

Trip dossier

Balkan Kaleidoscope – a journey across 8 Balkan countries (Bulgaria, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia)



Mostar City, Bosnia and Herzegovina

During the tour you will discover the unprecedented cultural mix of Europe's busiest historical crossroad. The Balkans is the place where Europe meets the Orient, where Christians, Muslims and Jews have lived together for centuries, where old traditions coexist with the rhythm of XXI century. This journey reveals the scars of the wars of the 90's, the beauty of Nature and the people of the Balkans tell the story of nations whose fate was and will be to survive together.

General information

Geography and Weather

Balkans, also called Balkan Peninsula, easternmost of Europe's three great southern peninsulas, usually characterized as comprising Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, and Moldova. However, there is not universal agreement on the region's components. Some define the region in cultural and historical terms and others geographically, though there are even different interpretations among historians and geographers. Generally, the Balkans are bordered by Italy on the northwest, Austria and Hungary on the north, Ukraine on the north and northeast, and Greece and Turkey on the south. The region is washed by the Adriatic Sea in the west, the Ionian Sea in the southwest, and the Black Sea in the east. In the north, clear geographic delimitation of the Balkans becomes difficult because the Pannonian Basin of the Great Alföld (Great Hungarian Plain) extends from central Europe into parts of Croatia, Serbia, and Romania.

The peninsula is very mountainous, the main ranges are the Dinaric Alps, the Balkans, the Rhodope Mts., and the Pindus. Except for the barren Karst plateau in the northwest and the eroded highlands of Greece, the mountains are densely forested.

In the central and northern regions, the climate of the Balkan Peninsula is temperate continental. Covering a greater area are the humid subtropical climate in the northwest and the harsher humid continental climate in the northeast. The mild Mediterranean-type climate, with its dry summer period, is limited to the southern and coastal areas. In addition to these basic types, various transitional climates are also observed. The mean July temperature in the north is 22°-23° C, and in the south 25°-27° C; in January, from -2° C to 8° C respectively. In the mountainous west, yearly precipitation is 1,000–1,500 mm (in the region of the Bay of Kotor, about 5,000 mm); in the eastern and southern parts of the Balkan Peninsula (with the exception of the high mountains), less than 1,000 mm, and in places less than 500 mm.

Joining Instructions in Sofia, Bulgaria

Airport transfers, as well as transfers within Sofia on arrival and departure days (Saturday and Friday) are included in tour price. All other transfers on other days in connection with pre/post tour accommodation in Sofia should be paid separately – usually we charge 15 EUR pr. vehicle.

Detailed information about pickup location and time will be provided according to your arrival information in a voucher that you are going to receive at latest 10 days prior departure.

A get-to-know meeting with our tour leader will take place on Day 2 (Sunday) in the lobby of your hotel.

Our Vehicles and Luggage.

In a few occasions we run this tour with smaller groups (3 to 7 participants). In such cases we use minivans where the tour leader will be your driver. For bigger groups you will be escorted by driver & tour leader.

Only one piece of luggage up to 20 kg is accepted on this tour. Extra luggage can be stored either at your hotel or in our Sofia office.

Please bear in mind that not all hotels on our tour have elevators and you can not rely on portage services in each hotel.

Tour Leader

Your tour leader usually is a Penguin staff member, who is responsible for the logistics of the tour – updating you on the daily itinerary, arranging your passport checks at the border-crossings, handling the check-ins at each hotel, helping the daily meals en route, communicating with the driver and arranging the local guides as scheduled in the program.

Our tour leaders have the necessary background, education and general knowledge of Balkans history and geography.

As we pass through seven different countries and sometimes need to change routes due to road conditions and traffic do not expect that the tour leader will be able to answer all your questions about the tour sights along our route. In-depth information about these sights and the countries will be provided by the local guides.

Local Guides

Local English speaking guides in following cities are included in tour price – Sarajevo , Dubrovnik, Kotor, Prizren, Tirana, Berat and Ohrid.

They will escort you on a 3-4 hours sightseeing tour and will be helpful with practical information like eating out, planning of you free time, shopping etc.

Border Checks

The trip involves a lot of border crossings, which are not a problematic as long as the passengers present a valid passport and visa (for more information about visa requirements refer to the following point 5). Be informed that depending on the season, the traffic and the number of the group members, the crossing of some borders might take more time (up to 2 hours in rare cases).

Visas

Visas are not required if you are a citizen of an EU country or Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Switzerland or the USA. If your nationality is not listed please contact us for further information.

A valid passport is required. (At least 6 months within date)

Money

ALL prices stated in this dossier are given as a guide only and are subject to change.

