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The Republic of Croatia is an European country situated along the Adriatic Sea and its hinterland. It stretches from the slopes of the Alps and deep into the Pannonian Valley to the banks of the Danube and Drava rivers. Thus according to its natural characteristics, as well as its cultural and historical development, Croatia can be divided into three geographically distinct zones:
 - the Coastal region - the Mountain region - the Pannonian region -

Like many countries in Western Europe, Croatia was founded on the ruins of the Roman Empire. When they arrived in the territory of present-day Croatia, the Croats were politically organized in principalities. In 925, Croatian King Tomislav united the principalities, establishing the first Croatian state. Later, Croatia retained its legal status and autonomy within the framework of the Hungarian empire, and the Habsburg Monarchy.

The main executive power of Croatian state is the government (in Croatian: "vlada"), presided by the Prime Minister. The Croatian legislature is the Hrvatski sabor.

Area: 56,542 km², with an additional 31,067 km² of territorial waters.

Population: 4.437.460 **Capital:** Zagreb (779.145 inhabitants - the administrative, cultural, academic and communication centre of the country).

Length of coast: 5,835 km - including 4,058 km of island, islet and reef coastline.

Number of islands, islets and reefs: 1,185. The largest islands are those of Krk and Cres. There are 67 inhabited islands.

Population nationality: The majority of the population are Croats. National minorities include Serbs, Moslems, Slovenes, Italians, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, and others.

Official language and alphabet: Croatian language and Latin alphabet.

Religions: The majority of the population are Roman Catholics, and in addition there are a number of those of Orthodox religion, as well as Muslims, and Christians of other denominations.

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Dalmatia lies in Croatia and is a historical region on the eastern coast of the Adriatic Sea.

It stretches from the island of Rab in the northwest to the Bay of Kotor in the southeast. The hinterland, the Dalmatian Zagora, ranges from fifty kilometers in width in the north to just a few kilometers in the south.

Dalmatia signifies not only a geographical unit, but is an entity based on common culture and settlement types, a common narrow eastern Adriatic coastal belt, Mediterranean climate, sclerophyllous vegetation, Adriatic carbonate platform, and karst geomorphology.

On the coasts the climate is Mediterranean, while further inland it is moderate continental. In the mountains, winters are frosty and snowy, while summers are hot and dry. To the south winters are milder. Over the centuries many forest have been cut down and replaced with bush and brush. There is evergreen vegetation on the coast.

Land cultivation is mostly unsuccessful because of the mountains, hot summers and poor soils, although olives and grapes flourish. The rocky karst that borders coastal areas has been producing wine grapes of high quality, especially in new vineyards being planted in the Dingač region.

The Adriatic Sea's high water quality, along with the immense number of coves, islands and channels, makes Dalmatia an attractive place for nautical races, nautical tourism, and tourism in general.

Dalmatia also includes several national parks that are tourist attractions: Paklenica karst river, Kornati archipelago, Krka river rapids and Mljet island.

Split is by far the largest Dalmatian city and the second-largest city of Croatia. It is a Mediterranean city on the eastern shores of the Adriatic Sea, centered around the ancient Roman Palace of the Emperor Diocletian and its bay and port.

Split is also one of the oldest cities in the area. While it is traditionally considered just over 1,700 years old counting from the construction of Diocletian's Palace in AD 305, archaeological research relating to the original founding of the city as the Greek colony of Aspálathos (Ἀσπάλαθος) in the 6th century BC, establishes the urban tradition of the area as being several centuries older.

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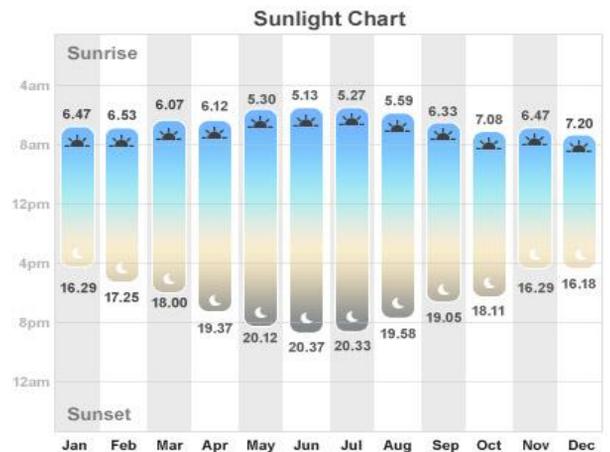
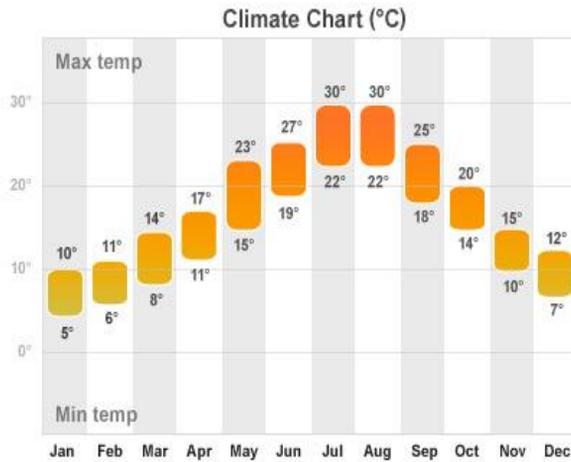
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Croatia's coast and islands from Istra and Kvarner in the north through Dalmatia are governed by a Mediterranean climate although it's usually several degrees cooler in the northern Adriatic than in the south.

