Constantine VII , the Croats had arrived in what is today Croatia in the early 7th century , however that claim is disputed and competing hypotheses date the event between the 6th and the 9th centuries . Eventually two dukedoms were formed ? Duchy of Pannonia and Duchy of Croatia , ruled by Liudewit and Borja , as attested by chronicles of Einhard starting in 818 . The record represents the first document of Croatian realms , vassal states of Francia at the time .

The Frankish overlordship ended during the reign of Mislav two decades later . According to the Constantine VII Christianization of Croats began in the 7th century , but the claim is disputed and generally Christianization is associated with the 9th century . The first native Croatian ruler recognised by the Pope was Duke Branimir , who received papal recognition from Pope John VIII on 7 June 879 .

Tomislav was the first ruler of Croatia who was styled a king in a letter from the Pope John X , dating kingdom of Croatia to year 925 . Tomislav defeated Hungarian and Bulgarian invasions , spreading the influence of Croatian kings . The medieval Croatian kingdom reached its peak in the 11th century during the reigns of Petar Kre?imir IV (1058 ? 1074) and Dmitar Zvonimir (1075 ?

1089) . When Stjepan II died in 1091 ending the Trpimirovi? dynasty , Ladislaus I of Hungary claimed the Croatian crown in name of his sister Helena , wife of King Dmitar Zvonimir . Opposition to the claim led to a war and personal union of Croatia and Hungary in 1102 , ruled by Coloman .

For the next four centuries , the Kingdom of Croatia was ruled by the Sabor (parliament) and a Ban (viceroy) appointed by the king . The period saw increasing threat of Ottoman conquest and struggle against the Republic of Venice for control of coastal areas . The Venetians gained control over most of Dalmatia by 1428 , with exception of the city @-@ state of Dubrovnik which became independent . Ottoman conquests led to the 1493 Battle of Krbava field and 1526 Battle of Mohács , both ending in decisive Ottoman victories . King Louis II died at Mohács , and in 1527 , the Croatian Parliament met in Cetin and chose Ferdinand I of the House of Habsburg as new ruler of Croatia , under the condition that he provide protection to Croatia against the Ottoman Empire while respecting its political rights . This period saw the rise of influential nobility such as the Frankopan and Zrinski families to prominence and ultimately numerous Bans from the two families .

= = = Habsburg Monarchy and Austria @-@ Hungary (1538 ? 1918) = = =

Following the decisive Ottoman victories , Croatia was split into civilian and military territories , with the partition formed in 1538 . The military territories would become known as the Croatian Military Frontier and were under direct Imperial control . Ottoman advances in the Croatian territory continued until the 1593 Battle of Sisak , the first decisive Ottoman defeat , and stabilisation of borders .

During the Great Turkish War (1667 ? 1698) , Slavonia was regained but western Bosnia , which had been part of Croatia before the Ottoman conquest , remained outside Croatian control . The present @-@ day border between the two countries is a remnant of this outcome . Dalmatia , the southern part of the border , was similarly defined by the Fifth and the Seventh Ottoman ? Venetian Wars .

The Ottoman wars instigated great demographic changes . Croats migrated towards Austria and the present @-@ day Burgenland Croats are direct descendants of these settlers . To replace the fleeing population , the Habsburgs encouraged the Christian populations of Bosnia and Serbia to provide military service in the Croatian Military Frontier . Serb migration into this region peaked during the Great Serb Migrations of 1690 and 1737 ? 39 .

The Croatian Parliament supported Emperor Charles 's Pragmatic Sanction and signed their own Pragmatic Sanction in 1712 . Subsequently , the emperor pledged to respect all privileges and political rights of Kingdom of Croatia and the empress Maria Theresa made significant contributions to Croatian matters .

Between 1797 and 1809 the First French Empire gradually occupied the entire eastern Adriatic coastline and a substantial part of its hinterland , ending the Venetian and the Ragusan republics , establishing the Illyrian Provinces . In response the Royal Navy started the blockade of the Adriatic Sea leading to the Battle of Vis in 1811 . The Illyrian Provinces were captured by the Austrians in 1813 , and absorbed by the Austrian Empire following the Congress of Vienna in 1815 . This led to formation of the Kingdom of Dalmatia and restoration of the Croatian Littoral to the Kingdom of Croatia , now both under the same crown . The 1830s and 1840s saw romantic nationalism inspire the Croatian National Revival , a political and cultural campaign advocating the unity of all South Slavs in the empire . Its primary focus was the establishment of a standard language as a counterweight to Hungarian , along with the promotion of Croatian literature and culture . During the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 Croatia sided with the Austrians , Ban Josip Jela?i? helping defeat the Hungarian forces in 1849 , and ushering a period of Germanization policy .

By the 1860s , failure of the policy became apparent , leading to the Austro @-@ Hungarian Compromise of 1867 and creation of a personal union between the crowns of the Austrian Empire and the Kingdom of Hungary . The treaty left the issue of Croatia 's status to Hungary , and the status was resolved by the Croatian ? Hungarian Settlement of 1868 , when kingdoms of Croatia and Slavonia were united . The Kingdom of Dalmatia remained under de facto Austrian control , while Rijeka retained the status of Corpus separatum introduced in 1779 .

After Austria @-@ Hungary occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina following the 1878 Treaty of Berlin , the Croatian Military Frontier was abolished and the territory returned to Croatia in 1881 , pursuant to provisions of the Croatian @-@ Hungarian settlement . Renewed efforts to reform Austria @-@ Hungary , entailing federalisation with Croatia as a federal unit , were stopped by advent of World War I.

= = = Yugoslavia (1918 ? 1991) = = =

On 29 October 1918 the Croatian Parliament (Sabor) declared independence and decided to join the newly formed State of Slovenes , Croats and Serbs , which in turn entered into union with the Kingdom of Serbia on 4 December 1918 to form the Kingdom of Serbs , Croats , and Slovenes . The Croatian Parliament never ratified a decision to unite with Serbia and Montenegro . The 1921 constitution defining the country as a unitary state and abolition of Croatian Parliament and historical administrative divisions effectively ended Croatian autonomy . The new constitution was opposed by the most widely supported national political party ? the Croatian Peasant Party (HSS) led by Stjepan Radi? .

The political situation deteriorated further as Radi? was assassinated in the National Assembly in 1928 , leading to the dictatorship of King Alexander in January 1929 . The dictatorship formally ended in 1931 when the king imposed a more unitarian constitution , and changed the name of the country to Yugoslavia . The HSS , now led by Vladko Ma?ek , continued to advocate federalisation of Yugoslavia , resulting in the Cvetkovi? ? Ma?ek Agreement of August 1939 and the autonomous Banovina of Croatia . The Yugoslav government retained control of defence , internal security , foreign affairs , trade , and transport while other matters were left to the Croatian Sabor and a crown @-@ appointed Ban .

