

Frommer's

Croatia





TELEPHONE TIPS

To call Croatia from another country: Dial the international access code (U.S. and Canada 011; U.K., Ireland, and New Zealand 00; Australia 0011), followed by Croatia's country code, 385, then the city code with the initial zero omitted, plus the local number.

To make international calls from Croatia: Dial 00 plus the country code (U.S. or Canada 1, U.K. 44, Ireland 353, Australia 61, New Zealand 64), plus the area code, then the local number.

To make calls within Croatia: For local calls, simply dial the number without the city code. For calls from one Croatian city to another, dial the Croatian city code, followed by the number. **Note:** Croatian pay phones do not accept coins; pre-paid phone cards (telekarta) are available at any post office or news kiosk.

For directory assistance: Dial 988 if you're looking for a number inside the country; dial 902 for numbers to all other countries.

For operator assistance: If you need operator assistance in making a call, dial 901 for both international and local calls.



METRIC CONVERSIONS



LIQUID VOLUME

To convert..... multiply by

U.S. gallons to liters 3.8

Liters to U.S. gallons26

U.S. gallons to imperial gallons83

Imperial gallons to U.S. gallons 1.20

Imperial gallons to liters 4.55

Liters to imperial gallons22

1 liter = .26 U.S. gallon

1 U.S. gallon = 3.8 liters



DISTANCE

To convert..... multiply by

inches to centimeters 2.54

centimeters to inches39

feet to meters30

meters to feet 3.28

yards to meters91

meters to yards 1.09

miles to kilometers 1.61

kilometers to miles62

1 ft. = .30m 1 mile = 1.6km

1m = 3.3 ft. 1km = .62 mile



WEIGHT

To convert..... multiply by

Ounces to grams 28.35

Grams to ounces035

Pounds to kilograms45

Kilograms to pounds 2.20

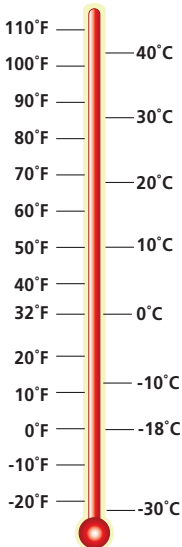
1 ounce = 28 grams

1 pound = .4555 kilogram

1 gram = .04 ounce

1 kilogram = 2.2 pounds

TEMPERATURE



To convert F to C:
subtract 32 and multiply
by $\frac{5}{9}$ (.555)

To convert C to F:
multiply by 1.8
and add 32

32°F = 0°C



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Croatia

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by Dr. Karen Tormé Olson

with Sanja Bažulić Olson



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Cartographer: Andrew Dolan

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HOW TO CONTACT US

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

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AN ADDITIONAL NOTE

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Karen Tormé Olson and her daughter-in-law Sanja Bažulić Olson have spent every summer and holiday since 2003 traveling Croatia as a writer-translator team to gather information for *Frommer's Croatia*. Karen is a photographer, freelance travel writer, and former *Chicago Tribune* editor. She has a doctorate in administration, is a member of the Society of American Travel Writers, and holds a day job as a school counselor, fencing coach, and literary magazine advisor. She lives in a Chicago suburb with her husband, Randy Weissman, their son, Drew, and three large shelter dogs.

Sanja Bažulić Olson was born in Denmark but was reared and educated in Croatia, where she has lived for most of her life. She holds a master's degree in agricultural engineering from Zagreb University, and since 2003 Sanja has lived in Uganda, Washington, D.C., Kabul, Afghanistan, and Pristina, Kosovo, with her husband, Greg, who works in micro development for the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

FROMMER'S STAR RATINGS, ICONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system**. In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use **eight feature icons** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

- Finds** Special finds—those places only insiders know about
- Fun Facts** Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
- Kids** Best bets for kids, and advice for the whole family
- Moments** Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
- Overrated** Places or experiences not worth your time or money
- Tips** Insider tips—great ways to save time and money
- Value** Great values—where to get the best deals
- Warning!** Warning—traveler's advisories are usually in effect

The following **abbreviations** are used for credit cards:

AE American Express	DISC Discover	V Visa
DC Diners Club	MC MasterCard	

TRAVEL RESOURCES AT FROMMERS.COM

Frommer's travel resources don't end with this guide. Frommer's website, **www.frommers.com**, has travel information on more than 4,000 destinations. We update features regularly, giving you access to the most current trip-planning information and the best airfare, lodging, and car-rental bargains. You can also listen to podcasts, connect with other Frommers.com members through our active-reader forums, share your travel photos, read blogs from guide-book editors and fellow travelers, and much more.

The Best of Croatia

Until recently, July and August in Croatia belonged to Germans and Italians, who clogged border crossings in their annual migration to the country's endless beaches and clear blue sea. Finally, the rest of the world has discovered Croatia's charms: its wealth of Roman ruins, medieval hilltop castles, and staggering cache of natural wonders. Even though the summer crowds are now larger and more diverse, it still is possible to find a secluded cove or patch of beach where it seems you're the only person on Earth. When all the name-brand hotels are filled, there always is a room waiting in a private home where the landlord welcomes you like a long-lost friend.

Every town and village has at least one restaurant where the locals hang out and where the slice of life you get with your meal is the best dessert there is. In Croatia, each building has a story that adds another facet to this gem of a country.

This chapter is a "road map," directing you to some of our favorites. We know you'll add to the list when you find some of your own.

1 THE BEST TRAVEL EXPERIENCES

- **Listening to the Sea Organ** (Zadar): Waves create music as they move water through this organ's undersea pipes. Add a set of white stone steps leading into the crystal water above the submerged organ and shooting beams of light from sister installation **Greeting to the Sun** on Zadar's Riva. The result is a matchless venue to enjoy a multimedia symphony courtesy of the sea and sky. See p. 171.
- **Viewing Mummies** (Vodjnan): They look a little like skeletons shrink-wrapped in leather, and they are billed as the mortal coils of holy people who died centuries ago but miraculously never decomposed. You can't get too close to these relics because viewing distance is restricted. You can, however, recognize these mummies as former human beings even in the dimly lighted area behind the altar of St. Blaise Church in Vodjnan. Soulful background music and overly dramatic piped-in commentary make the experience creepy but riveting. See p. 237.
- **Watching the Sunrise over Vis Town Harbor** (Vis): Vis Town and its harbor were the view from our balcony at the Bellevue Apartments in the hills above. It was a perfect vantage point for witnessing a kaleidoscope of color washing over the landscape as the sun moved above the horizon each morning. At night everything was black and gray, then just before dawn, the scene was painted in liquid gold. Pinks and blues were next, and finally the buildings and sea came into focus in silver, turquoise, and red. It was such a glorious sight that we were up before dawn every day just to catch the show.
- **Exploring the Village of Hum** (Istria): It calls itself the smallest town in the world, and population-wise, it might be. But so many people visit this village high in the Istrian interior that it always seems crowded. The village fathers have

done a wonderful job of restoring the buildings in town to make it tourist-friendly. See p. 269.

- **Strolling Through Mirogoj Cemetery** (Zagreb): As much sculpture garden as burial ground, this 19th-century cemetery was designed by architect Hermann Bollé. It is home to Croatian patriots, common folk, and people of all faiths and nationalities. The tombstones range from small and simple to enormous and elaborate, but each is a story in itself. Don't miss the black granite slab at the grave of former president Franjo Tuđman

or the sculpture-rich arcades on either side of the entrance. See p. 285.

- **Descending into Iločki Podrumi** (Ilok): You'll get the chills from two sources in this second-oldest wine cellar in Croatia: the temperature and the history. The cellar was looted by the Serbs during the Homeland War, but not before the owners concealed bottles of the best vintages behind a false wall. Today those bottles are out of hiding and on display along with the barrels and vats used to store the winery's newest vintages. See p. 361.

2 THE BEST NATURAL WONDERS

- **Plitvice Lakes National Park** (145km/90 miles southwest of Zagreb): Plitvice is Croatia's best-known natural wonder. The park's 16 crystal-clear, turquoise lakes and countless waterfalls put on a great show. The lakes flow into one another and tumble over deposits of travertine, creating waterfalls that drop a few feet or plunge as much as 64m (210 ft.). All this beauty is set in a dense forest accessed via footpaths and populated by bears and wild boar. See p. 315.
- **Kornati National Park** (part of the Zadar Archipelago): Kornati's 140 islands are really the tops of mountains that were above sea level 20,000 years ago but now are mostly submerged. One side of each island is rocky and lightly blanketed with vegetation (a few grapevines and olive trees). The side facing the sea is a sheer rock wall known as a "crown" that plunges almost 76m (250 ft.) straight into the water. Sixty-nine species of butterflies live here. Perhaps the most interesting part is

Kornati's offshore underwater landscape. Its rock formations support flourishing flora and fauna. See p. 183.