In summer, the mean temperature is between 24°C and 26°C along the coast. Yet the Istrian interior is somewhat cooler at 22°C. In winter, the coast has a mean temperature of 2°C in the north and 9°C in the south.

As a rule, summer is the driest season along the coast and winter the rainiest with twice the amount of precipitation as the summer. Croatia's islands can be dry indeed (sometimes way too dry leading to devastating fires). Generally, the islands further from the mainland are the driest. For example, Vis Island averages only 557mm of rainfall per year while Brac Island averages 952mm.

Dubrovnik is one of the rainiest parts of the coast from October through December. Snow is a rare occurrence anywhere along the coast.

The sunniest island in Croatia is Hvar which is sunny over 2700 hours per year. Split, Vela Luka (on Korcula Island) and Dubrovnik are the next sunniest spots in Dalmatia.

Coastal winds - The coastal climate is defined by its winds. The most frequent wind in Dalmatia is the southeasterly Jugo which blows toward the mainland in autumn and winter bringing warmer and moister air with it. The Bura however, is a cold, dry wind which blows from the mainland in sudden and powerful gusts bringing dry air and cooler temperatures. The westerly Maestral is a pleasant summer wind that blows in from the sea, reaching its peak force in early afternoon. It refreshes the air and chases away any mugginess.

F L Y I N F L Y O U T



Airport	Airport Code
Brac Island	BWK
Dubrovnik	DBV
Osijek	OKI
Pula	PUY
Rijeka	RJK
Split	SPU
Zadar	ZAD
Zagreb	ZAG

Zagreb, Croatia's capital is the main entry point into the country. You'll find plenty of flights to Zagreb from all European capitals run by Croatia Airlines, the national carrier, as well as other airlines. Lately, more air routes to Croatia have been opening up and there are good deals on direct flights to other Croatian gateway cities such as Dubrovnik, Pula, Split and Zadar as well as flights to Zagreb.

Of course you'll need to get to the airport but that's no problem. Buses and taxis connect Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Split and Rijeka airports with the town centers. Above you can find Croatia's airports and their airport codes.

Low-Cost Carriers - A lot of low-cost carriers offer flights to Croatia from April to October but there are clearly fewer the rest of the year. The best way to find these cheap flights is to use whichbudget.com which has up-to-date information on all budget carriers to Croatia.

Flights from North America to Croatia - If you're coming from North America, you'll need to be cagey to get the best fares. Remember: there are no non-stop flights between North America and Croatia. The best deals on a round trip flight to Zagreb will involve at least one change in Europe. You may be tempted to fly to London to take advantage of a cheap fare to the Croatian coast. Be aware that some low-cost airlines to Croatia are not flying out of international airports such as Heathrow or Gatwick but use the local airports, Stansted or Luton.

Booking your flights - recommended web sites;
<http://www.farecompare.com>
<http://www.ebookers.com>
<http://www.edreams.com>
<http://www.fly.com>



SPLIT AIRPORT (SPU) <-> SPLIT

www.split-airport.hr

Split Airport is located at the very exit from the town of Kastela, towards Trogir. It is at 20 km distance from Split, and at 6 km from Trogir.

Direct Bus Line

Bus leaves upon arrival of every scheduled flight. Bus tickets are not included in the price of the air ticket. Transfer of passengers to/from Split is organized in cooperation with *Pleso prijevoz* company. Information: www.plesoprijevoz.hr

Taxi

Taxi is available during Split Airport operating hours.
Telephone: +385 (0)21 895 237



Public Transport

Close to Split Airport there is a bus stop of lines No. 37 (Split – Trogir; Trogir – Split) and No. 38 (Split Airport – Kastel Stari – Split; Split – Kastel Stari – Split Airport).
Information: www.promet-split.hr

DUBROVNIK AIRPORT (DBV) <-> DUBROVNIK

www.airport-dubrovnik.hr

Dubrovnik Airport is located 21km (13 miles) to the southeast of Dubrovnik.