In April 1941 , Yugoslavia was occupied by Germany and Italy . Following the invasion the territory , parts of Croatia , Bosnia and Herzegovina , and the region of Syrmia were incorporated into the Independent State of Croatia (NDH) , a Nazi @-@ backed puppet state . Parts of Dalmatia were annexed by Italy and the northern Croatian regions of Baranja and Me?imurje were annexed by Hungary . The NDH regime was led by Ante Paveli? and ultranationalist Usta?e . The regime introduced anti @-@ semitic laws and conducted a campaign of ethnic cleansing and genocide against Serb and Roma inhabitants of the NDH , exemplified by the Jasenovac and Stara Gradi?ka concentration camps .

It is estimated that out of 39 @,@ 000 Jews in the country only 9 @,@ 000 survived ; the rest were either killed or deported to Germany , both by the local authorities and the German Army itself . Croatian and Serbian sources disagree on the exact figures .

Furthermore , a significant number of Serbs were killed by the Usta?e on the territory of the NDH during the war . According to Midlarsky , the number of Serbs killed by the regime was at least half a million , but the figure is contradicted by Bogoljub Ko?ovi? and Vladimir ?erjavi? . Ko?ovi? estimated total number of Serbs killed throughout Yugoslav territory in various circumstances at 487 @,@ 000 , while ?erjavi? put the figure at 530 @,@ 000 . ?erjavi? indicated that 320 @,@ 000 Serbs were killed in the NDH , including 82 @,@ 000 killed among the Yugoslav Partisans , 23 @,@ 000 killed as Axis collaborators , 25 @,@ 000 victims of typhoid epidemic , 45 @,@ 000 killed by Germans and 15 @,@ 000 by Italians . Ko?ovi? 's and ?erjavi? 's total Yugoslav losses are in agreement with estimates made by Mayers and Campbell of the United States Census Bureau . The number of Croats killed in the NDH is estimated to be approximately 200 @,@ 000 , either by the Croatian fascist regime , as members of the armed resistance , or as Axis collaborators . Several thousand of these were killed by the Chetniks ; most Croatian historians place the number of Croats killed by the Chetniks on the territory of modern @-@ day Croatia at between 3 @,@ 000 and 3 @,@ 500 . Croatian estimates for the number of Croats killed by Chetniks in the whole of Yugoslavia range from 18 @,@ 000 to 32 @,@ 000 (both combatants and civilians) .

A resistance movement soon emerged . On 22 June 1941 , the 1st Sisak Partisan Detachment was formed near Sisak , as the first military unit formed by a resistance movement in occupied Europe . This sparked the beginning of the Yugoslav Partisan movement , a communist multi @-@ ethnic

anti @-@ fascist resistance group led by Josip Broz Tito . The movement grew rapidly and at the Tehran Conference in December 1943 the Partisans gained recognition from the Allies .

With Allied support in logistics , equipment , training and air power , and with the assistance of Soviet troops taking part in the 1944 Belgrade Offensive , the Partisans gained control of Yugoslavia and the border regions of Italy and Austria by May 1945 , during which thousands of members of the Ustaše , as well as Croat refugees , were killed by the Yugoslav Partisans .

The political aspirations of the Partisan movement were reflected in the State Anti @-@ fascist Council for the National Liberation of Croatia , which developed in 1943 as the bearer of Croatian statehood and later transformed into the Parliament of Croatia in 1945 , and AVNOJ ? its counterpart at the Yugoslav level .

After World War II , Croatia became a single @-@ party socialist federal unit of the SFR Yugoslavia , ruled by the Communists , but enjoying a degree of autonomy within the federation . In 1967 , Croatian authors and linguists published a Declaration on the Status and Name of the Croatian Standard Language demanding greater autonomy for Croatian language . The declaration contributed to a national movement seeking greater civil rights and decentralization of the Yugoslav economy , culminating in the Croatian Spring of 1971 , suppressed by Yugoslav leadership . Still , the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution gave increased autonomy to federal units , basically fulfilling a goal of the Croatian Spring , and providing a legal basis for independence of the federative constituents .

Following the death of Yugoslav ruler Josip Broz Tito in 1980 , the political situation in Yugoslavia deteriorated , with national tension fanned by the 1986 Serbian SANU Memorandum and the 1989 coups in Vojvodina , Kosovo and Montenegro . In January 1990 , the Communist Party fragmented along national lines , with the Croatian faction demanding a looser federation . In the same year , the first multi @-@ party elections were held in Croatia , with Franjo Tuđman 's win raising nationalist tensions further . Some of Serbs in Croatia left Sabor and declared the autonomy of areas that would soon become the unrecognised Republic of Serbian Krajina , intent on achieving independence from Croatia .

= = = Independence (1991 ? present) = = =

As tensions rose , Croatia declared independence on 25 June 1991 ; however the full implementation of declaration only came into effect on 8 October 1991 . In the meantime , tensions escalated into overt war when the Yugoslav People 's Army (JNA) and various Serb paramilitary groups attacked Croatia . By the end of 1991 , a high @-@ intensity conflict fought along a wide front reduced Croatia to control of only about two @-@ thirds of its territory . The various Serb paramilitary groups then began pursuing a campaign of killing , terror and expulsion against the non @-@ Serb population in the rebel territories , killing hundreds of Croat civilians and forcing a further 170 @, @ 000 from their homes .

On 15 January 1992 , Croatia gained diplomatic recognition by the European Economic Community members , and subsequently the United Nations . The war effectively ended in August 1995 with a decisive victory by Croatia . This was accompanied by the exodus of about 200 @, @ 000 Serbs from the rebel territories , whose lands were subsequently settled by Croat refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina . The remaining occupied areas were restored to Croatia pursuant to the Erdut Agreement of November 1995 , with the process concluded in January 1998 . Croatia became a World Trade Organization (WTO) member on 30 November 2000 . The country signed a Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with the European Union in October 2001 . Croatia became a member of NATO on 1 April 2009 , and joined the European Union on 1 July 2013 .

= = Geography = =

Croatia is located in Central and Southeast Europe , bordering Hungary to the northeast , Serbia to the east , Bosnia and Herzegovina to the southeast , Montenegro to the southeast , the Adriatic Sea to the southwest and Slovenia to the northwest . It lies mostly between latitudes 42 ° and 47 ° N and longitudes 13 ° and 20 ° E. Part of the territory in the extreme south surrounding Dubrovnik is a

practical exclave connected to the rest of the mainland by territorial waters , but separated on land by a short coastline strip belonging to Bosnia and Herzegovina around Neum .