- **Paklenica National Park** (btw. Zadar and Karlobag): Paklenica's raw beauty is best appreciated by hikers and nature lovers. But even motorists respect the imposing Velebit peaks because the limestone cliffs that soar above deep gorges and dense vegetation are visible for miles from nearby highways. Even from afar you can see cave openings and imagine what's inside. See p. 177.
- **Krka National Park** (less than half an hour from Šibenik): The park was formed to protect the Krka River, which runs from its source near Knin to the sea near Šibenik. The river has created a series of spectacular gorges, waterfalls, lakes, and rapids on its trip through the mountains. The jaw-droppingly steep Skradinski Buk and Roški Slapovi are the most impressive. Between the two are Lake Visovac and Visovac Island, home to a Franciscan monastery. See p. 186.

3 THE BEST OPEN-AIR MARKETS

- **Dolac** (Zagreb): The urban market is above the main square at the foot of Old Town, but it is more than just a place to buy fruits and veggies. Dolac is a crossroads where people come to see and be seen; to trade gossip; and to relax with a cup of coffee. Morning is the best time to visit because that's when the bread is freshest, the displays the prettiest, and the people the most interesting. See p. 278.
- **Pazarin** (Split): Pazarin is reminiscent of a Turkish bazaar in looks, sounds, and smells. Booths and tables line both sides of Hrvojeva Street outside the east wall of Diocletian's Palace from the Riva to the Silver Gate. Pazarin has the usual assortment of produce plus a variety of textiles and the country's most persuasive vendors. See p. 109.
- **Bjelovar** (Bjelovar): This market is quite civilized and partially covered. It is noteworthy as the place where farmers from Croatia's agricultural belt bring their best produce, dairy products, fish, and meat every day. The market is at its busiest from 7am to noon, but a few vendors stay open until 6pm or so. The later it gets, the lower the prices go. See p. 343.

4 THE BEST SMALL HOTELS & INNS

- **Hotel San Rocco** (Brtonigla): San Rocco's location deep in Istria adds to the romance in its lovingly restored stone buildings and grounds. Flowers, olive groves, and an assortment of ruins comprise the hotel's sensual "curb appeal." But it's really the beautifully put together guest rooms with their *mélange* of antique and modern touches, the inviting pool, and the magnificent gourmet restaurant that seal the deal. See p. 254.
- **Lešić Dimitri Palace** (Korčula): Each of the six *pied-à-terre* in this lavishly renovated urban palace has a personality of its own and each is drenched in luxury. Privacy, elegance, and whimsy are built into each unit, any of which would be a fitting home for royalty in Manhattan or Marrakesh. See p. 146.
- **Villa Kukuljica** (Zaton Mali): Villa K is a modest inn compared to most of the splashy accommodations in the Dubrovnik area, but in a single night its authenticity made a lasting impression. Experience real Croatian hospitality in the person of Kukuljica's owners. It's a revelation of culture, food, and hospitality. See p. 82.
- **Hotel Waldinger** (Osijek): Waldinger packs a lot of elegance into its 18 rooms, each of which drips with period elegance in the heart of a city that has not altogether recovered from the Homeland War. From here you easily can walk to the banks of the Drava, shop the city market, and explore medieval Tvrđa. See p. 353.
- **Hotel Boškinac** (Novalja, Pag Island): Boškinac is in the middle of nowhere even for Pag, but that's part of its charm. The country-chic hotel is surrounded by gardens, olive groves, vineyards, and forest, far from the madding weekenders who descend on nearby Novalja all summer long. Boškinac's restaurant is one of most food-forward in Croatia, and the wines from its vineyards are prized all over the country. See p. 163.
- **Hotel Palazzo** (Poreč): When the Hotel Riviera opened a century ago, it was

standing on Istria's first landfill. Today the Riviera has been reincarnated in the same spot with all its original charm and elegance. It's the Palazzo now, with the soul of 1910 Italy in a 2010 body, a heady combination of history, romance, and comfort. See p. 249.

- **Hotel Vestibul Palace** (Split): The Roman Empire meets the 21st century at the Palace, where most rooms share at least part of a wall built by Diocletian. History and gourmet delights align to make this one of the best hotel experiences in Croatia. Each room has a

personality of its own, complete with cleverly designed windows carved into the stone walls to reveal views of various aspects of Old Town. See p. 112.

- **Valsabbion** (Pula): This hedonistic experience is not to be missed. The hotel's seven rooms, three suites, and spa are decorated with flair in a breezy, romantic style that carries over to its exquisite restaurant, one of the best in Croatia. You might come here for the beach, but you'll stay for the food and the pampering. See p. 233.

5 THE BEST BIG LUXURY HOTELS

- **The Regent Esplanade** (Zagreb): The most gracious hotel in Croatia compares favorably with luxury hotels in New York and Paris for a fraction of the cost. From rich furnishings in the guest rooms to a concierge who is a gallant repository of Croatian history, a stay at the Esplanade is an experience you'll never forget. See p. 290.
- **Hilton Imperial** (Dubrovnik): This is the U.S. chain's first foray into Croatia. Rather than build a hotel from scratch, Hilton had the wisdom to restore what was salvageable from Dubrovnik's historic 19th-century Imperial and graft a modern hotel onto the base. Every detail has been taken care of, and you'll be treated as an honored guest here. See p. 76.
- **Excelsior** (Dubrovnik): We love the Excelsior for its understated profile and for the way it channels the graceful elegance of the 1930s in style and attitude. Every service is personalized and every visitor is treated as if he or she is the hotel's guest of honor. In Dubrovnik's frenetic tourism environment, that is no small feat. See p. 77.
- **Le Meridien Lav** (Split): Le Meridien's seaside location in Podstrana, 20 minutes from Split's Old Town, gives it a resort feel. Its spacious, well-appointed

rooms, spa, casino, and high-design public areas contribute luxury, and its marina, tennis courts, and pools make it a destination hotel. If you are looking for a place you don't have to leave to have fun, this is it. See p. 112.

- **Monte Mulini** (Rovinj): The Monte Mulini is Rovinj's first true luxury hotel. Even the lowest priced room has a huge glamour bathroom with a shower that is separate from the tub and an array of designer toiletries. MM's world class restaurants, services, and a people-centric staff cater to guests' every whim. The spa is the ultimate in decadence with a floating bath filled with water that has such a high concentration of salt that you stay suspended in water no matter how hard you try to touch bottom. See p. 241.
- **Radisson BLU** (Orašac): Orašac is 12km (7½ miles) from Dubrovnik and an idyllic spot for getting away from it all without going too far. The nice thing about the BLU is that you never have to leave its lavishly landscaped grounds. You can veg out right there and still experience Dalmatia's natural beauty, fine food, and hospitality. Even better, the BLU provides all the above while being environmentally responsible. See p. 78.

6 THE BEST ROMAN RUINS

- **Pula Amphitheater** (Pula): Smaller than Rome's coliseum but in much better shape, the amphitheater is more accessible to tourists than its Rome counterpart. Don't miss the restored underground chambers and their exhibits featuring Istrian history. And if you're in town when a concert is scheduled, get a ticket no matter who is headlining. See p. 230.
- **Salona** (Solin): The grandeur that was Rome still is evident in the crumbling buildings and foundations of this former outpost of the empire. It isn't difficult to imagine what Salona looked like in its prime, but it is tough to imagine why Salona was left to sink into the Earth for a couple of centuries. Do not approach without sturdy walking shoes, sunscreen, and a full water bottle. See p. 118.
- **Diocletian's Palace** (Split): Diocletian built his estate on a scale so grand it was converted into a city after he died, but its landscape has been tinkered with so much during the last 15 centuries that the character of the original complex has been all but obliterated. What remains of the palace and what has been built on its footprint is now Split's Old Town. If you walk around it, through it, and under it enough, you'll begin to understand Diocletian's enormous ego. See p. 107.