Direct Bus Line

Bus leaves upon arrival of every scheduled flight. Bus tickets are not included in the price of the air ticket. Transfer of passengers to/from Dubrovnik is organized in cooperation with the *Atlas transport* company. Leaving from Dubrovnik, bus leaves Gruž bus station 90 minutes before Croatia Airlines' scheduled flight takes off. The journey time to central Dubrovnik is around 30 minutes. Information: e-mail: callcentre@atlas.hr phone: +385 (0)20 442 222; www.atlas-croatia.com

Taxi

Taxis are available on the kerb just outside the terminal building.
Information: phone: +385 (0)800 0970 e-mail: info@taxi-dubrovnik.hr

Public Transport

Public bus company *Libertas* operates bus services from Dubrovnik Airport. Not all buses go to Dubrovnik, some go only to Cavtat 5km (3 miles) away, but there are frequent bus departures from there to Dubrovnik. Bus stops are immediately outside the terminals. Information: tel: +385 (0)800 1910 www.libertasdubrovnik.hr



GENERAL INFORMATION

Currency: Kuna (1 Kuna = 100 Lipa). There are 1, 2, 5, 10, 20, 50 Lipa coins, 1, 2, 5 and 25 Kuna coins and 5, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 500 and 1,000 Kuna banknotes. 1€ = 7,6 KN 1\$ = 6,0 KN

Foreign currencies: can be exchanged at banks, exchange offices, post offices and at most tourist agencies, hotels and camping grounds. Banking hours are 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. from Monday to Friday. On Saturdays banks are open until 1 p.m. In the larger cities some banks are also open on Sundays.

Credit cards: most hotels, restaurants and shops accept credit cards (American Express, Diners Club, Eurocard/Mastercard, Visa, Sport Card International).

Cash dispensing machines you can find everywhere.

Electricity: Voltage of city power grid is 220V, frequency 50HZ

Water: Tap water is potable throughout Croatia.

The telephone code for Croatia is +385.

Time zone: GMT plus one hour in winter and GMT plus two in summer.

Travel documentation: Passport or some other internationally recognized identification document. Tourists may remain in Croatia for up to three months.

HOW TO PHONE



The components of the telephone number are:

- International Access Code (sometimes called Exit Code) for the country from which you are calling (IAC).
- Country code for the country that you are calling (CC).
- Local number (LN). European local numbers can vary in length; whatever digits follow the country code is the telephone number.
- + sign - European telephone numbers are often written with a + sign preceding the number. This presentation is a convenient method of providing the Country Code with the telephone number. When dialing, replace the + sign with the IAC.
- Trunk Code is a digit (usually a zero) that is placed in front of the telephone number and is used only when dialing domestically within Europe. This digit must be omitted when dialing from US or Canada.

The International Access (Exit) Code for the US and Canada is 011.

The International Access (Exit) Code for Croatia is 00.

The Country Code for Croatia is 385.

The Country Code for the US and Canada is 1.

To call the US or Canada from Croatia, dial IAC + CC + LN.

The local telephone number of the friend in Boulder is 970-423-8346. You would dial 00-1-970-423-8346.

To call Croatia from within Croatia, dial LN.

The local telephone number of the Maritime Museum in Croatia is (0) 21-388-951. The number could also be listed as +385(0) 21-388-951. In both cases, you would dial 021-388-951. Unlike the US there is no need to differentiate local and long distance by dialing a 1. Notice that the Trunk Code (0) is dialed.

Traveling with your Cell Phone

For your cell phone to work in Europe you will need a mobile phone that supports the GSM Wireless system (Global System for Mobile Communications). Most cell phone providers do provide GSM capable phones although you may have to call your service provider to have the technology "turned on". If you have T-Mobile or AT&T you will need to "unlock" your GSM phone. If a service provider does NOT provide GSM capable phones, it is possible to rent or buy a separate phone that is GSM capable. Once you have a GSM capable phone, you will need to have international roaming turned on in order to make phone calls. Remember that you will be charged for both outgoing and incoming phone calls and charges range from \$1 to \$1.70 per minute.

Mobal International Cell Phones, <http://www.mobal.com> offers international phones, SIM cards, and international phone service with no monthly plan or fee. The minutes do not expire and you pay for only the minutes used.

Minutes can be added by credit card. If you already have a GSM cell phone you can purchase only the SIM card.

You can buy a Croatian SIM card at newspaper and tobacco stores, small shops and markets for about HRK \$100, which already includes HRK \$100 credit for calls. You can buy additional credits (in HRK \$25, HRK \$50 or HRK \$100 cards) at the same places. The major prepaid package cellular companies are: Vip me, Simpa, Tele2, and Tomato.

Approximate costs are HRK \$2.75 for 1 minute of talking within Croatia, HRK \$6.70 for 1 minute of talking to the USA, HRK \$4.40 - \$5.40 for 1 minute to other European countries, and HRK \$0.50 for a text message anywhere.

Specific prices may vary according to the company. Please note that you may need a Croatian's help in setting up the SIM card as the first instructions are in Croatian, but can be later be changed to English.

Before you travel with your cell phone please check with your cell phone provider and make sure you know the answers to these questions:

1. Is my cell phone GSM capable?
2. If yes, is that option on and can I use it abroad or can I "unlock" the GSM?
3. If it isn't GSM capable can I rent a GSM phone, or where can I get one?
4. What are the international roaming fees for the country I am traveling in?

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Croatia is a safe country. While we always give locks and urge our customers to lock the bikes, for now it never happened there was a bike or something stolen from the bike. Of course, this does not mean you can leave your bike unlocked wherever you want! If you are staying in hotels, check with front desk where to leave bike. If you are staying in the apartments you can lock it in front of the house, but during the evenings, try to bring it inside, if possible!