The territory covers 56 @, @ 594 square kilometres (21 @, @ 851 square miles) , consisting of 56 @, @ 414 square kilometres (21 @, @ 782 square miles) of land and 128 square kilometres (49 square miles) of water . It is the 127th largest country in the world . Elevation ranges from the mountains of the Dinaric Alps with the highest point of the Dinara peak at 1 @, @ 831 metres (6 @, @ 007 feet) near the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina in the south to the shore of the Adriatic Sea which makes up its entire southwest border . Insular Croatia consists of over a thousand islands and islets varying in size , 48 of which are permanently inhabited . The largest islands are Cres and Krk , each of them having an area of around 405 square kilometres (156 square miles) .

The hilly northern parts of Hrvatsko Zagorje and the flat plains of Slavonia in the east (which is part of the Pannonian Basin) are traversed by major rivers such as Sava , Drava , Kupa and Danube . The Danube , Europe 's second longest river , runs through the city of Vukovar in the extreme east and forms part of the border with Serbia . The central and southern regions near the Adriatic coastline and islands consist of low mountains and forested highlands . Natural resources found in the country in quantities significant enough for production include oil , coal , bauxite , low @-@ grade iron ore , calcium , gypsum , natural asphalt , silica , mica , clays , salt and hydropower .

Karst topography makes up about half of Croatia and is especially prominent in the Dinaric Alps . There are a number of deep caves in Croatia , 49 of which are deeper than 250 m (820 @. @ 21 ft) , 14 of them deeper than 500 m (1 @, @ 640 @. @ 42 ft) and three deeper than 1 @, @ 000 m (3 @, @ 280 @. @ 84 ft) . Croatia 's most famous lakes are the Plitvice lakes , a system of 16 lakes with waterfalls connecting them over dolomite and limestone cascades . The lakes are renowned for their distinctive colours , ranging from turquoise to mint green , grey or blue .

= = = Climate = = =

Most of Croatia has a moderately warm and rainy continental climate as defined by the Köppen climate classification . Mean monthly temperature ranges between ? 3 ° C (27 ° F) (in January) and 18 ° C (64 ° F) (in July) . The coldest parts of the country are Lika and Gorski Kotar where snowy forested climate is found at elevations above 1 @, @ 200 metres (3 @, @ 900 feet) . The warmest areas of Croatia are at the Adriatic coast and especially in its immediate hinterland characterised by the Mediterranean climate , as the temperature highs are moderated by the sea . Consequently , temperature peaks are more pronounced in the continental areas ? the lowest temperature of ? 35 @. @ 5 ° C (? 31 @. @ 9 ° F) was recorded on 3 February 1919 in ?akovec , and the highest temperature of 42 @. @ 4 ° C (108 @. @ 3 ° F) was recorded on 5 July 1950 in Karlovac .

Mean annual precipitation ranges between 600 millimetres (24 inches) and 3 @, @ 500 millimetres (140 inches) depending on geographic region and prevailing climate type . The least precipitation is recorded in the outer islands (Vis , Lastovo , Bi?evo , Svetac) and in the eastern parts of Slavonia , however in the latter case , it is mostly occurring during the growing season . The maximum precipitation levels are observed on the Dinara mountain range and in Gorski kotar .

Prevailing winds in the interior are light to moderate northeast or southwest , and in the coastal area prevailing winds are determined by local area features . Higher wind velocities are more often recorded in cooler months along the coast , generally as bura or less frequently as sirocco . The sunniest parts of the country are the outer islands , Hvar and Kor?ula , where more than 2700 hours of sunshine are recorded per year , followed by the middle and southern Adriatic Sea area in general and northern Adriatic coast , all with more than 2000 hours of sunshine per year .

= = = Biodiversity = = =

Croatia can be subdivided between a number of ecoregions because of its climate and geomorphology . The country is consequently one of the richest in Europe in terms of biodiversity .

There are four types of biogeographical regions in Croatia ? Mediterranean along the coast and in its immediate hinterland , Alpine in most of Lika and Gorski Kotar , Pannonian along Drava and Danube , and continental in the remaining areas . One of the most significant are karst habitats which include submerged karst , such as Zrmanja and Krka canyons and tufa barriers , as well as underground habitats .

The karst geology harbours approximately 7 @, @ 000 caves and pits , some of which are habitat of the only known aquatic cave vertebrate ? the olm . Forests are also significantly present in the country , as they cover 2 @, @ 490 @, @ 000 hectares (6 @, @ 200 @, @ 000 acres) representing 44 % of Croatian land surface . Other habitat types include wetlands , grasslands , bogs , fens , scrub habitats , coastal and marine habitats . In terms of phytogeography , Croatia is a part of the Boreal Kingdom and is a part of Illyrian and Central European provinces of the Circumboreal Region and the Adriatic province of the Mediterranean Region . The World Wide Fund for Nature divides Croatia between three ecoregions ? Pannonian mixed forests , Dinaric Mountains mixed forests and Illyrian deciduous forests .

There are 37 @, @ 000 known species in Croatia , but their actual number is estimated to be between 50 @, @ 000 and 100 @, @ 000 . The claim is supported by nearly 400 new taxa of invertebrates discovered in Croatia in the first half of the 2000s (decade) alone . There are more than a thousand endemic species , especially in Velebit and Biokovo mountains , Adriatic islands and karst rivers . Legislation protects 1 @, @ 131 species . The most serious threat to species is loss and degradation of habitats . A further problem is presented by invasive alien species , especially *Caulerpa taxifolia* algae .

The invasive algae are regularly monitored and removed to protect the benthic habitat . Indigenous sorts of cultivated plants and breeds of domesticated animals are also numerous . Those include five breeds of horses , five breeds of cattle , eight breeds of sheep , two breeds of pigs and a poultry breed . Even the indigenous breeds include nine endangered or critically endangered ones . There are 444 protected areas of Croatia , encompassing 9 % of the country . Those include eight national parks , two strict reserves , and ten nature parks . The most famous protected area and the oldest national park in Croatia is the Plitvice Lakes National Park , a UNESCO World Heritage Site . Velebit Nature Park is a part of the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere Programme . The strict and special reserves , as well as the national and nature parks , are managed and protected by the central government , while other protected areas are managed by counties . In 2005 , the National Ecological Network was set up , as the first step in preparation of the EU accession and joining of the Natura 2000 network .

= = Politics = =

The Republic of Croatia is a unitary state using a parliamentary system of governance . With the collapse of the ruling communist party in SFR Yugoslavia , Croatia organized its first multi @-@ party elections and adopted its present constitution in 1990 . It declared independence on 8 October 1991 leading to the break @-@ up of Yugoslavia and the country was internationally recognised by the United Nations in 1992 . Under its 1990 constitution , Croatia operated a semi @-@ presidential system until 2000 when it switched to a parliamentary system . Government powers in Croatia are divided into legislative , executive and judiciary powers . The legal system of Croatia is civil law , strongly influenced , as is the institutional framework , by the legal heritage of Austria @-@ Hungary . By the time EU accession negotiations were completed on 30 June 2010 , Croatian legislation was fully harmonised with the Community *acquis* .