7 THE BEST BEACHES

- **Baška** (Krk Island): This is a sun-lover's paradise, with more than 30 beaches of varying size and a promenade that skirts most of them. Baška's beaches once were sand, but now the sand is covered with pebbles that extend a few feet into the water. See p. 210.
- **Novalja** (Pag Island): Any cove off Novalja can be a private beach. The water offshore is so clear you can see the white, sandy bottom 6m (20 ft.) below. If you have a boat, drop anchor for a while, take a dip, and let your stress float away. See p. 161.
- **Zlatni Rat** (Brač Island): Visit this beach just so you can say you did. This is the famous strip that appears in all the Croatia ads, usually in an aerial view. From above, Zlatni Rat resembles a green finger rimmed with sand and tipped with a curling tendril extending into the sapphire sea. From ground level, it is a sun-blasted, pebbled landscape covered with a huge international crowd soaking up the rays and the local culture. See p. 129.
- **Orebić** (Pelješac Peninsula): Orebić is a civilized place where families linger together and, at the end of the day, Mom brings covered bowls full of fruit down to kids who don't want to leave their sand castles and snorkels. The water is warm, the sun constant, and the people as nice as they come. See p. 94.

8 THE MOST CHARMING RUSTIC VILLAGES

- **Kumrovec** in the Zagorje region is like a Croatian Williamsburg, Virginia, with restored cabins and barns furnished as they were when Croatia's most famous son, Josip Broz Tito, was born in the late 19th century. Some of the rustic buildings in this open-air museum contain photos and displays,

while others feature docents in traditional costumes who explain weaving, candle making, and some of the crafts of the times. See p. 320.

- **Čigoč** is known as the “Stork Place” because of the long-legged birds that perch atop roofs in this Lonjsko Polje village. The storks are the hook that gets tourists to stop in the middle of the marsh, but the historic cabins and natural surroundings keep them there for hours. See p. 336.
- **Štrigova** isn’t exceptionally rustic, but it is a quaint launching pad for a visit to

the surrounding Međimurje region. From Štrigova, you can explore the rolling vineyards and wineries of northern Croatia. See chapter 11.

- **Hlebine**, in the north-central part of inland Croatia, is home to a colony of nearly 200 painters and sculptors, the country’s naive art movement, and the ateliers of Josip and Ivan Generalić. It is the cradle of the naive art movement in Croatia. Many works from these artists are on display in the town’s galleries, one of which is the Generalić home. See p. 340.

9 THE BEST CATHEDRALS & CHURCHES

- **Holy Cross Church** (Nin): Holy Cross is the oldest church in Croatia and also the world’s smallest cathedral, according to posted signs. According to one scientist, the little white stone church is also a giant sun dial and was constructed according to mathematical calculations. See p. 179.
- **Euphrasian Basilica Complex** (Poreč): A must-see sight in this city of superlatives, the UNESCO World Heritage church is the last of four that were built on top of each other. One of the basilica’s premier attractions is the collection of Byzantine mosaics on display. Euphrasius is not just one church, but a series of church buildings, each with its own story. See p. 247.
- **St. Donatus** (Zadar): Notable for its unusual shape (circular inside), St. Donatus is void of decoration. The church is no longer used for Mass, but its great acoustics make it a hot venue for classical concerts. Like other churches of its time (9th c.), Donatus is one of several buildings in a clerical complex. See p. 171.
- **Church of St. Mary** (Beram): This chapel in the woods is so small and so remote that you would never notice it if it weren’t in a guidebook. But St. Mary’s remoteness is what protected the eye-popping frescoes that dance on its walls. You’ll need to pick up one of the church’s keepers in Beram and drive her to the chapel in the woods so she can unlock it. See p. 260.

10 THE BEST CASTLES

- **Pazin Kaštel** (Istria): One of the best-preserved castles in Istria, this is a surprising “must-see” in the Istrian interior. Pazin Kaštel is next to one of the scariest-looking gorges ever, a feature that was conveniently utilized as a dumping ground (literally) for enemies of whoever controlled the castle at the time. What may be Croatia’s best ethnographic museum is inside. See p. 261.
- **Stari Grad** (Varaždin): The Gothic Renaissance defensive complex includes a castle and the Varaždin Town Museum. As a whole, Stari Grad is this

Baroque town's best attraction. The museum is an excellent showcase for artwork and historical items. Multilingual docents are happy to help visitors. See p. 328.

- **Veliki Tabor** (Zagorje Region): North of Zagreb is an imposing, solid brick fortress that looks like the place Rapunzel let down her hair. Veliki Tabor has its own legends, including murder, mayhem, and a ghost. While the exterior of the 12th-century structure looks like it could withstand a nuclear attack, the inside is still in the process of renovation. See p. 322.

- **Trakošćan Castle** (near Varaždin): North of Zagreb is one of Croatia's most visited sites and one of its most impressive castles—from the outside. The grounds are extensive and the structure itself is everything you'd expect a storybook castle to be—stone walls, turrets, a drawbridge—but inside, renovations have been less than meticulous and sometimes border on tacky. However, Trakošćan is worth the trip if for no other reason than to ponder the plastic deer mounted on the walls outside the entrance. See p. 326.

11 THE BEST RESTAURANTS

- **Valsabbion** (Pula): Valsabbion is so avant-garde that it defies categorization. It is innovative yet traditional; stylish yet not overly so; a mecca of haute cuisine but not intimidating. This is a temple to Istrian ingredients and dishes that are a perfect match for its talented chef. Together they make magic. See p. 233.
- **Mala Hiza** (Mačkovec): Mala Hiza is one of the finest restaurants in the country. The building was constructed in 1887 and once stood outside Zagreb—it later was taken apart, plopped in the middle of a gorgeous garden, and reassembled 4km (2½ miles) outside Čakovic. The menu is full of creative interpretations of regional Croatian cuisine, and the chef will prepare any old-time recipe if you call ahead with your request. See p. 333.
- **Klub Gastronomada** (Zagreb): Dining at this upstairs room off Jelačića Square awakened taste buds we didn't know we had. The restaurant's bent clearly is locavore, but its soul is experimental theater. From clear tomato soup to nettle sauce to Istrian beef to a dessert made with black olive jam, we were surprised (and wowed) with every bite (and every sip of IQ wine). See p. 297.
- **Zinfandel's** (Regent Esplanade, Zagreb): We dined at Zinfandel's on several occasions over the years and found it to be a solid, traditional choice. This time (2009), we were blown away by its new attitude, menu, and the deftness of its chef. The old school elegance of the room and impeccable service still are there, but the food is lighter, more contemporary, and the preparations and presentations are as creative as any we encountered. This is a special occasion place and a don't-miss-it for anyone who cares about gourmet dining. See p. 296.
- **Zigante** (Livade): Behold truffle king Giancarlo Zigante's gourmet palace. Almost everything on the extensive menu here utilizes the truffle, the precious fungus with which Zigante made his fortune. The restaurant is not a gimmick: Everything on the menu is expertly prepared and even flirts with creativity. See p. 267.
- **Boškinac** (Novalja, Pag Island): Boškinac has a knack for turning fresh produce and local ingredients like Pag

lamb and Pag cheese into dishes that surprise the palate. Whether it's a Saturday lunch on the sunny terrace or a gala dinner in the elegant dining room, Boškinac's creations are sublime. We don't know how the chef did it, but the four cuts of lamb in a single sauce each had a personality all its own. Go out of your way for Boškinac and take home a bottle of its boutique wine. See p. 164.

- **Bitoraj** (Fužine): Bitoraj is a 75-year-old restaurant in a new setting, which only enhances the dining experience. Game dishes available nowhere else are on the menu in company with traditional delicacies. From bear steak and deer ham to Bitoraj's signature dish of young wild boars baked under a lid on

an open fire (*peka*), Bitoraj utilizes the best ingredients the surrounding woods can offer. See p. 191.

- **Riblji Restaurant Foša** (Zadar): Foša has one of the best locations in Croatia. It is at the water outside the Zadar wall, and it has a view and sea breeze that make the food taste that much better. The restaurant is a favorite hangout for locals. See p. 174.
- **Palača Paladini** (Hvar Town): This restaurant appeals to all five senses: It is set in a beautiful garden with blooming lavender and orange trees frequented by songbirds. It has a great list of wines, and it offers superb Dalmatian cuisine that tastes as good as it smells and looks. See p. 142.