Changing money and ATMs

All major currencies can be exchanged at banks and change bureaus. Currency markets operate on the street in front of the main post office or bank in most towns, a perfectly legal way to exchange your money and avoid bank commission.

The most widely accepted credit cards are VISA, Mastercard, and Diner's Club. There are ATMs in most towns which you can use to withdraw cash from most international Visa and Mastercard credit or debit cards. *Further information is provided in country dossiers.*

Recommended clothing:

It is advisable to travel light and dress modestly in earth tones to avoid undue attention. When visiting mosques and churches – dress conservatively (cover shoulders and knees). In most of them there is no such thing like a “dress-code”, but it will be appreciated if you cover your shoulders.

Bulgaria dossier:

1. The Facts

Capital: Sofia,

Population: 7.5 million

Total Area: 110,910 square kilometres

Official Language: Bulgarian. English is widely spoken in the main cities.

Religion: Bulgarian Orthodox 82.6%, Muslim 12.2%

Voltage: 220-240V. Sockets are of European two pronged round pin variety.

Local currency: The monetary unit in Bulgaria is the lev (BGN) (1.00EUR=~1.95BGN) **Dialling code:** +359 **Time**

Difference: GMT/UTC + 2.

2. Brief history





The first Bulgarian Kingdom was founded by Khan Asparouh in 681. It was situated in what is now north-east Bulgaria, and was inhabited by Slavs from the Byzantium Empire, and Bulgarians who came from an ancient Bulgarian state situated on the Volga river. The creation of the Slavonic alphabet by brothers Cyril and Methodius in 863 and the establishment of Christianity (East Orthodox) as a state religion in 864 contributed to the development of the Bulgarian nationality and created conditions for the flourishing of Bulgarian literature and culture. From 1018 till 1185 Bulgaria remained in the Byzantium Empire. In 1185 the Second Bulgarian Kingdom was declared

St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral is a Bulgarian Orthodox after the end of Byzantium rule and oppression. In cathedral in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria 1393 after a long war and fierce resistance the country fell under Turkish rule.

After an unsuccessful revolution in 1876, Bulgaria received freedom thanks to the Russian-Turkish Liberation War (1877-1878). The state was separated into three parts after the Berlin Conference in 1878.

In 1989, the country performed an unprecedented peaceful transition from autocratic communist rule to a democratic system. A new Parliament was elected in June, 1990 after the first free elections in 50 years. This Parliament made a New Constitution said to be one of the most democratic constitutions in Europe and the first among the former socialist countries.

Nowadays Bulgaria is a member of the European Union and NATO.

The geographical position of Bulgaria, on the crossroads between Europe and Asia and North and South, is reflected in the rich and ancient history of Bulgarian culture, architecture, cuisine, customs and clothes.

3. Geography and weather Our tours operate from late spring to early autumn, when the weather is generally at its best. Temperatures will generally still be cool in April and again in October. The warmest (and busiest) months tend to be July/August. The further south you are the higher the average temperatures. Rainfall is at its lowest from June to August but it can rain at any time of year.

Statue of Saint Sofia



4. Money

Changing money, credit cards and ATMs

The easiest way to obtain money in Bulgaria is to draw it out of an ATM (cash machine) on a credit or debit card. ATMs are widely available throughout Bulgaria.

5. Working out your budget

Entrance fees (5-10 euro)- depending on the sites may wish to visit during your free time in

“Meal for 2 persons, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course 14 €”

“Domestic Beer (0.5 liter draught) 1.00 €” you

“Cup of Coffee / Cappuccino (regular) 0.70 €”

Bulgarian capital.

Tipping- If there is no service fee, a general rule of thumb is to add 10 to 15 percent of the bill for a tip.

6. Local food and drink

Food

One of the great joys of Bulgaria is sampling the wide selection of different dishes available. Food offered in much of Bulgaria is delicious, hearty, and often meat orientated. You may well find smoked or salted fish, pickled cabbage stew, beef stroganoff, goulash, meat stews, game meat, and many varieties of dumplings.

Drink Rakia is very common throughout Bulgaria but beer is the main alcoholic drink and Bulgaria is proud of its national beers. All drinks such as bottled water or soft drinks are fairly inexpensive. Alcoholic drinks vary in price, with beer generally being the cheapest option.

Serbia dossier:

1. The facts

Official Name: Republic of Serbia **Capital:** Belgrade

Population: 8.3 million

Total Area: 77,474 square kilometres

Official Language: Serbian, and uses both Cyrillic and Latin script. Some Hungarian and Albanian also spoken in the north.