The President of the Republic (Croatian : Predsjednik Republike) is the head of state , directly elected to a five @-@ year term and is limited by the Constitution to a maximum of two terms . In addition to being the commander in chief of the armed forces , the president has the procedural duty of appointing the prime minister with the consent of the parliament , and has some influence on foreign policy . The most recent presidential elections were held on 11 January 2015 , when Kolinda Grabar @-@ Kitarović won . She took the oath of office on 15 February 2015 .

The government is headed by the prime minister , who has four deputy prime ministers and 17

ministers in charge of particular sectors of activity . As the executive branch , it is responsible for proposing legislation and a budget , executing the laws , and guiding the foreign and internal policies of the republic . The government is seated at Banski dvori in Zagreb . Since 22 January 2016 , the prime minister of the government is Tihomir Orešković .

The parliament (Sabor) is a unicameral legislative body . A second chamber , the House of Counties , set up in 1993 pursuant to the 1990 Constitution , was abolished in 2001 . The number of Sabor members can vary from 100 to 160 ; they are all elected by popular vote to serve four @-@ year terms . The sessions of the Sabor take place from 15 January to 15 July , and from 15 September to 15 December . The two largest political parties in Croatia are the Croatian Democratic Union and the Social Democratic Party of Croatia .

Croatia has a three @-@ tiered judicial system , made up of the Supreme Court , County courts , and Municipal courts . The Constitutional Court rules on matters regarding the Constitution . In addition there are misdemeanour courts , commercial courts and administrative courts . Law enforcement in Croatia is the responsibility of the Croatian police force , which is under the control of the Ministry of the Interior . In recent years , the force has been undergoing a reform with assistance from international agencies , including the Organization for Security and Co @-@ operation in Europe (OSCE) since its mission to Croatia began on 18 April 1996 .

= = = Administrative divisions = = =

Croatia was first subdivided into counties in the Middle Ages . The divisions changed over time to reflect losses of territory to Ottoman conquest and subsequent liberation of the same territory , changes of political status of Dalmatia , Dubrovnik and Istria . Traditional division of the country into counties was abolished in the 1920s , when the Kingdom of Serbs , Croats and Slovenes and subsequent Kingdom of Yugoslavia introduced oblasts and banovinas respectively .

Communist @-@ ruled Croatia , as a constituent part of post @-@ WWII Yugoslavia , abolished earlier divisions and introduced municipalities , subdividing Croatia into approximately one hundred municipalities . Counties were reintroduced in 1992 legislation , significantly altered in terms of territory relative to the pre @-@ 1920s subdivisions : In 1918 , the Transleithanian part of Croatia was divided into eight counties with their seats in Bjelovar , Gospić , Ogulin , Požega , Vukovar , Varaždin , Osijek and Zagreb , and the 1992 legislation established 14 counties in the same territory .

Since the counties were re @-@ established in 1992 , Croatia is divided into 20 counties and the capital city of Zagreb , the latter having the authority and legal status of a county and a city at the same time . Borders of the counties changed in some instances since , with the latest revision taking place in 2006 . The counties subdivide into 127 cities and 429 municipalities . Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) division of Croatia is performed in several tiers . NUTS 1 level places the entire country in a single unit , while there are three NUTS 2 regions . Those are Northwest Croatia , Central and Eastern (Pannonian) Croatia and Adriatic Croatia . The latter encompasses all the counties along the Adriatic coast . The Northwest Croatia includes the city of Zagreb , Zagreb , Krapina @-@ Zagorje , Varaždin , Koprivnica @-@ Križevci and Međimurje counties , and the Central and Eastern (Pannonian) Croatia includes the remaining areas ? Bjelovar @-@ Bilogora , Virovitica @-@ Podravina , Požega @-@ Slavonia , Brod @-@ Posavina , Osijek @-@ Baranja , Vukovar @-@ Syrmia , Karlovac and Sisak @-@ Moslavina counties . Individual counties and the city of Zagreb also represent NUTS 3 level subdivision units in Croatia . The NUTS Local administrative unit divisions are two @-@ tiered . LAU 1 divisions match the counties and the city of Zagreb in effect making those the same as NUTS 3 units , while LAU 2 subdivisions correspond to the cities and municipalities of Croatia .

= = = Foreign relations = = =

Croatia has established diplomatic relations with 174 countries . As of 2009 , Croatia maintains a network of 51 embassies , 24 consulates and eight permanent diplomatic missions abroad .

Furthermore , there are 52 foreign embassies and 69 consulates in the Republic of Croatia in addition to offices of international organisations such as the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development , International Organization for Migration , OSCE , World Bank , World Health Organization (WHO) , International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) , United Nations Development Programme , United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and UNICEF . In 2009 , the Croatian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration employed 1 @, @ 381 personnel and expended 648 @. @ 2 million kuna (? 86 @. @ 4 million) . Stated aims of Croatian foreign policy include enhancing relations with neighbouring countries , developing international co @- @ operation and promotion of the Croatian economy and Croatia itself .

Since 2003 , Croatian foreign policy has focused on achieving the strategic goal of becoming a member state of the European Union (EU) . In December 2011 , Croatia completed the EU accession negotiations and signed an EU accession treaty on 9 December 2011 . Croatia joined the European Union on 1 July 2013 marking the end of a process started in 2001 by signing of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement and Croatian application for the EU membership in 2003 . A recurring obstacle to the negotiations was Croatia 's ICTY co @- @ operation record and Slovenian blocking of the negotiations because of Croatia ? Slovenia border disputes . The latter was resolved through an Arbitration Agreement of 4 November 2009 , approved by national parliaments and a referendum in Slovenia .

Another strategic Croatian foreign policy goal for the 2000s was NATO membership . Croatia was included in the Partnership for Peace in 2000 , invited to NATO membership in 2008 and formally joined the alliance on 1 April 2009 . Croatia became a member of the United Nations Security Council for the 2008 ? 2009 term , assuming presidency in December 2008 . The country is preparing to join the Schengen Area by 2015 .

= = = Military = = =

The Croatian Armed Forces (CAF) consist of the Army , Navy and Air Force branches in addition to the Education and Training Command and Support Command . The CAF is headed by the General Staff , which reports to the Defence Minister , who in turn reports to the President of Croatia . According to the constitution , the President is commander @- @ in @- @ chief of the armed forces and in case of immediate threat during wartime he issues orders directly to the General Staff .