Croatia in Depth

“The Mediterranean as It Once Was,” “Europe’s Summer Home,” “Ethnic Battlefield,” “War-Torn Nation.” Croatia has been labeled all these things, but which is it, and is the country worth visiting when there are so many exciting but less controversial destinations vying for a traveler’s time and dollars?

The answer is that Croatia is a little of each but not dominated by any, and that’s part of its allure.

Where else can you spend the night in a room on a working farm, then spend the day poking around an intact Roman amphitheater? How many places let you walk atop a massive fortification wall in the steps of a guard on the lookout for invaders from the sea, then sip martinis at midnight watching models strut down a runway in a square surrounded by churches and remnants of the Renaissance? Is there another destination where you can hike through a forest to the tempo of water rushing from falls too numerous to count, then dress for dinner on a candlelit terrace where passengers from the Orient Express once mingled during a layover?

Germans, Italians, Austrians, Hungarians, and other Europeans know Croatia as the sun-drenched playground where their ancestors spent more than a century of August vacations frolicking in the sea and dining on just-caught seafood. Other foreigners know Croatia as the site of one of the most vicious wars in European history. For Croatians, the country is simply home and heritage, and they are proud of who they are, what they have endured, and who they have become.

Contemporary Croatia is a product of its history, its present, and even its future aspirations. It is a country that is embracing progress, but hasn’t forgotten its past. That’s no different from the histories of Italy, France, Germany, or any other popular destination that entices tourists to leave home. The difference is that Croatia’s struggles are more recent and have not yet faded to black.

Our advice is to put aside labels and preconceived notions about Croatia and plan to experience the country “as is.” Seek out experiences that appeal to you as you read this book, then be prepared to be surprised, stay open to a change of plans, and don’t be afraid to pursue your own discoveries. Head for the coast and bask in the sun, but take a day to explore villages in the inland hills, too. Book a room in a name-brand resort area, but carve out time to have lunch at a family-run inn in the country. You might wander a bit, but you’ll never feel lost.

1 CROATIA TODAY

More than 15 years after the end of the Homeland War, Croatia still is rebuilding its image as a tourist destination following a collapse of tourism during the hostilities. It still is determining its structure as an independent nation in anticipation of taking

its place at the world table as it clears hurdles necessary for admittance to the European Union, which is expected no later than 2011.

The 2009 world economic crisis changed the country’s trajectory toward

10 prosperity, but until then, signs of an economic boom had been everywhere, but most especially in the tourism industry. Since then, the country's luxury hotels on the Adriatic coast have seen fewer guests, stores and malls fewer shoppers, and restaurants have served fewer diners. The downturn in tourism and commerce is understandable in the current economic climate, but it could not have come at a more inopportune time.

Without explanation, Croatia's long-time Prime Minister Ivo Sanader withdrew from politics on July 1, 2009, in a sudden move that shocked the nation. Sanader was in the middle of his second term as prime minister, and he was president of the country's ruling party. Local media had been speculating that Sanader would run for president in elections scheduled for early 2010 and that he would leave his post as prime minister to run for the office. He quashed that rumor when he announced that not only was he resigning his post, but he also was quitting politics altogether.

One of Sanader's key political goals had been to lead the former Yugoslav republic into NATO, and that was realized in April 2009. Another goal was to bring Croatia into the European Union, an initiative that still is in progress.

Upon Sanader's resignation, his deputy, Jadranka Kosor, immediately took over as prime minister and seems to have been left holding the economic bag: In the first 4 months of her term, circumstances forced Kosor to do serious damage control with respect to Croatia's finances. Within weeks of taking office, she had to take unpopular

emergency measures to shore up the country's economy to evade bankruptcy, and as a result, Croatia raised its value-added tax (VAT) from 22% to 23% and levied a "crisis tax" of 2% to 4% on anyone making more than 3,000kn per month. Construction projects—including in-progress highway construction—were stopped or slowed because government funding was pulled. There even was talk of the need for requesting an economic rescue from the International Monetary Fund, though Croatia decided to go it alone to handle its debts.

Precise figures for Croatia's economic plight had not been made public at press time, but early reports show that the country's biggest economic engine, tourism, was down more than 30% overall in the first 3 months of 2009 and anticipated to settle into a 15% or more downturn for the year after 4 straight years of growth.

Experts expect the across-the-board economic slide in Croatia to last until at least 2012. How that will affect Croatia's schedule for admittance to the European Union still is unknown. Admission to the E.U. carries economic requirements, but reports say that Croatia's petition still is on track to be completed in 2011.

Economic issues are just one bump in the road delaying Croatia's membership in the E.U., however. Corruption in both the public and private sectors, inefficiency in its legal system and government, and Croatia's cooperation (or lack of cooperation) with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia all present considerable challenges, though progress is being made.

2 LOOKING BACK AT CROATIA

PREHISTORY

At the turn of the 20th century (1899), the remains of a type of Neanderthal who lived in caves some 30,000 years ago were

discovered at Krapina, a tiny town north of Zagreb. These early cave dwellers' bones were dubbed "Krapina Man," and they established a time line that put humans in

Croatia in the middle of the Stone Age. Traces of other prehistoric cultures also have been found in Vukovar in eastern Croatia, but none is more significant than Krapina Man.

ILLYRIANS

Recorded Croatian history begins around 1200 B.C., when the people occupying the region that is now Croatia, Bosnia, Albania, and Serbia began to form a coalition of tribes known as the Illyrians. Illyrian lifestyles had similarities, such as burial customs and dwelling styles, but there is no concrete evidence that any tribe was assimilated by any other. In fact, the tribes were known by different names according to where they settled, and at least some of them became regional powers and established cities that survive today.

THE GREEK COLONISTS

The Greeks began colonizing the Adriatic coast of Croatia in the 4th century B.C., beginning with Issa (Vis), a colony founded by residents of Syracuse (Sicily). Other settlements followed, including Paros (Hvar) and Tragurion (Trogir). The Illyrians traded oil, wine, salt, metals, and other commodities with the Greeks but nonetheless tried to get rid of foreign settlements. In the 3rd century B.C., the Illyrians attempted to form an independent state under the leadership of one of its pirate tribes. In 229 B.C., the Greeks, who were alarmed by this turn of events, asked the Romans for help in containing Illyrian lawlessness. When the Romans sent messengers to negotiate peace with the Illyrian Queen Teuta, she had them executed. This touched off a series of wars that lasted more than 60 years, ending with the defeat of the Illyrians and the creation of the Roman province of Illyricum.

THE ROMAN OCCUPATION

The spread of Roman colonies across Croatia continued until A.D. 9, when the

Adriatic coast and interior lands were annexed by the Emperor Tiberius to create three Roman provinces: Dalmatia (Adriatic seacoast), Noricum (northern territory/Austria), and Pannonia (Hungary). The Romans built fortresses, roads, bridges, aqueducts, and sparkling new cities that overtook Illyrian culture or drove it away. The main Roman cities of that time were Pola (Pula), Jader (Zadar), Salona (Solin) near Split, and Epidaurum (Cavtat). The Roman propensity for building roads linked northeast Italy to Byzantium (Istanbul) and opened lines of communication that facilitated trade and troop movements and the spread of Roman culture.

Those same roads brought Christianity to the area, and with it persecution, primarily by Emperor Diocletian, whose “retirement home” at Split is one of Croatia’s best-preserved vestiges of the Roman era, which flourished until the end of the 4th century.

From about A.D. 395 until the 7th century, Croatia suffered a series of invasions by the Ostrogoths, Slavs, and other barbarians. But it was the Avars, a warlike Asian tribe, who allegedly brought the Slavic Croats—ancestors to today’s Croats—to the area.

According to the 10th-century Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Emperor Heraclius asked the Croats to get rid of the Avars and to protect Rome’s interests, though the Croats didn’t stop at saving the Roman occupation.

THE CROAT MIGRATION

Porphyrogenitus’s account has been disputed, partly because it was written 300 years after the fact. Other accounts differ about the Croats’ appearance in southeastern Europe. Some experts say the Croats came from the Ukraine; others pinpoint Poland; and some say the Croats migrated from Iran because the name “Hvrat” has Persian origins. The trail leading back to the Croats is further clouded because “Hvrat” was used by other Slavic tribes of

the times (White Croats in Poland; Croats in the Czech Republic area; and other groups from nearby Slovenia, Slovakia, and Macedonia). It is likely that there were several waves of Croat migration, with the first group settling the part of the Roman province of Pannonia that is now southern Hungary. Later migrations settled land all the way to Dalmatia.