The most spoken foreign language in Croatia is English. The younger generation speaks English and in all hotels, shops and drug stores English is spoken. German and Italian are also well spoken all over Croatia. In Dalmatia, older people speak fluent German and don't really understand much of English. But don't worry, Croatian people are very friendly and will try to help you however they know. Sometimes they will have to use the language of hands but it will work!

Swimming is possible everywhere you can get in! There are no hazards such as sharks or jelly fish!

Paved roads in Croatia and on our islands are generally in very good conditions! All the towns and villages are signed and it is easy to get from one place to another. Driving in Croatia is on the right hand side. Bikers should be riding on the right side of the right lane! Call 112 in the following cases:

- if you need urgent or vital medical assistance;
- for assistance of fire fighting services;
- for assistance of mountain rescue services;

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General tips for cycling

Always wear a helmet! It is important to maintain the proper level of hydration when bicycling. During a multi-day bicycle tours, it is easy to become partially dehydrated. If that happens, you will have less power, will be less efficient and are more likely to get sick or have heat related problems. Drink before the ride (starting the day with juice or water with breakfast), Make sure you drink enough during the ride (1 bottle per hour at a minimum) and drink after the ride! Tap water is drinkable in Croatia. Make sure you always have enough water before your ride. Carry food and a couple of water bottles so that you can eat and drink at regular intervals.

Keep your tires inflated to the limit indicated on the side of the tire. An under-inflated tire requires more effort to turn and is more prone to blowouts. We always check tires before our bikes leave the shop!

If riding in group, ride in single file.

Avoid pulling too hard on the front brake lever. Brake smoothly! Hard braking is a common cause of cycling injuries. This can cause the brakes to lock and the rider to fall over the handlebars

When cycling past parked cars try to give them a buffer of at least one meter (three feet) in case a door is suddenly opened, otherwise you may take the door prize.

Don't forget sunscreen.

Don't wear headphones. You need to hear what's going on around you.

Flag your intention to turn by hand signaling

Ride in a predictable way, about one meter out from parked cars.

Always wear brightly colored clothing. It is harder for motorists to see you if you are dressed in dark or dull colors. Fluorescent fabrics markedly increase your visibility to other road users. When in doubt, walk. Biking can really be dangerous. If a hill looks too steep or a curve too tricky, get off.

If you are not in a good shape, it is always better to spin faster rather than ride in hard gear thinking you will reach your destination or climb the hill faster. When pedaling hard your muscles get cramps, you lose your power faster, and probably will not recover enough for tomorrow's ride!

We suggest having a traveler's insurance for the bike tour.

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PACKING LIST

Clothing

Clean Synthetic/cotton T-shirt, Fleece Jacket/vest, Casual dress clothing for dinners/evenings, Dress shoes

Swimsuit, Sandals, Bike Clothing, Waterproof and wind resistant jacket and pants (1 set), Waterproof socks (if biking in early spring or autumn), Seat – if you are used to your own, bring it and we will mount it on your bike, Good quality walking/biking shoes with socks or bike shoes with clips and your pedals (SPD,LOOK or similar), Long and short-sleeved t-shirts, Bike gloves, mittens + liners (1 pair, if biking in early spring our autumn), Padded shorts and bike jerseys (2-3)

Side mirror if desired and you are used to have it on the bike

Helmet – if you prefer to use your own, otherwise we can provide one

Other Items

Sports/Energy drink mixes, Driving license, Medications, Airline and/or rail tickets, Passport - including a photocopy, Wallet, Credit cards, Cash (in bars and simple restaurants it is common they do not accept CC), Identification, Emergency contact info – please sent the contact to info@meridien.hr, Photographic equipment including charger, Insect repellent, Sunscreen, Sunglasses and other sun protection gear, lip balm Travel Power Adapter, contact lenses or eyeglasses (+ case)

Toiletries / First aid

Soap/Shampoo, deodorant, toothbrush + paste, skin cream, nail clippers, hair brush, razor + shaving cream, woman's hygiene products, ear plugs, prescription medication, multi-vitamins.

Band-aids, first aid ointment, adhesive first aid tape, blister bandages, alcohol wipes, cotton swabs, compress pads, ibuprofen, anti itch cream, muscle relief cream, anti-diarrheal tabs, zinc tablets. Sports injury cloth bandage, neoprene knee/ankle wrap

FOOD AND DRINK

FOOD

Dalmatia is a land where cultures collided bringing together the traditions of Orient and cuisine of Venetian nobility...each with a distinctive personality and history. Along the Dalmatian Coast the cuisine has a definite Mediterranean flavor with world class olive oils superb wines and seafood. Travel a short distance into the hinterland, and you will find meats and vegetables, and even bread baked under the peka – traditional technique dating back millennia. On the islands, cheeses and lamb grilled on a spit are served in family owned konobas or taverns... We invite you to explore the tastes of Dalmatia...a land of thousands of islands, of history, beauty and mystery. And yes, a land with a rich culinary history which many people have yet to discover.

Croatian standard fare is similar to many other central European or Mediterranean countries (pizza, pasta, meat dishes, fish). All food is safe to eat as restaurants are regularly inspected, and there is no problem with drinking water. Unsurprisingly, seafood is a specialty along the Croatian coastline and the islands.