Following the 1991 ? 95 war defence spending and CAF size have been in constant decline . As of 2005 military spending was an estimated 2 @. @ 39 % of the country 's GDP , which placed Croatia 64th in a ranking of all countries . Since 2005 the budget was kept below 2 % of GDP , down from the record high of 11 @. @ 1 % in 1994 . Traditionally relying on a large number of conscripts , CAF also went through a period of reforms focused on downsizing , restructuring and professionalisation in the years prior to Croatia 's accession to NATO in April 2009 . According to a presidential decree issued in 2006 the CAF is set to employ 18 @, @ 100 active duty military personnel , 3 @, @ 000 civilians and 2 @, @ 000 voluntary conscripts between the ages of 18 and 30 in peacetime .

Compulsory conscription was abolished in January 2008 . Until 2008 military service was compulsory for men at age 18 and conscripts served six @- @ month tours of duty , reduced in 2001 from the earlier scheme of nine @- @ month conscription tours . Conscientious objectors could instead opt for an eight @- @ month civilian service . As of April 2011 the Croatian military had 120 members stationed in foreign countries as part of United Nations @- @ led international peacekeeping forces , including 95 serving as part of the UNDOF in the Golan Heights . As of 2011 an additional 350 troops serve as part of the NATO @- @ led ISAF force in Afghanistan and another 20 with the KFOR in Kosovo .

Croatia also has a significant military industry sector which exported around US \$ 120 million worth of military equipment and armament in 2010 . Croatian @- @ made weapons and vehicles used by CAF include the standard sidearm HS2000 manufactured by HS Produkt and the M @- @ 84D battle tank designed by the ?uro ?akovi? factory . Uniforms and helmets worn by CAF soldiers are also locally produced and successfully marketed to other countries .

== Economy ==

Croatia has a high @-@ income economy . International Monetary Fund data projects that Croatian nominal GDP stands at \$ 52 billion , or \$ 12 @,@ 405 per capita for year 2017 , while purchasing power parity GDP stands at \$ 97 billion , or \$ 23 @,@ 171 per capita . According to Eurostat data , Croatian PPS GDP per capita stood at 61 % of the EU average in 2012 .

Real GDP growth in 2007 was 6 @.@ 0 per cent . The average net salary of a Croatian worker in February 2016 was 5 @,@ 652 HRK per month , and the average gross salary was 7 @,@ 735 HRK per month . As of March 2016 , registered unemployment rate in Croatia was 17 @.@ 2 % .

In 2010 , economic output was dominated by the service sector which accounted for 66 % of GDP , followed by the industrial sector with 27 @.@ 2 % and agriculture accounting for 6 @.@ 8 % of GDP . According to 2004 data , 2 @.@ 7 % of the workforce were employed in agriculture , 32 @.@ 8 % by industry and 64 @.@ 5 % in services . The industrial sector is dominated by shipbuilding , food processing , pharmaceuticals , information technology , biochemical and timber industry . In 2010 , Croatian exports were valued at 64 @.@ 9 billion kuna (? 8 @.@ 65 billion) with 110 @.@ 3 billion kuna (? 14 @.@ 7 billion) worth of imports . The largest trading partner is rest of the European Union . More than half of Croatia 's trade is with other European Union member states .

Privatization and the drive toward a market economy had barely begun under the new Croatian Government when war broke out in 1991 . As a result of the war , the economic infrastructure sustained massive damage , particularly the revenue @-@ rich tourism industry . From 1989 to 1993 , the GDP fell 40 @.@ 5 % . The Croatian state still controls a significant part of the economy , with government expenditures accounting for as much as 40 % of GDP . A backlogged judiciary system , combined with inefficient public administration , especially on issues of land ownership and corruption , are particular concerns . In 2011 the country has been ranked 66th by Transparency International with a Corruption Perceptions Index of 4 @.@ 0 . In June 2013 , the national debt stood at 59 @.@ 5 % of the nation 's GDP .

== Tourism ==

Tourism dominates the Croatian service sector and accounts for up to 20 % of Croatian GDP . Annual tourist industry income for 2014 was estimated at ? 7 @.@ 4 billion . Its positive effects are felt throughout the economy of Croatia in terms of increased business volume observed in retail business , processing industry orders and summer seasonal employment . The industry is considered an export business , because it significantly reduces the country 's external trade imbalance . Since the conclusion of the Croatian War of Independence , the tourist industry has grown rapidly , recording a fourfold rise in tourist numbers , with more than 11 million tourists each year . The most numerous are tourists from Germany , Slovenia , Austria , Italy and the Czech Republic as well as Croatia itself . Length of a tourist stay in Croatia averages 4 @.@ 9 days .

The bulk of the tourist industry is concentrated along the Adriatic Sea coast . Opatija was the first holiday resort since the middle of the 19th century . By the 1890s , it became one of the most significant European health resorts . Later a number of resorts sprang up along the coast and islands , offering services ranging from mass tourism to catering and various niche markets , the most significant being nautical tourism , as there are numerous marinas with more than 16 thousand berths , cultural tourism relying on appeal of medieval coastal cities and numerous cultural events taking place during the summer . Inland areas offer mountain resorts , agrotourism and spas . Zagreb is also a significant tourist destination , rivalling major coastal cities and resorts .

Croatia has unpolluted marine areas reflected through numerous nature reserves and 116 Blue Flag beaches . Croatia is ranked as the 18th most popular tourist destination in the world . About 15 % of these visitors (over one million per year) are involved with naturism , an industry for which Croatia is world famous . It was also the first European country to develop commercial naturist resorts .

== Infrastructure ==

The highlight of Croatia's recent infrastructure developments is its rapidly developed motorway network, largely built in the late 1990s and especially in the 2000s (decade). By September 2011, Croatia had completed more than 1,000 kilometres (680 miles) of motorways, connecting Zagreb to most other regions and following various European routes and four Pan-European corridors. The busiest motorways are the A1, connecting Zagreb to Split and the A3, passing east to west through northwest Croatia and Slavonia. A widespread network of state roads in Croatia acts as motorway feeder roads while connecting all major settlements in the country. The high quality and safety levels of the Croatian motorway network were tested and confirmed by several EuroTAP and EuroTest programs.

Croatia has an extensive rail network spanning 2,722 kilometres (1,691 miles), including 984 kilometres (611 miles) of electrified railways and 254 kilometres (158 miles) of double track railways. The most significant railways in Croatia are found within the Pan-European transport corridors Vb and X connecting Rijeka to Budapest and Ljubljana to Belgrade, both via Zagreb. All rail services are operated by Croatian Railways.

There are international airports in Zagreb, Zadar, Split, Dubrovnik, Rijeka, Osijek and Pula. The largest and busiest is Franjo Tuđman Airport. As of January 2011, Croatia complies with International Civil Aviation Organization aviation safety standards and the Federal Aviation Administration upgraded it to Category 1 rating.