Eventually, the Croat émigrés organized into two dukedoms, and at the same time they began to accept Roman-rite Christianity and Roman culture. But the existence of two distinct centers of culture—Mediterranean (Dalmatia) and central European (Pannonia)—served to form a dueling Croatian psyche, which lingers today. Croats continued to live under a series of foreign and Croatian administrations until A.D. 924, when the country was united under the leadership of Tomislav I, the first king of Croatia.

MEDIEVAL CROATIA

When Tomislav was crowned around A.D. 924, he united the Pannonian and Dalmatian duchies, which included much of present-day Slavonia, Dalmatia, Istria, and Bosnia/Herzegovina. Tomislav died about A.D. 928, and no one disputes that he had a profound effect on Croatia. He was succeeded by a series of monarchs who enjoyed relative stability for almost the next 2 centuries. Among them were King Petar Krešimir IV (1058–74) and King Dmitar Zvonimir (1075–89). Zvonimir's reign is notable because he entrenched Catholicism in Croatia and strengthened the country's relationship with the Roman Church. His reign is immortalized on the Baška Tablet, a kind of Croatian Rosetta stone engraved with the oldest known Croatian text. The tablet is on display in Zagreb's archaeological museum.

HUNGARY & VENICE

After Zvonimir's death in the 11th century, the monarchy withered, and Croatia

and Hungary formed a common kingdom guided by a parliament (Sabor). During this time, the wealth and power of the landed nobility grew, and an increase in the feudal obligations of the agrarian population followed.

Free cities (Dubrovnik, among others) were founded along the coast, increasing trade and political strength in the region. Many made trade agreements with Venice, which by now was a contender for control of Croatia's ports.

Trade increased, and northern Croatian cities also saw rapid development, but a Tatar invasion in 1242 diverted the government's attention to the country's defense as invaders razed Zagreb and everything else in their path. Ultimately, Hungarian King Bela IV outmaneuvered the Tatars and retained control, but the country's growing strength from its alliance with Hungary fueled Venice's determination to control Istria and Dalmatia and ultimately access to the sea.

Venice began a long-term campaign to take over the Croatian coast early in the 13th century: They captured Zadar in 1202 and Dubrovnik in 1205. For the next century, the Venetian influence along the coast increased until they achieved their objective. During the period of Venetian acquisition, the counts of Anjou came to the Croatian throne, and in 1358 they reasserted Hungarian control of Dalmatia thanks to Louis of Anjou. King Louis expelled the Venetians, but disarray in the House of Anjou ultimately resulted in the sale of rights over Dalmatia back to the Venetians in 1409.

OTTOMANS & HAPSBURGS

During the 15th century, the Ottoman Turks advanced on Croatian lands, taking Bulgaria and Bosnia and leaving the rest of Croatia vulnerable. During the battle against the Turks at Mohács, Hungarian King Louis II was killed in action, leaving

the Turk Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent in control of much of southern Croatia. Louis did not have an heir, and the throne went to his designated successor, Ferdinand I of Hapsburg, a move that put Croatia in the Hapsburg Empire.

The first Hapsburg rulers were determined to defend Croatia against the Turks, who continued to gobble up Croat land until the mid-17th century despite efforts to contain them. During this time, Croatia lost 75% of its territory and people, but by the mid-17th century, the Hapsburgs had retaken Croatia and pushed the Turks out of the region. Subsequently, Hapsburg armies gradually drove the Turks out of the rest of central Europe (except for Bosnia and Herzegovina).

The decrease in Turk strength opened the door for the Venetians to once again surge in Dalmatia.

In 1671, the Croats made a push for self-rule, but the Hapsburgs would have none of it and quashed the movement. During the next century, the Hapsburgs gradually squeezed out Croatian authority, which further made Croatia a takeover target.

By this time many Orthodox Serbs who were living in Catholic Croatia and Russia began to show an interest in the region. This raised the question of who would take control, Catholic Austria or Orthodox Russia. Thus began the so-called Eastern Question, which was one of the precipitators of World War I.

THE NAPOLEON EFFECT

During the 18th century, Austria, Hungary, and Venice all continued to vie for pieces of Croatia and for imposition of their own cultures. The Hapsburgs pushed to install German customs and language; the Hungarians proposed that Hungarian be accepted as the official language and claimed that Slavonia belonged to Hungary; the Venetians extended their territories to the Dinara mountains and beyond, thanks to the Treaty of Požarevac; and the

Turks retained control of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Požarevac treaty made it difficult to define Croatia's geography, but in 1808 Napoleon "solved" the problem by capturing coastal towns, uniting Dalmatia with parts of Slovenia and Croatia, and renaming the joint territories the Illyrian Provinces. Napoleon's influence was profound but short-lived. He promoted agriculture and commerce, raised the status of the Orthodox population, and started a reawakening of Croatian nationalism. But with his defeat in 1815 at the hands of the English navy, control of Dalmatia once again reverted to the Hapsburgs, who immediately reasserted authority over Croatia.

ILLYRIANISM

After the fall of Napoleon, Austria created the Kingdom of Illyria, an administrative unit designed to thwart Hungarian nationalism and unification of the South Slavs. Dalmatia, however, was not part of this reorganization, as Austria decided to keep this gold mine as its vacation playground. Eventually, the Hapsburgs' attempts to exert absolute control over every aspect of Croatian life backfired. Croatian leaders began stirring up nationalism by promoting the Croatian language and culture as well as formation of a Slavic kingdom under the Hapsburgs' noses. In 1832, Ljudevit Gaj, a Croatian noble, tried to elbow the Hungarians aside by addressing the Sabor in the Croatian language, which was daring at the time. Gaj, who was a journalist and linguist, pushed a South Slavic literary language, engineered a Latin-based script, and in 1836 founded an anti-Hungarian journal that called for cultural and political unity. The Hungarians were understandably angered by these developments and tried to impose Hungarian as the official language of Slavonia. The Croats responded by sending any correspondence written in Hungarian back to Hungary unread.

14 AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN RULE

In 1848, Hungary challenged Austria during the revolution that was sweeping across Europe. Croats, who feared another wave of domination from Hungary and who had hoped for unification, sided with Austria and began to call for self-determination. Austria yielded to Croatian pressure and raised Josip Jelačić to the position of Ban (viceroy) of Croatia. Jelačić immediately convened the Croatian Sabor to consolidate his support. He suspended relations with Hungary and declared war, but his Austrian allies reasserted their authority over Croatia after defeating the Hungarians with Jelačić's help.

Austria ended absolute rule over Croatia in 1860, and in 1866 the Austro-Hungarian empire was near collapse. In order to save it, Emperor Franz Joseph united Austria and Hungary in a dual monarchy. In a Sabor dominated by pro-Hungarian officials, a compromise on Croatia was reached that acknowledged the country as a distinct political entity within the empire.

Croatia increased its autonomy within the empire and in 1868 established a political/cultural base in Zagreb. However, the Croatian leadership was divided between those advocating a South Slav union and those favoring a Greater Croatia. In addition, animosity between the Croats and Serbs was on the rise. Bishop Josip Strossmayer attempted to reduce the religious differences between the Croats and Serbs to defuse the growing tensions.

Ante Starčević represented the opposition to Strossmayer's initiatives and was suspicious of any conciliatory moves directed at the Serbs. Both movements were sabotaged by Ban Károly Khuen-Héderváry when he ignored a compromise that allowed home rule for Croatia and promoted Hungarian language and culture by provoking conflict between Croats and Serbs.

Despite Héderváry's treachery, in 1906, Serbs and Croats again came together to create the Croat-Serb Coalition, which immediately came under attack from Vienna, which feared a loss of Austrian influence.

WORLD WAR I

In 1908, Austria-Hungary annexed Bosnia and its diverse population of Catholic Croats, Orthodox Serbs, and Muslims. This move set back the Serb goal of creating a Serbian state and reignited tensions between Croats and Serbs. Thus, when Hapsburg heir Franz Ferdinand visited the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo in 1914, the mood of the city was hostile.

On June 28, Bosnian Serb Gavrilo Princip assassinated Franz Joseph and his wife, and a month later Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Germany sided with Austria; Russia, France, and Great Britain countered by forming an alliance of their own, thus drawing a line in the sand for World War I.