Hotel breakfasts generally include coffee, tea, bread, butter, jam, paté, cheese, and ham. We try to ensure that our hotels provide a substantial breakfast for cycling, and so ask them to include fruit, cereal, milk and maybe yogurt. If you are on your own and need more sustenance, you can always go to the supermarket to buy yogurt or cheese.

You can also find good snacks and pastries at Slasticarna, small pastry shops. Look for apple, cheese or cherry strudel, 'Croatian' donuts with a bit of marmalade inside, Chocolate donut, or "Pasta", a cream based pastry.

For quick lunches on the road, you can go to a Pekara (bakery) and try Burek, a savory pastry filled with cheese or meat and often eaten as a "fast food" item. It may also be eaten with yogurt and is made of thin dough layers that are stuffed and then rolled and cut into spirals. Another famous fast food item in Croatia is Cevapcici. Originally from Bosnia, this is a delicious dish of grilled minced meat, found in the countries of the Former Yugoslavia. Cevapcici may be served on a plate or in a flatbread sandwich (then called a lepinja), often with chopped onions, a local type of sour cream (kajmak), a relish made of bell peppers, eggplant, chili and garlic (ajvar) cottage cheese, and so on.

For sit down meals at dinner or lunch you can go to fancier restaurants or to the local pub/eatery, the "Konoba." Konobas generally have traditionally prepared dishes, made with natural home-grown ingredients and served in pleasant local surroundings. Service may be lower quality than in restaurants, but it is an authentic meal.

“Peka”

Peka is one of the best known traditional Croatian dishes. Though simple at first glance, «Peka» requires a great deal of skill and experience. Peka is a baked dish with meat and vegetables made in a pot or a tray, the pot is put into the embers of a fireplace, in many houses here in Dalmatia, especially on the country side, you have a special place in the barn or at the ground floor of the house for preparing the Peka. Dishes under the lid are some of the top gastronomic offers in the Dalmatian cuisine, food prepared under cripnja (this is Dalmatian term for the special bell shaped lid, which is put over the pot/tray, for cooking the Peka). The food is easy to prepare, only you have to catch the “hand” for the right mix of ingredients ... and success is guaranteed! For the food prepared in the embers of a fireplace, we can use all types of meat, octopus, fish, and squid.

Octopus Peka – Octopus under the bell

Ingredients:

* Peka from Octopus 1.5-2 kg octopus * 0,8-1 kg potatoes * 4 cloves garlic * 2 dl olive oil
* Salt * Pepper * Sprig fresh rosemary * if desired you can add more vegetables
* 1 dl white wine

Preparation:

All the ingredients except the wine to put in a flat round tray and put under cripnja (iron bell fireplace), and left an hour under the embers. After an hour of baking, stir the octopus and potatoes and add a deciliter white wine, cover the cripnja again, and let it bake on the embers for another half hour. Additional advice for the preparation of the octopus: If you have a fresh octopus it is best to freeze for a day, because then the octopus will be softer. Enjoy!

Grilled fish

Try this traditional way to prepare grilled fish. Sometimes the simplest methods of preparation yield excellent results. Most locals on the Adriatic will tell you that one of the best ways to prepare fish is to grill it. Here is a basic method for doing just that. It works on any type of oily fish. The recipe is easily doubled. Baste fish with sprigs of rosemary or thyme, you will love the results!

Ingredients:

2 1/2 pounds fish fillets cut in pieces * Bay leaves * Salt to taste * 1/2 cup olive oil
1/4 cup lemon juice * chopped parsley

Preparation:

Skewer the fish pieces on a skewer, placing a bay leaf between each piece. Salt the fish and grill over the barbecue. Rotate occasionally, basting continually with olive oil and lemon juice until done.

Place on platter; garnish with parsley, and sprinkle with olive oil. Prepare fish on skewers ahead of time. Refrigerate and baste with oil and lemon juice to keep moist until ready to use.

Dalmatian Stewed Beef - “Pasticada”

Though Dalmatia is best known for its seafood, one cannot omit this dish from a list of traditional Dalmatian specialties. We have included two different versions. Both are tasty and we encourage you to try each of them! This dish is usually served with Potatoes with Swiss chard however; mashed potatoes, fresh pasta or rice would be good as well.

Ingredients: (Serves 8 to 10)

1/2 to 3/4 cup cooking oil
 3 1/2 pounds beef round
 1/4 pound smoked bacon, cut into 1/2-inch pieces
 salt and pepper to taste
 1 pound soup vegetables chopped (carrots, celery, parsley root, parsnips)
 2 tablespoons chopped rosemary
 1 bay leaf
 15 to 20 peppercorns
 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
 1 cup white wine
 1 cup beef stock
 1/2 cup pitted and halved olives
 juice of 1 lemon
 2 tblsp. chopped rosemary

Preparation:

Heat the oil in a large deep Dutch oven or a deep stockpot with a lid. Make pockets with a sharp knife all over the beef round and insert the smoked bacon pieces into the pockets. Season with salt and pepper. Then fry the round quickly in oil to brown all sides. Remove and transfer to another dish. Brown the chopped vegetables in the same oil. When the vegetables have become lightly browned, add the rosemary, bay leaf and peppercorns. Stir and then place the meat on top. Cover the dish and stew on medium heat for about 2 1/2 hours, adding water when necessary. When the meat is tender and done, remove it and once again transfer to another dish.