The busiest cargo seaport in Croatia is the Port of Rijeka and the busiest passenger ports are Split and Zadar. In addition to those, a large number of minor ports serve an extensive system of ferries connecting numerous islands and coastal cities in addition to ferry lines to several cities in Italy. The largest river port is Vukovar, located on the Danube, representing the nation's outlet to the Pan-European transport corridor VII.

There are 610 kilometres (380 miles) of crude oil pipelines in Croatia, connecting the Port of Rijeka oil terminal with refineries in Rijeka and Sisak, as well as several transshipment terminals. The system has a capacity of 20 million tonnes per year. The natural gas transportation system comprises 2,113 kilometres (1,313 miles) of trunk and regional natural gas pipelines, and more than 300 associated structures, connecting production rigs, the Okoli natural gas storage facility, 27 end users and 37 distribution systems.

Croatian production of energy sources covers 85 % of nationwide natural gas demand and 19 % of oil demand. In 2008, 47.6 % of Croatia's primary energy production structure comprised use of natural gas (47.7 %), crude oil (18.0 %), fuel wood (8.4 %), hydro power (25.4 %) and other renewable energy sources (0.5 %). In 2009, net total electrical power production in Croatia reached 12,725 GWh and Croatia imported 28.5 % of its electric power energy needs. The bulk of Croatian imports are supplied by the Krško Nuclear Power Plant, 50 % owned by Hrvatska elektroprivreda, providing 15 % of Croatia's electricity.

== Demographics ==

With its population of 4.28 million in 2011, Croatia ranks 125th by population in the world. Its population density stands at 75.9 inhabitants per square kilometre. The overall life expectancy in Croatia at birth was 78 years in 2012. The total fertility rate of 1.5 children per mother, is one of the lowest in the world. Since 1991, Croatia's death rate has continuously exceeded its birth rate. Since the late 1990s, there has been a positive net migration into Croatia, reaching a level of more than 7,000 net immigrants in 2006. According to the 2013 United Nations report, 17.6 % of Croatia's population were foreign born immigrants.

The Croatian Bureau of Statistics forecast that the population may shrink to 3.1 million by 2051, depending on actual birth rate and the level of net migration. The population of Croatia rose steadily from 2.1 million in 1857 until 1991, when it peaked at 4.7 million, with exception of censuses taken in 1921 and 1948, i.e. following two world wars. The natural growth rate of the population is currently negative with the demographic transition completed in the 1970s. In recent years, the Croatian government has been pressured each year to add 40 % to work

permit quotas for foreign workers . In accordance with its immigration policy , Croatia is trying to entice emigrants to return .

The population decrease was also a result of the Croatian War of Independence . During the war , large sections of the population were displaced and emigration increased . In 1991 , in predominantly Serb areas , more than 400 @,@ 000 Croats and other non @-@ Serbs were either removed from their homes by the Croatian Serb forces or fled the violence . During the final days of the war in 1995 , more than 120 @,@ 000 Serbs , and perhaps as many as 200 @,@ 000 , fled the country before arrival of Croatian forces during Operation Storm . Within a decade following the end of the war , only 117 @,@ 000 Serb refugees returned out of 300 @,@ 000 displaced during the entire war . Most of Croatia 's remaining Serbs never lived in areas occupied in the Croatian War of Independence . Serbs have been only partially re @-@ settled in the regions they previously inhabited while some of the settlements previously inhabited by Serbs were settled by Croat refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina , mostly from Republika Srpska .

Croatia is inhabited mostly by Croats (90 @.@ 4 %) and is ethnically the most homogeneous of the six countries of former Yugoslavia . Minority groups include Serbs (4 @.@ 4 %) , Bosniaks , Hungarians , Italians , Slovenes , Germans , Czechs , Romani people and others (5 @.@ 9 %) .

= = = Religion = = =

Croatia has no official religion and Freedom of religion is a right defined by the Constitution of Croatia , which also defines all religious communities as equal in front of the law and separate from the state .

The most predominant religion in Croatia is Christianity and a large majority of the Croatian population declares themselves as members of the Roman Catholic Church . The main religions of Croatia are Roman Catholicism 86 @.@ 28 % , Eastern Orthodoxy 4 @.@ 44 % , Protestantism 0 @.@ 34 % , other Christianity 0 @.@ 30 % , and Islam 1 @.@ 47 % .

= = = Languages = = =

Croatian is the official language of Croatia , and became the 24th official language of the European Union upon its accession in 2013 . Minority languages are in official use in local government units where more than a third of population consists of national minorities or where local legislation defines so . Those languages are Czech , Hungarian , Italian , Ruthenian , Serbian and Slovakian .

According to the 2011 Census , 95 @.@ 6 % of citizens of Croatia declared Croatian as their native language , 1 @.@ 2 % declared Serbian as their native language , while no other language is represented in Croatia by more than 0 @.@ 5 % of native speakers among population of Croatia . Croatian is a South Slavic language . Most Croatian vocabulary is derived from the Slavic branch of the Indo @-@ European language family . Croatian is written using the Latin alphabet . Croatian has three major dialects , with Shtokavian dialect used as the standard Croatian and Chakavian and Kajkavian dialects distinguished by their lexicon , phonology , and syntax .

From 1961 to 1991 , the official language was Serbo @-@ Croatian . Even during socialist rule , Croats often referred to their language as Croato @-@ Serbian (instead of Serbo @-@ Croatian) or as Croatian . Croatian and Serbian variants of the language were not officially recognised as different at the time , but referred to as the west and east version , and had different alphabets : the Latin alphabet and Serbian Cyrillic . Croats are protective of their Croatian language from foreign influences , as the language was under constant change and threats imposed by previous rulers (i.e. Austrian German , Hungarian , Italian and Turkish words were changed and altered to " Slavic " looking / sounding ones) . Efforts made to impose policies to alter Croatian into " Serbo @-@ Croatian " or " South Slavic " language , met resistance from Croats in form of Croatian linguistic purism . Croatian replaced Latin as the official language of the Croatian government in the 19th century .

A 2011 survey revealed that 78 % of Croats claim knowledge of at least one foreign language . According to a survey ordered by the European Commission in 2005 , 49 % of Croats speak

English as the second language , 34 % speak German , and 14 % speak Italian . French and Russian are spoken by 4 % each , and 2 % of Croats speak Spanish . A substantial proportion of Slovenes (59 %) have a certain level of knowledge of Croatian .

=== Education ===

Literacy in Croatia stands at 99 % . A worldwide study about the quality of living in different countries published by Newsweek in August 2010 ranked the Croatian education system at 22nd , to share the position with Austria . Primary education in Croatia starts at the age of six or seven and consists of eight grades . In 2007 a law was passed to increase free , noncompulsory education until 18 years of age . Compulsory education consists of eight grades of elementary school . Secondary education is provided by gymnasiums and vocational schools . As of 2010 , there are 2 131 elementary schools and 713 schools providing various forms of secondary education . Primary and secondary education are also available in languages of recognised minorities in Croatia , where classes are held in Czech , Hungarian , Italian , Serbian and German languages .