For a time, the Croats sided with the Hapsburg contingent, but on December 1, 1918, after the Austro-Hungarian empire had been defeated, Serb Prince Aleksandar Karadordević broke rank and created the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The unification seemed reasonable in theory, but it did not allow for autonomy of any of the nations nor did it provide any guidelines to facilitate cooperation among diverse people suddenly thrown together under a single umbrella.

Only one Croat raised an alarm about the ramifications of unification. Stjepan Radić, leader of the Croatian Peasant's Party, urged caution, but his pleas went unheeded. After the new Croatian government failed to move in the direction of autonomy, in 1927 Radić and Serbian Svetozar Pribićević of the Independent Democratic Party joined forces to unite the Serbs and Croats. However, on June 20, 1928, extremists from Belgrade fatally

shot Radić and two members of the Peasant's Party while parliament was in session. Fearing that the assassination would incite further ethnic violence, King Aleksandar dissolved parliament, established a dictatorship, and changed the name of the state to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (South Slavia).

WORLD WAR II

Aleksandar's dictatorship resembled a police state in which 90% of the police and government officials were Serbian, a situation that invited trouble. As a reaction to this state of affairs, in 1929 Croat Ante Pavelić founded the Ustaše, an organization dedicated to the overthrow of Aleksandar's state. Five years later, in 1934, the Ustaše, with Italy's help, assassinated the king in Marseilles, an act that threw Yugoslavia into turmoil and made it vulnerable to Nazi exploitation.

Yugoslavia tried to remain neutral at the start of World War II, but pressure to support the Axis side was great, and on March 25, 1941, Yugoslavia's Prince Pavle aligned the country with the fascists. Within 2 days the prince was overthrown and the pact nullified, but the Nazis would not let the cancellation stand. On April 6, they bombed Belgrade and invaded Yugoslavia. It took the Nazis just 10 days to defeat the Yugoslav army. Shortly after that, the Ustaše formed the Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH), leaving the rest of Yugoslavia isolated.

The Ustaše at first attempted to drive the Serbs out of Croatia, but when that proved impossible, they set up several concentration camps, the most infamous being the camps at Jasenovac, about 97km (60 miles) south of Zagreb on the Sava River. No one knows how many people died in Jasenovac at the hands of the Ustaše, but reports did chronicle acts of inhumanity and barbarism in the camps. Not all Croats condoned the Ustaše and their methods.

THE RESISTANCE MOVEMENT

A resistance movement to counter the Ustaše was organized almost immediately after Germany invaded in 1941, but it was divided between the pro-Serbian Četniks and the pro-Communist Partisans led by Josip Broz "Tito." Committed as these groups were, they were not very effective in combating the Ustaše because they were more intent on competing with and killing each other. However, the Allies recognized Tito's Partisans as the official resistance at the Tehran Conference and funneled all aid to the Communist group, which helped liberate Belgrade.

Ironically, the internal conflict between opposing resistance groups in Yugoslavia helped the Allied victory because it tied up hundreds of thousands of Axis troops, who then were unavailable to fight the Allies. Even so, when the war ended in 1944, more than 1.7 million Yugoslavs had died as a result of the fighting, a number that represented 10% of the country's population.

POSTWAR YUGOSLAVIA

After the war, Tito's Communist Party won the Yugoslav election with 90% percent of the vote, but Tito was not in lockstep with Stalin and declared Yugoslav nonalignment in 1948, which allowed him to be a cafeteria Communist.

Nonalignment was a double-edged sword for Yugoslavia. On the one hand, the country had to endure a Soviet blockade in the 1950s as a result of Tito's nonconformity, but on the other, Tito's position helped tourism flourish along the Adriatic coast. His approval of site management allowed competition and created efficiencies in the workplace. He also gave each of Yugoslavia's six republics—Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Bosnia/Herzegovina, Macedonia, and Montenegro—control over its own internal affairs.

Tito's largesse had its limits. In 1967 the Croatian economy was booming, which buoyed national sentiment. The first expression of renewed nationalism surfaced in the cultural realm: The Croatian intelligentsia, worried by attempts to create a single Serb-Croat literary language, issued a declaration stating that Croatian was a language distinct from Serbian. Croatia's Serbs issued a retort stating that they had a right to their own language, too, and that they wanted to use the Cyrillic script. Tito quickly suppressed both sides of the argument, which put an end to the nascent nationalist movement dubbed "Croatian Spring."

For a while, other efforts at liberalization—demands for autonomy, student strikes, calls for government reform—were attempted, but in 1971 Tito cracked down on those reformers, too, effectively putting an end to the Croatian Spring once and for all. Tito's hard line had a chilling effect on reform efforts not only in Croatia but also in the rest of Yugoslavia, though his iron hand didn't stop Yugoslavs outside the country from criticizing his style of government.

YUGOSLAVIA IN TURMOIL

On May 4, 1980, after decades of balancing Communist ideology with Western capitalism in Yugoslavia, Josip Broz "Tito" died at the age of 88. His funeral in Belgrade was attended by thousands of Yugoslavs and more than 100 heads of state.

Unfortunately, as with many authoritarian leaders, Tito had not developed a plan of succession, which left the Yugoslav state without a strong leader. To complicate matters, the region's economy was deteriorating in the wake of the 1970s oil crisis, a huge national debt, and the disappearance of foreign credit sources. The republics once again became restless, and old problems resurfaced.

The first hot spot was Kosovo, a region in southwest Serbia with a large Muslim Albanian population that in 1981 aspired to republic status after having enjoyed a modicum of autonomy. Six years later, the emboldened Serb minority in Kosovo took the position that the Albanians there were a threat to them. That inspired Serbs in Croatia to almost simultaneously express the same sentiment about the Croats. A collective angst spread, cracking Yugoslavia along national, religious, and ethnic lines.

In 1987, a relatively unknown Serb politician named Slobodan Milošević began to proclaim Serb superiority while working toward installing a Communist government in Yugoslavia. Two years after Milošević's debut as a champion of Serbs, the Berlin Wall came down, leaving him holding an unpopular position while the rest of Europe raced off in the opposite ideological direction.

WAR IN CROATIA

Despite Milošević's efforts to expand his bloc of followers, Croatia and other Yugoslav republics were trying to make the transition to democracy. In May 1989 the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), led by former general and historian Franjo Tuđman, became one of the first non-Communist organizations in Croatia, and in less than a year began campaigning for Croatia's secession from Yugoslavia. By April, free elections were held in Croatia and Tuđman was sworn in as president the next month. He promptly declared Croatian statehood, a preliminary stage before independence. At the same time, Stjepan Mešić was chosen as Croatia's first post-Communist prime minister, and a constitution was written that declared Serbs in Croatia a national minority rather than a nation within the republic.

This classification fomented outrage in the Serb community. In 1991, Milošević, seeing that the breakup of Yugoslavia was

inevitable, began gathering support for a Greater Serbia, which would include all the areas of Croatia and Bosnia/Herzegovina where Serbs were in residence. Worse, Milošević developed a plan to “ethnically cleanse” eastern Croatia of any Croats living there. Under such conditions, civil war was imminent.

Hostilities broke out in 1991 with Milošević pulling Serb forces into Croatia from all over Yugoslavia. During the violence, cities such as Dubrovnik, Vukovar, and Osijek suffered heavy damage, thousands of Croats were forced to leave their homes, and thousands more were killed. The fighting also spread to other republics in Yugoslavia—most notably Bosnia—as Milošević and the Serbs kept advancing and pressuring Croats and Muslims in Bosnia to fight each other.

Finally, hostilities between the Croats and the Muslims in Bosnia were ended by the U.S., and peace was declared in northern Yugoslavia in 1995. But 3 more years passed before the last Serb military units left Croatia. A year later, Tuđman died, paving the way for the election of Stjepan Mesić, who had opposed Tuđman’s war policies in Bosnia/Herzegovina, and he has served as president of Croatia since then.

POSTWAR CROATIA

Croatia’s economy was a shambles as the war drew to a close: Unemployment was hovering at 20%; industry was almost nonexistent; agricultural output was drastically low; and some companies were unable to pay workers the depressed average monthly wage of \$400.

In some business sectors, the country’s economy still is struggling, but until the 2009 economic crisis, tourism and service industries were growing as tourists returned to Croatia.