Add the flour to the vegetable mix, stirring thoroughly. Add the wine and stock and simmer uncovered, stirring frequently until the sauce thickens. When it has thickened to a gravy-like consistency, strain it. If so desired, you may purée the vegetables and add them back to the sauce (add liquid if the sauce becomes too thick). Add the olives to your sauce and season with lemon juice and salt. Slice the meat, arrange on a platter, and either pour the sauce over top or serve separately.

- Use canned beef stock and frozen baby carrots.
- Reduce the oil after you have browned the beef. Use less bacon but do not omit.

Dalmatian Brodetto (fish stew) with Creamy Parmigiano-Reggiano Polenta

This is a wonderful easy to make dish that every seafood lover is sure to love. The beauty of this dish is you can use almost any seafood you like, even though traditionally it is made with a variety of rock fishes, sea bass, cuttle fish and regional bivalves.

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 lbs of Cod fish
- 2 lbs of Mussels
- 1 lb of white shrimp, cleaned and shells removed
- 1/4 cup of olive oil
- 1 medium onion, sliced and halved
- a small bunch of fresh chopped parsley
- 29 oz can of Tomato Puree
- 2 14.5 oz cans of stewed tomatoes
- 4 cloves of garlic, pressed
- 32 oz of Vegetable stock (you can use fish stock if your prefer)
- salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons of white vinegar

Ingredients for Creamy Parmigiano-Reggiano Polenta

- 32 oz of Chicken stock
- 1/2 cup of milk
- 1/2 cup of half and half
- 4 Tablespoons of unsalted butter
- 1 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 cup of fresh grated Parmigiano-Reggiano (the real stuff, non of the fake!)
- 1 3/4 cups of yellow corn meal

Preparation:

1. Cut the Cod fish into 2 inch pieces, clean the shrimp and mussels and set aside.
2. Chop the onion, and crush the garlic in a garlic press; Saute the onions and garlic in the olive oil and parsley. Add the salt and pepper and sweat till translucent.
3. Add tomato puree, stewed tomatoes, and Vegetable stock, let come to boil, then add in the Vinegar, reduce heat and let simmer for 20 minutes.
4. Add the seafood, bring back up to a boil and then reduce heat to a low simmer. It doesn't take long for seafood to cook, dish is down when Mussels open and shrimp have turned color. DO NOT OVER COOK

Preparation (polenta):

1. In Large saucepan bring chicken stock to a rolling boil. Add Salt.
2. Add Milk and half and half
3. Gradually pour in corn meal
4. Whisk constantly to avoid clumping, while stirring in butter
5. Reduce the heat to low and cook until mixture thickens.(10- 15 minutes)
6. Stir in Parmigiano-Reggiano

To serve, spoon polenta into bowl about 1/3 of the way top remainder with fish stew.... make sure you spoon from bottom and get polenta with every bite!

“ROZATA” Croatian caramel custard

Rožata is a Croatian custard pudding from the Dalmatian region, similar to flan and crème brûlée.

Ingredients:

- 6 eggs
- 5 tablespoons of sugar
- 4 dcl of milk
- vanilla sugar
- grated rind of a lemon
- a bit of rum
- 8 tablespoons of sugar for the mould

Preparation:

In a 1l pot stir 7-8 tablespoons of sugar until it melts on fire, keep stirring until it turns golden brown. Immediately pour the sugar into the mould and spill around it and leave it there until it starts cracking. In another bowl put the milk, sugar, eggs, vanilla sugar, a bit of rum and the grated rind of lemon. Mix it all together with a whisk, pour into the mould and begin cooking it on vapor. Cook it for about an hour and a half. Except on a cooking stove you can also prepare rožata covered in your oven until its firm like a pudding. After it cools a bit put it in your fridge.

Decorate as you like; covered with cream and cherries, or sprinkled with some grated chocolate.

FRITULE – Dalmatian Fritters

This dessert is very good for cold days and it is practiced in winter and especially for Christmas and New Year’s holidays. Children and adults both adore fritters and it is not difficult to prepare them.

Ingredients for about 8 people:

- 2 packages of dry yeast,
- 1 dl of warm water,
- 1 full cup (20 dg) of granulated sugar,
- 1,4 kg of all-purpose flour,
- 4 dl hot water,
- 1 dl of brandy (usually plum brandy),
- 2 small spoons of vanilla sugar,
- ½ small spoon of grated nutmeg,
- 2 fists of raisins,
- 1 grated lemon,
- about 1 l of oil for frying,
- pulverized sugar.