There are 84 elementary level and 47 secondary level music and art schools , as well as 92 schools for disabled children and youth and 74 schools for adults . Nationwide leaving exams (Croatian : državna matura) were introduced for secondary education students in the school year 2009 / 2010 . It comprises three compulsory subjects (Croatian language , mathematics , and a foreign language) and optional subjects and is a prerequisite for university education .

Croatia has eight universities , the University of Zagreb , University of Split , University of Rijeka , University of Osijek , University of Zadar , University of Dubrovnik , University of Pula and Dubrovnik International University . The University of Zadar , the first university in Croatia , was founded in 1396 and remained active until 1807 , when other institutions of higher education took over until the foundation of the renewed University of Zadar in 2002 . The University of Zagreb , founded in 1669 , is the oldest continuously operating university in Southeast Europe . There are also 11 polytechnics and 23 higher education institutions , of which 19 are private . In total , there are 132 institutions of higher education in Croatia , attended by more than 145 thousand students .

There are 205 companies , government or education system institutions and non profit organisations in Croatia pursuing scientific research and development of technology . Combined , they spent more than 3 billion kuna (? 400 million) and employed 10 191 full time research staff in 2008 . Among the scientific institutes operating in Croatia , the largest is the Ruđer Bošković Institute in Zagreb . The Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Zagreb is a learned society promoting language , culture , arts and science from its inception in 1866 . Croatia has also produced inventors and two Croats received the Nobel Prize .

=== Health ===

Croatia has a universal health care system , whose roots can be traced back to the Hungarian Croatian Parliament Act of 1891 , providing a form of mandatory insurance of all factory workers and craftsmen . The population is covered by a basic health insurance plan provided by statute and optional insurance . In 2012 , annual healthcare related expenditures reached 21 billion kuna (? 2 billion) . Healthcare expenditures comprise only 6 % of private health insurance and public spending . In 2010 , Croatia spent 9 % of its GDP on healthcare .

Croatia ranked around the 40th in the world in life expectancy with 74 years for men and 81 years for women , and it had a low infant mortality rate of 5 per 1 000 live births .

There are hundreds of healthcare institutions in Croatia , including 79 hospitals and clinics with 23 967 beds . The hospitals and clinics care for more than 700 thousand patients per year and employ 5 205 medical doctors , including 3 929 specialists . There are 6 379 private practice offices , and a total of 41 271 health workers in the country . There are 63 emergency medical service units , responding to more than a million calls . The principal cause of

death in 2008 was cardiovascular disease at 43 @. @ 5 % for men and 57 @. @ 2 % for women , followed by tumours , at 29 @. @ 4 % for men and 21 @. @ 4 % for women . In 2009 only 13 Croatians had been infected with HIV / AIDS and 6 had died from the disease . In 2008 it was estimated by the WHO that 27 @. @ 4 % of Croatians over age of 15 are smokers . According to 2003 WHO data , 22 % of the Croatian adult population is obese .

= = Culture = =

Because of its geographic position , Croatia represents a blend of four different cultural spheres . It has been a crossroad of influences of the western culture and the east ? ever since division of the Western Roman Empire and the Byzantine Empire ? as well as of the Mitteleuropa and the Mediterranean culture . The Illyrian movement was the most significant period of national cultural history , as the 19th @- @ century period proved crucial in emancipation of the Croatian language and saw unprecedented developments in all fields of art and culture , giving rise to a number of historical figures .

The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia is tasked with preserving the nation 's cultural and natural heritage and overseeing its development . Further activities supporting development of culture are undertaken at local government level . The UNESCO inscribed seven sites in Croatia on the World Heritage List . The country is also rich with Intangible culture and holds ten of UNESCO 's World 's intangible culture masterpieces , surpassing all countries in Europe except Spain which possesses an equal number of the listed items . A global cultural contribution from Croatia is the necktie , derived from the cravat originally worn by the 17th @- @ century Croatian mercenaries in France .

As of 2012 , Croatia has 60 professional theatres , 17 professional children 's theatres and 60 amateur theatres visited by more than 1 @. @ 8 million viewers per year . The professional theatres employ 1 @, @ 121 artists . There are 23 professional orchestras , ensembles and choirs in the country , attracting an annual attendance of 294 thousand . There are 162 cinemas with attendance exceeding 4 million . Croatia has 175 museums , visited by nearly 2 @. @ 2 million people in 2009 . Furthermore , there are 1 @, @ 731 libraries in the country , containing 24 @. @ 5 million volumes , and 18 archives .

In 2009 , more than 7 @, @ 200 books and brochures were published , along with 2 @, @ 678 magazines and 314 newspapers . There are also 146 radio stations and 21 TV stations operating in the country . In past five years , film production in Croatia produced up to five feature films and 10 to 51 short films , with an additional 76 to 112 TV films . As of 2009 , there are 784 amateur cultural and artistic associations and more than 10 thousand cultural , educational and artistic events held annually . The book publishing market is dominated by several major publishers and the industry 's centrepiece event ? Interliber exhibition held annually at Zagreb Fair .

Croatia has established a high level of human development and gender equality in terms of the Human Development Index . It promotes disability rights . Recognition of same @- @ sex unions in Croatia has gradually improved over the past decade , culminating in registered civil unions in July 2014 , granting same @- @ sex couples equal inheritance rights , tax deductions and limited adoption rights . However , in December 2013 Croatians voted in favour of a constitutional referendum , backed by conservative groups , defining marriage as a " life union of woman and man " .

= = = Arts and literature = = =

Architecture in Croatia reflects influences of bordering nations . Austrian and Hungarian influence is visible in public spaces and buildings in the north and in the central regions , architecture found along coasts of Dalmatia and Istria exhibits Venetian influence . Large squares named after culture heroes , well @- @ groomed parks , and pedestrian @- @ only zones , are features of these orderly towns and cities , especially where large scale Baroque urban planning took place , for instance in Osijek (Tvr?a) , Vara?din and Karlovac . Subsequent influence of the Art Nouveau was reflected in

contemporary architecture . Along the coast , the architecture is Mediterranean with a strong Venetian and Renaissance influence in major urban areas exemplified in works of Giorgio da Sebenico and Niccolò Fiorentino such as the Cathedral of St. James in Zadar . The oldest preserved examples of Croatian architecture are the 9th -10th century churches , with the largest and the most representative among them being Donatus of Zadar .