The bad memories from the Croat-Serb civil war haven’t completely disappeared, and many people are trying to recover from the horrors of ethnic cleansing, poverty, and loss. In April 2001, Slobodan Milošević, architect of the campaign to “cleanse” certain areas of all but Serbs, was arrested and charged with corruption after a 26-hour armed standoff with police at his Belgrade home. Two months later Milošević was turned over to the United Nations and charged with committing crimes against humanity in Kosovo and Croatia.

In November 2001, the United Nations War Crimes Tribunal charged Milošević with genocide stemming from his alleged activity during the 1992–95 Bosnian war. He is the first head of state to face an international war-crimes court. He died on March 12, 2006, while in custody at The Hague. His trial was in progress, and a verdict was never reached.

Since then, Croatia has raised its international profile. It is on track for admission to the European Union by 2011, and it has achieved NATO membership. How the global economic crisis will affect Croatia’s progress is yet to be determined, but if history is any indicator, Croatia will emerge as a strong, independent player on the world stage.

3 CROATIA’S ART & ARCHITECTURE

Croatian art and literature are largely unknown outside the Balkans. But that’s understandable given the country’s size and the restrictions imposed by past dictators. Croatia’s art phases follow a timeline

that is parallel to the nation’s past, and much of it is informed by the tastes of serial occupiers who invaded the country in waves through the centuries.

18 PREHISTORIC TO 1 B.C.

The remains of cave dwellers have been found in Vukovar, on Vis, and most famously in Krapina in the northwestern part of the country where archaeologists found the bones of the 100,000-year-old Krapina Man. Specimens of primitive art—pottery, tools, even jewelry—usually are part of any such find, but the most famous Croatian objet d'art discovered in these ancient time capsules is the ceramic **Dove of Vučedol** (2000 B.C.), which was found during an archaeological dig in Vučedol, 4.8km (3 miles) outside of Vukovar. The Vučedol Dove has become the symbol of Vukovar and is available in many souvenir renditions.

ILLYRIAN, ROMAN & BYZANTINE (1ST–6TH C.)

There is almost nowhere in Croatia that is without a collection of art or architecture from at least one of these cultures, usually items that were found nearby. Vestiges of the Illyrians and Greeks who settled Vis (Issa) are scarce inland, but beautiful examples of sculpture, textiles, metal work and architecture are on display in Vis's archeological museum and *in situ*. Go there just to see a perfect sculpture of the **head of the goddess Aphrodite** (or Artemis) from the 4th century B.C. as well as **the remains of a Roman theater** that held 3,500. There's also the mosaic floor of a **Roman bathhouse** that still is being excavated.

The Romans completely infiltrated Croatia, and there are few places along the country's coast, on its islands, or even inland that are without something the Romans brought or built there. Pula, which was a Roman outpost called Pietas Julius, is home to one of the largest **Roman amphitheaters** still standing. The 1st-century beauty was built to hold more than 20,000 spectators, and though now reduced in size, it's in terrific shape, thanks to restoration. The remains of **Diocletian's Palace** in

Split, numerous **Roman summer homes** (*villa rusticate*) on the islands and along the coast, and the remains of **Salona**, the former Roman seat of power outside Split, are just a few examples of the mark the Romans left on Croatia. And of course, smaller, more portable Roman leavings, such as **amphorae, funerary art, and statues**, have been found all over Croatia. They are on display in most of the country's museums.

Enter the barbarians and the fall of Rome. Just as Roman influence was receding in its provinces, including Croatia, the influence of Byzantium was creeping in, thanks to the **Emperor Justinian**, who was educated in Constantinople and served as consul there. It is almost impossible to distinguish between Rome as it declined and the Byzantine empire of Constantinople because both were part of the same political institution, the Roman Empire. Byzantium's capitol, Constantinople, had been founded as the capital of Rome by the emperor Constantine, and while it was a solid part of the Roman Empire, it had Greek influences, too. One of the best architectural examples of this transition is the 6th century **Basilica of Euphrasius** in Poreč, with its mosaics set on a gilded background. The basilica is on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

ROMANESQUE TO RENAISSANCE (7TH–17TH C.)

There is some controversy about where the Croats originated, but there is agreement that they arrived in Croatia in the 7th century. Whatever their origins, this migrating group brought its art with it and introduced a signature design (*pleter*) that resembles stylized Celtic knots. The design found its way onto the stone ornamentation of almost every medieval church in Croatia, including the first built by this new group of immigrants, **Nin's Holy Cross Church**.

As with all art movements, this one segued into another style, the Romanesque phase, but not until **St. Donat's in Zadar**

was built with three apses, a soaring rotunda, and remnants of Roman architectural ornamentation.

4 CROATIA IN BOOKS, FILM & MUSIC

My favorite read on Croatia is *Travels in Undiscovered Country* (University of Alberta Press, 2003), an account of author Tony Fabijančić's travels through the country in search of his father's roots. The people he meets and the situations he encounters enlighten more than any travelogue ever could.

For the first time, an English-language book puts Croatia's art and architecture in the context of its history. *Croatia: Aspects of Art, Architecture, and Cultural Heritage* (Frances Lincoln, 2009) is a scholarly look at the monuments, grand houses, art collections, Roman influence, and Gothic leavings that embody the story of Croatia. Essays and anecdotes from American, English, and Croatian experts predominate.

Rebecca West's *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia* (Penguin Books, 1994) is a classic, a graceful history/travel journal that portrays Croatia in a Balkan context. West, who was a journalist, novelist, and critic, undertook her research in the Balkans with the idea of writing a travel book, but the final product turned out to be a seminal work that illuminates the tangled history of the former Yugoslavia.

Croatia: A Nation Forged in War by Marcus Tanner (Yale University Press,

2001) is also a history of Croatia, but Tanner's book goes from the beginning of Croatia's history in A.D. 800 through the start of the millennium and includes the 1991–95 Homeland War.

Robin Harris's *Dubrovnik: A History* (SAQI, 2003) is an excellent historical overview of the former Republic of Ragusa and helps shed light on how Dubrovnik came to be the "Pearl of the Adriatic."

For a quick tutorial in Croatian folk music, dancing, and costume, get a DVD featuring LADO, Croatia's National Folk Dance Ensemble (www.lado.hr, \$20). LADO was founded in 1949 in Zagreb with the aim of researching, artistically interpreting, and presenting examples of traditional Croatian music and dance. The troupe toured North America in October 2009. If you can get tickets when you're in Croatia (they are in high demand), catching a performance is even better.

Harrison's Flowers is a 2007 film available on DVD set in Croatia during the Homeland War. It is the fictional story of a woman searching for her photojournalist husband in Vukovar and elsewhere in the war zone in the middle of battle. While the plot is fiction, the setting is not and the film gives some context to the situation in Croatia during the hostilities.

Dressed in Tradition

LADO owns more than 1,200 authentic, original folk costumes carefully gathered and preserved from all corners of Croatia. Some are so elaborate that it takes the dancers 2 hours to dress.

5 EATING & DRINKING IN CROATIA

Traditional Croatian cuisine reflects widely diverse cultural and geographic influences. Some are a result of Croatia's proximity to the sea and fertile farmland, and some are the result of foreign occupiers who imported their tastes and recipes. Croatians are very proud of their gastronomic traditions, and while there are regional differences, you'll find that freshness, grilling, and daily baking are consistent across the country.

Until recently, there was little menu variety within the region. But in summer 2009, it was clear that a new breed of chefs had infiltrated Croatia's dining scene with food-forward trends and preparations. In large cities and small, menus offering dishes made with local produce, meats, and fish were being prepared using sophisticated methods like *sous-vide*, infusion, and vertical presentation. The new culinary outlook has given new life to Croatia's dining scene, which is now innovative and exciting.

In Istria, the development of the country's first quality rating system for wine and olive oil production has been introduced, opening the way for development of new export possibilities. And in such cities as Dubrovnik and Zagreb, there has been an explosion of ethnic restaurants offering Croatians the opportunity to sample global cuisines including Thai, Mexican, Japanese, and even southern American. These are long overdue accomplishments, and they are making a significant contribution to more interesting dining choices and the development of a new Croatian culinary tradition.

MEALS & DINING CUSTOMS

Croatia's *old* dining tradition still is strong, but it is changing as citizens change their work hours, eating habits, and culinary awareness.