Preparation:

First you have to prepare the yeast. Mix it with 1 dl of warm water and a bit of sugar. Put it to the side while it bubbles and rises. Put flour in a big mixing bowl, make a big hole in it and start adding hot water. Be sure you are slowly adding water and stirring it with flour in the same time. You mustn’t stop stirring before it starts to “ball”. Then begin adding sugar (1 cup), vanilla sugar, nutmeg, brandy, raisins and grated lemon. After mixing all those ingredients, combine it all with the yeast mix.

Now you have to let it rest for about 15-20 minutes while you are heating up the oil in a deeper pot. Try dropping a bit of your mixture on the oil and see what happens. If it sizzles and is not burning, the oil is ready for frying your fritters – FRITULE!

Now, you take one rounded tablespoon and use it to make small balls of the dough and drop them to the oil. Before making another little ball (fritter), dip the spoon in water – the dough should peel off the spoon more easily.

And one more advice – don’t put too many fritters in the pan the same time. While frying, turn fritters around all the time so they can become beautifully golden on all sides.

When fritted, put fritters on some paper towels to drain excessive oil. Then fix them up on a serving plate and sprinkle with powdered sugar.

DRINK

Croatian beers are top quality. Try *Ozujsko pivo* or *Karlovacko pivo* or *Tomislav (dark beer)* brewed under license in Croatia. You'll find several people and towns with homemade wine for sale or to drink since grapes are grown in most places. You should also try Croatia's favorite brandy *sljivovica*, made from plums, or *travarica*, an herbal brandy.

Coffee drinking: In Dalmatia, coffee drinking is an important morning ritual. You'll see people out at cafés drinking coffee and watching the world go by. During weekends, when the weather is nice, at the waterfront (when you have thousands of people passing by in front of you) drinking coffee and chatting and gossiping is a must! Don't be surprised to see a lot of people in the bars at these days. Most people drink a large coffee with milk (*velika kava s mlijekom*; pronounced: velika kava mleeyeko) or you could also order a *kava obična* (pronounced: kava obichna) which is a simple coffee without milk—just an espresso.

Croatian wine has a history dating back to the Ancient Greek settlers, and their wine production on the southern Dalmatian islands of Vis, Hvar and Korčula some 2,500 years ago. Like other old world wine producers, many traditional grape varieties still survive in Croatia, perfectly suited to their local wine hills. Modern wine-production methods have taken over in the larger wineries, and EU-style wine regulations have been adopted, guaranteeing the quality of the wine. The majority of Croatian wine is white, with most of the remainder being red, and only a small percentage is rosé wines. In 2005, Croatia ranked 21st in wine producing countries with 180,000 tones.

Wine is a popular drink in Croatia, and locals traditionally like to drink wine with their meals. Quite often, the wine is diluted with either still or sparkling water - producing a drink known as *gemišt* (a combination of wine and carbonated water), and *bevanda* (a combination of wine and still water).

The grape varieties in use in Croatia can be very confusing to foreigners, not simply because the Croatian names are unfamiliar, but because many of the varieties may not be in use beyond a very limited area. Croatia's long history of wine production has left it with a rich tradition of indigenous varieties, especially in the more out-lying areas, or the more extreme growing conditions. Some of these have been so successful that they are in widespread use within Croatia, yet remain relatively unknown outside the country. One such is Plavac Mali, the foundation of many highly-regarded Dalmatian red wines, such as Postup and Dingač.

The well-known Napa Valley winemaker Miljenko "Mike" Grgich is a Croatian native, and he has argued the case for Zinfandel being descended from the Plavac Mali grape. DNA testing has now demonstrated that Plavac Mali is in fact a child of the true original Zinfandel, which is a little-planted grape from the same area named Crljenak Kašteljanski.

Following the devastation of the vines by phylloxera at the end of the 19th century, Croatian vineyards were replanted by grafting the traditional varieties on to American root stock. Only a very few pre-phylloxera vines still survive today on a couple of the islands (Korčula, Grk)

Malvazija from Istria and **Posip** from Korcula produce Croatia's most renowned white wines.

BENVENUTI MALVAZIJA

Benvenuti at gold this time! Seriously though young, with a mineral body, fruity, very fresh and harmonious Malmsey. What kind of example to modern Malvasia should be. Except fruitiness that is rich, Benvenuti Malvasia is specific for minerality which gives the sharpness. It is this specific minerality and the "crispy" taste gives it the interesting compared to many "more regular" Malvasias who competed for the championship title. Straw-yellow color with greenish reflections, very luscious, very varietal aroma. Without a doubt Malvasia deserves the title of best of the best. Due to limited quantities it is hard to find. Golden Malvasia Vinistra 2010th Quality: High quality wine (!) Vinogorje: central Istrian Variety: Malvasia Sweetness: Dry Alcohol: 13.4% Temp. Servings: 10 - 12°C Food recommendations: The Executive agrees with the main meals of white meat and the quality fish, and with fine cheeses and desserts.