Besides the architecture encompassing the oldest artworks in Croatia , there is a long history of artists in Croatia reaching to the Middle Ages . In that period the stone portal of the Trogir Cathedral was made by Radovan , representing the most important monument of Romanesque sculpture from Medieval Croatia . The Renaissance had the greatest impact on the Adriatic Sea coast since the remainder of Croatia was embroiled in the Hundred Years ' Croatian - Ottoman War . With the waning of the Ottoman Empire , art flourished during the Baroque and Rococo . The 19th and the 20th centuries brought about affirmation of numerous Croatian artisans , helped by several patrons of the arts such as bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer . Croatian artists of the period achieving worldwide renown were Vlaho Bukovac and Ivan Meštrović .

The Baška tablet , a stone inscribed with the glagolitic alphabet found on the Krk island and dated to 1100 , is considered to be the oldest surviving prose in Croatian . The beginning of more vigorous development of Croatian literature is marked by the Renaissance and Marko Marulić . Besides Marulić , Renaissance playwright Marin Držić , Baroque poet Ivan Gundulić , Croatian national revival poet Ivan Mažuranić , novelist , playwright and poet August Šenoa , poet and writer Antun Gustav Matoš , poet Antun Branko Šimić , expressionist and realist writer Miroslav Krleža , poet Tin Ujević and novelist and short story writer Ivo Andrić are often cited as the greatest figures in Croatian literature .

== Media ==

The freedom of the press and the freedom of speech are guaranteed by the constitution of Croatia . Croatia ranked 62nd in the 2010 Press Freedom Index report compiled by Reporters Without Borders . The state -owned news agency HINA runs a wire service in Croatian and English on politics , economics , society and culture .

Nevertheless , despite the provisions fixed in the constitution , freedoms of press and speech in Croatia have been classified as partly free since 2000 by Freedom House , the independent nongovernmental organisation that monitors press freedom worldwide . Namely the country has been ranked 85th (of 196 countries) , and the 2011 Freedom House report noted improvement of applicable legislation reflecting Croatia 's accession to the EU , yet pointed out instances of politicians ' attempts to hinder investigative journalism and influence news reports contents , difficulties regarding public access to information , and that most of print media market is controlled by German -owned Europapress Holding and Austrian -owned Styria Media Group . Amnesty International reports that in 2009 in Croatia there was an increase in the number of physical attacks and murders of journalists . The incidents were mainly perpetrated against journalists investigating war crimes and organised crime .

As of October 2011 , there are nine nationwide free -to -air DVB -T television channels , with Croatian Radiotelevision (HRT) , Nova TV and RTL Televizija operating two of the channels each , and the remaining three operated by the Croatian Olympic Committee , Kapital Net d.o.o. and Author d.o.o. companies . In addition there are 21 regional or local DVB -T television channels . The HRT is also broadcasting a satellite TV channel . In 2012 , there were 146 radio stations and 25 TV stations in Croatia . Cable television and IPTV networks are gaining ground in the country , as the cable TV networks already serve 450 thousand people , 10 % of the total population of the country .

There are 314 newspapers and 2 ,678 magazines published in Croatia . The print media market is dominated by Europapress Holding and Styria Media Group who publish their flagship dailies Jutarnji list , Večernji list and 24sata . Other influential newspapers are Novi list and Slobodna Dalmacija . In 2013 , 24sata was the most widely circulated daily newspaper , followed by Večernji list and Jutarnji list .

Croatia 's film industry is small and heavily subsidised by the government , mainly through grants approved by the Ministry of Culture with films often being co -@-@ produced by HRT . Pula Film Festival , the national film awards event held annually in Pula , is the most prestigious film event featuring national and international productions . The greatest accomplishment by Croatian filmmakers was achieved by Du?an Vukoti? when he won the 1961 Academy Award for Best Animated Short Film for Ersatz (Croatian : Surogat) .

= = = Cuisine = = =

Croatian traditional cuisine varies from one region to another . Dalmatia and Istria draw upon culinary influences of Italian and other Mediterranean cuisines which prominently feature various seafood , cooked vegetables and pasta , as well as condiments such as olive oil and garlic . The continental cuisine is heavily influenced by Hungarian , Austrian and Turkish culinary styles . In that area , meats , freshwater fish and vegetable dishes are predominant .

There are two distinct wine @-@ producing regions in Croatia . The continental region in the north @-@ east of the country , especially Slavonia is capable of producing premium wines , particularly whites . Along the north coast , Istrian and Krk wines are similar to those produced in neighbouring Italy , while further south in Dalmatia , Mediterranean @-@ style red wines are the norm . Annual production of wine exceeds 140 million litres . Croatia was almost exclusively a wine @-@ consuming country up until the late 18th century when a more massive production and consumption of beer started , the annual consumption of beer in 2008 was 83 @.@ 3 litres per capita which placed Croatia on a relatively high 15th place among the world 's countries .

= = = Sports = = =

There are more than 400 @,@ 000 active sportspeople in Croatia . Out of that number , 277 @,@ 000 are members of sports associations and nearly 4 @,@ 000 are members of chess and contract bridge associations . Association football is the most popular sport . The Croatian Football Federation (Croatian : Hrvatski nogometni savez) , with more than 118 @,@ 000 registered players , is the largest sporting association in the country . The Prva HNL football league attracts the highest average attendance of any professional sports league in the country . In season 2010 ? 11 , it attracted 458 @,@ 746 spectators .

Croatian athletes competing at international events since Croatian independence in 1991 won 34 Olympic medals , including ten gold medals ? at the 2012 Summer Olympics in discus throw , trap shooting , and water polo ; at the 1996 Summer Olympics and the 2004 Summer Olympics in handball , at the 2000 Summer Olympics in weightlifting and four gold medals in alpine skiing at the 2002 Winter Olympics and the 2006 Winter Olympics . In addition , Croatian athletes won 13 gold medals at world championships , including two in athletics at the World Championships in Athletics held in 2007 and 2009 , one in handball at the 2003 World Men 's Handball Championship , one in water polo at the 2007 World Aquatics Championships , one in rowing at the 2010 World Rowing Championships , six in alpine skiing at the FIS Alpine World Ski Championships held in 2003 and 2005 and two at the World Taekwondo Championships in 2011 and 2007 . Croatian athletes also won the 2005 Davis Cup .

Croatia hosted several major sport competitions , including the 2009 World Men 's Handball Championship , the 2007 World Table Tennis Championships , the 2000 World Rowing Championships , the 1987 Summer Universiade , the 1979 Mediterranean Games and several European Championships . The governing sports authority in the country is the Croatian Olympic Committee (Croatian : Hrvatski olimpijski odbor) , founded on 10 September 1991 and recognised by the International Olympic Committee since 17 January 1992 , in time to permit the Croatian athletes to appear at the 1992 Winter Olympics in Albertville , France representing the newly independent nation for the first time at the Olympic Games .