BREAKFAST & GABLEC Western-style breakfast (*doručak*; eggs, pastries, meats, cereals) is served at larger hotels and restaurants throughout Croatia. In smaller towns and in homes, a glass of *rakija* (fruit brandy), a cup of coffee, and bread or a roll hot from the local bakery comprise the usual early-morning meal.

Around 10am Croatians who farm or start work early often stop for *gablec* (*marenda* on the coast), literally "breakfast eaten with cutlery." This meal is a smaller version of lunch, Croatia's main meal, but it sometimes substitutes.

Gablec was common in the former Yugoslavia because back then people started work and school around 6 or 7am, which didn't allow time for breakfast. They were hungry around midmorning and a meal of home-style food like *sarma* (stuffed sour cabbage), *goulash*, or *fis paprikas* customarily was offered in factories, schools, and local restaurants.

LUNCH Lunch (*ručak*) generally is Croatia's main meal. It often begins with a bowl of soup followed by an entree of roasted meat, vegetable or salad, potatoes or noodles, and dessert. Croatians eat lunch anywhere from 10am to late afternoon, and if they eat dinner at all, it usually is a light meal.

DINNER Dinner (*večera*) for Croatians often consists of a very thin-crust pizza or a shared plate of snacks, such as *čevapi* (spicy grilled sausage), *pršut* (smoked ham) and cheese, or grilled sardines, usually served well after 8pm. If they aren't eating at home, Croatians most frequently dine at *restorans* or *konobas*, both of which serve a wide range of dishes but differ in levels of formality, with *restorans* being the fancier of the two.

COFFEE & ICE CREAM Drinking coffee is a social event in Croatia. People sipping espresso are a common sight on

almost every street in every town at any time of day. Sometimes Croatian coffee shops are cafes attached to restaurants or pastry shops, and sometimes they are free-standing shops that serve only drinks (alcoholic or nonalcoholic). Ice-cream shops—almost as ubiquitous as coffee shops—serve coffee and mostly nonalcoholic beverages plus a huge array of frozen concoctions ranging from basic cones to multilayered sundaes, as well as a selection of cakes and pastries.

TIPPING Tipping in Croatia is becoming more commonplace, especially in upscale restaurants. In the past, tipping was welcome but not expected. Today, an extra 10% or 15% is the norm in upscale establishments and in big cities. Tipping is rare and not expected in informal restaurants and in smaller towns, but most people leave any coins they receive in change for the waiter. Croatian waiters do not depend on tips for living wages.

COUVERT Adding a *couvert* to the bill is a relatively new practice in Croatian restaurants and it is not uniformly imposed. The *couvert* is a “cover charge” that is a *prima facie* charge for bread, which is brought to the table automatically in most places. Menus usually list the *couvert* and its cost, which can range from 5kn to 70kn or more. You can refuse the bread and escape the *couvert*, but once the bread basket lands on your table, you have to pay the charge.

REGIONAL SPECIALTIES

Dining is a national sport in Croatia. Generally, food is surprisingly good in all regions of the country. However, besides consistent quality and an ever-present offering of grilled meat and fish and pizza from north to south, each part of the country prides itself on specific traditional dishes.

CONTINENTAL CROATIA (ZAGREB, BILOGORA, ZAGORJE, PODRAVINA, MEĐIMURJE) Food traditions in this

region have roots in seasonal climate, fertile farmland, and the rural lifestyle of the common people, plus the lavish gastronomy of the nobility (Austro-Hungarian) who lived in castles dotting the terrain.

Consequently, cuisine in this part of Croatia is more substantial than in other regions. For example, the need to store meat safely inspired *lodrica ili tiblica* (big wooden bowl), baked meats kept in bowls full of lard in cool places for later use. Smoking and drying, also methods used to preserve meats, extended to cheese (*prgica*), still a popular item in regional markets. *Žganci*, a kind of grits topped with cheese, sour cream, yogurt, or bacon, is a common breakfast dish. Turkey or duck with *mlinci* (baked noodles), *sarma* (ground meat in cabbage leaves), and *kervavice* (blood sausage with sauerkraut) are popular mains.

Favorite desserts in this region are *štrukle* (phyllo filled with fresh cheese, apples, cherries, or other fruit) and *palačinke* (crepes filled with honey and walnuts or jam). *Knedle sa šljivama* (potato dumplings stuffed with plums) are on almost every restaurant menu. In Medimurje, *prekomurska gibanica* (yeast cake layered with fresh cheese, apples, walnuts, poppy seeds, and raisins) is a must-try sweet after dinner.

GORSKI KOTAR & LIKA The area southwest of central Croatia (including Plitvice Lakes National Park) is a combination of forests, hills, and pastures where winters are long and summers short. The food is similar to that of continental Croatia, with a few notable additions. You'll see a lot of roadside stalls selling homemade cheeses and fruit brandies as well as spit-roasted lamb and pork. Look for *janjetina* (lamb) or *janjetina* baked under a *peka* (a metal, bell-shaped lid). *Lika*-style sauerkraut is another specialty that consists of marinated cabbage and smoked sausage served with potatoes boiled in their skins. *Pijane pastrve* (drunken trout) is fish

cooked in wine sauce and served with potatoes and veggies, while *lički lonac* (Licki pot) is a stew of cabbage, potatoes, root vegetables, and meat.

SLAVONIA & BARANJA Cuisine in the eastern part of continental Croatia has a Hungarian influence: The food is quite heavy and seasoned with a lot of paprika. Specialties include *čobanac* (goulash made from meat and seasoned with hot paprika, garlic, and bay leaves), *ribli paprikaš* (paprika-based stew with a variety of fish), *punjene paprikaš* (paprika peppers stuffed with minced pork, rice, and bacon), and freshwater fish grilled on a spit over an open fire. *Kulen* (spicy paprika sausage), *rezanci* (broad egg noodles topped with sweetened walnuts or poppy seeds), and *breskvice* (dough balls filled with walnuts, sugar, chocolate, and fruit brandy, colored red to resemble peaches) are other regional delights. And the red stuff served with meat is called *ajvar*, a kind of red-pepper tapenade that can be mild or hot.

KVARNER & ISTRIA These two regions offer the most diverse cuisine in Croatia, perhaps because they combine both inland and coastal tastes. Here the *peka* covers food placed on a ceramic slab during cooking. The *peka* is covered with hot ash during the process. In the Kvarner, try *Creska janjetina* (lamb from the island of Cres) and *škampi* (shrimp cooked under the *peka*); or try game stews infused with bay leaves that from the mountainous part of Cres island.

In Lovran and along Kvarner Bay, *maruni* (chestnuts) are used in almost everything, including *kroštule* (fried strips of dough made with flour, eggs, lemon zest, and grape brandy). On Pag, try *Paški*

sir (Pag cheese), lamb, and *pršut* (Dalmatian ham), all infused with a distinct Pag flavor because of the animals' diet of local herbs.

Istria has the most refined cuisine in Croatia, and it is also the source of some of the country's best wines. Try *riblja juha* (fish soup), *riblji složenac* (fish stew), *kuhane kozice* (boiled prawns), *crni rižoto sa plodovima mora* (black and white seafood risotto), and any dish with *tartufe* (truffles), including *Istarski fuži sa tartufima* (Istrian fuži with truffles). A special *Istarski fuži sa gulasom od divljači* (fuži with game goulash) is worth trying. Wines from this region are *Malvazija* and *Vrbnička žlahtina* (whites); and *Teran* and *Borgonja* (reds).

DALMATIA Freshness and simplicity are the watchwords that most aptly characterize Dalmatian cuisine. Main meals typically start with *pršut* and *Paški sir*, both often scattered with olives that have different flavors, depending on the Dalmatian village that grows and processes them. Oysters (*kamenice*) from Ston on the Pelješac Peninsula are also prized, as is anything from the sea. *Riba na lešo* (fish grilled with olive oil) and served with *blitva* (boiled Swiss chard and potatoes) is a common main course, as is *školjke i škampi na buzaru* (shellfish and shrimp stew). There are as many recipes and spellings for *buzara* as there are restaurants, but common ingredients in this sauce seem to be oil, garlic, parsley, wine, and shellfish. *Pašticada* (larded beef or pork roasted in wine and spices) is another good choice.

Wines to seek out in this region include *Bogdanuša* and *Postup* (white); and *Kaštelet* and *Plavac* (red).