PLAVAC MURVICA BAKOVIC

Wine full and rich in flavor with a specific aroma. The body is full and concentrated, rich in extract and the heavy tannins are sour character. The final result is a rich, powerful and easy drinking wine that lasts long and has an excellent aftertaste. In recent years, a very popular and respected pumice. Another in a series of wines that you will not have a chance to find on the shelves of shopping malls. Quality: quality wine Vinogorje: Brac Variety: small pumice Sweetness: Dry Alcohol: 14.00% Temp. Servings: 16-18°C Food recommendations: all fried and spicy foods (fish stew, Dalmatian food, venison), spicy and oily fish

DINGAČ MILIČIĆ

One of the best wines from the Croatian south. It is among the upper class of the best Croatian wines. Wine is a compact, ruby color, excellent consistency and oily, and already the smell indicates the richness from the best position of Peljesac. The bouquet is spicy tones mix orange crest and carob complemented by leather and smoke tones of roasted almonds. A high percentage of alcohol is well integrated into other elements; the taste is rounded, smooth and dry with well-preserved plavac identity. Quality: High quality wine Vinogorje: Peljesac Variety: Plavac Mali Sweetness: Dry Alcohol: 14.2% Temp. Servings: 16-18°C Food recommendations: all fried and spicy foods (fish stew, Dalmatian food, venison), spicy and oily fish.

POŠIP ČARA NERICA

For a variety pošip was first heard in the second half of the 19th century. One farmer from Smokvice, cutting forest vine found growing wild, which interested him because of his unusual taste and aroma. It was planted in a vineyard blended with other varieties.

The latest DNA testing revealed that the pošip truly genuine and authentic Korcula wine. Until fifty years ago pošip was considered a side, locally important variety. The reason is probably the fact that it is a relatively new variety that has spread only on their island. From its beginnings, the quality of its breeding was questionable, but it is only recently being recognized, and beyond. Many good properties (high yield potential, early maturing, high quality wine and wine) allow the spread of this variety in other Dalmatian vineyards. Premium wine pošip is usually a golden color, strong (about 13% vol), harmonious acidity (about 6 g/l) and a full and distinctive flavor with a distinct aroma.

Wine yellowish color with a pronounced varietal distinctive sweet scent in the direction of vineyard peaches, figs and dates. Strong alcohol is an excellent fit into a medium full body. It is very rich in extract and ideally balanced acid helped the amalgamation of all substances in ripe and powerful wine. PZ "POŠIP" This wine is produced in a new modern winery in the picturesque village charms of the island. Quality: High quality wine Vinogorje: Korčulansko Variety: Pošip Sweetness: Dry Alcohol: 13.5% Temp. Servings: 12°C Food recommendations: In addition to mussels, crabs, squid, piquant cheeses, a recommendation is black risotto with cuttlefish.

CHARDONNAY ANIMA MATOŠEVIĆ

Flavor is very pleasant, spicy, warm and strong and slightly salty while spices from barrique dominate in the mouth. The smell is strong only "wooden" character that is expressed barrique aromas like cedar smoke filled notes that fully cover the other flavors. Anima is fermented in French barrique and aged for 14 months with yeasts. Quality: Quality wine Vinogorje: Istria Variety: Chardonnay Sweetness: Dry Alcohol: 13.5% Temp. Servings: 10 - 12°C Food recommendations: main meals of white meat and the quality fish, and with fine cheeses and desserts.

A B C Č Ć D Đ Ž Đ E F G H I J K L L J M N N J O P R S Š T U V Z Ž

The Croatian alphabet is a variant of the Latin alphabet, adapted by the Croatian linguist Ljudevit Gaj therefore also called Gaj's Latin alphabet or Gajica.

There are 30 letters, 5 for vowels (A, E, I, O, U) and 25 for consonants. The Western Q, W, X, Y are excluded from the Croatian alphabet.

Each sound is represented by a single letter. Croatian words are pronounced exactly how they are spelt.

A a	like a in sofa	G g	like g in game	Nj nj	like ñ in España
B b	like b in baby	H h	like h in ham	O o	like o in dog
C c	like ts in lets	I i	like ee in feet	P p	like p in patriot
Č č (hard)	like ch in church	J j	like y in yacht	R r	like r in replay
Ć ć (soft)	like ch in cheese	K k	like k in king	S s	like S in Sun
D d	like d in dino	L l	like l in love	Š š	like sh in sheep
Dž dž	similar to J in June	Lj lj	like l in lure	T t	like t in tea
Đ đ	like j in jam	M m	like m in mother	U u	like oo in boot
E e	Like e in met	M m	like m in mother	V v	like w in wolf
F f	like f in four	N n	like n in no	Z z	like z in zoo
				Ž ž	like s in measure

NUMBERS	0 - nula	1 - jedan	2 - dva	3 - tri	4 - četiri
	5 - pet	6 - šest	7 - sedam	8 - osam	9 - devet
					10 - deset

da - yes	bog - hello	volim te - I love you
ne - no	do videnja - goodbye	restoran - restaurant
kafić - cafe	dobro jutro - good morning	kava - coffe
račun - bill	dobar dan - good day	mlijeko - milk
vino - wine	dobra večer - good evening	pivo - beer
bijelo vino - white wine	laku noć - good night	voda - water
crno vino - red wine	hvala - thank you	bicikla - bike
more - sea	molim - please	sunce - sun
Hrvatska - Croatia	dobro - good	ljubav - love