Religions: Majority Eastern Orthodox Serbs, with a Muslim ethnic Albanian minority, a Muslim ethnic Slavic minority in the Raska region of the southwest, a Roman Catholic ethnic

Serbian and Croatian minority, a Protestant ethnic Hungarian minority (in the province of Vojvodina) and a small Jewish community.

Local currency: The monetary unit in Serbia is the Serbian dinar (RSD). (1 EUR= ~ 123 RSD)

Voltage: 220 volts / 50 Hz. European-style two-pin plugs are in use.

Dialling Code: +381

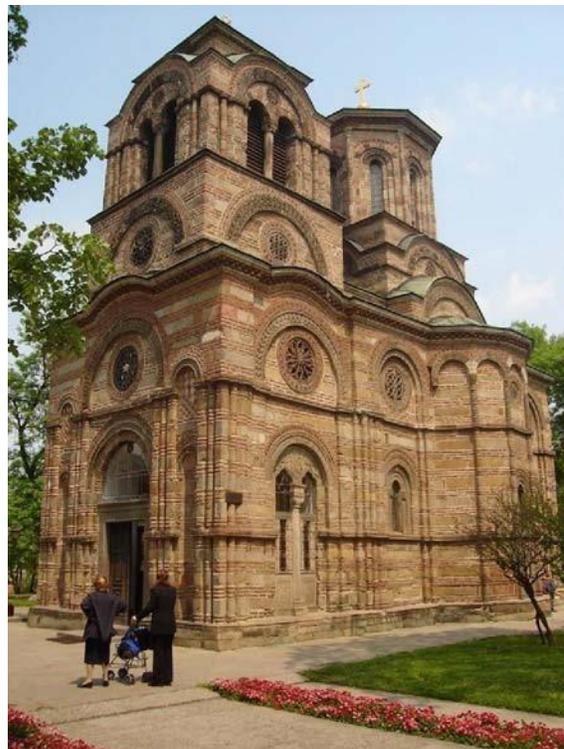
Time Difference: GMT/UTC +1.



2. Brief history

Located on a major route between Turkey in the Middle East and Europe, Serbia (Srbija) has a long and complex history spanning thousands of years and countless foreign invasions. The Illyrians were supplanted by the Celts in 4th century BC, followed by the arrival of the Romans a century later, then the Slavs occupied much of the Balkan Peninsula in the 6th century AD. The Serbian Kingdom achieved a short lived independence from Byzantium in 1217 but the Turks arrived in the 14th century and settled for the next 500 years. The Ottoman Empire began to decay in the 19th century and the Serbian Kingdom joined Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro in attempting to repel the Turks from Macedonia in the First Balkan War of 1912. Macedonia was divided up among the victors but the former allies began quarrelling over the territory resulting in the Second Balkan War of 1913, after which Serbia gained some of north and central Macedonia and the Kosovo region, while Albania became an independent state. After the assassination of Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand in 1914 by a Serb nationalist in Sarajevo, Serbia was invaded and World War I began. In 1918 Croatia and Slovenia joined the Kingdom of

Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and the group of nations was renamed Yugoslavia in 1929.



Kruševac, Serbia In 1941 Yugoslavia

joined the fascists but the people overthrew the leaders in a military coup and the country abruptly withdrew from the alliance. Hitler invaded, sliced up the country and handed parts to Germany, Italy, Hungary and Bulgaria. In 1945

the communist party came to power under Josip Broz Tito. The monarchy was abolished and Yugoslavia became a federal republic, while Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia were granted republic status. Tito broke with Stalin in 1948 and Yugoslavia became non-aligned.

Slobodan Milosevic became president in 1989 and revealed an ambition to reunite Yugoslavia with Croatia and Slovenia and under Milosevic's leadership, Serbia led various military campaigns to unite ethnic Serbs in neighbouring republics into a "Greater Serbia." In 1991, Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia declared independence, followed by Bosnia in 1992. The remaining republics of Serbia and Montenegro declared a new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) which was ousted from the UN the same year. Bloody battles ensued against the Serb-controlled Yugoslav army before UN declared a cease fire. A Yugoslav-Croat peace treaty was signed in 1995 and Bosnia-Herzegovina was divided



between Serbs and Croat-Muslims. After

Milosevic revoked Albanian autonomy in Kosovo, the Albanian majority rebelled and the federal army responded brutally by killing hundreds of people in 1998, while thousands more were forced to flee as refugees. International arms embargos were implemented but to little avail and Belgrade was bombed by NATO in 1999 followed by the Serbs withdrawing from Kosovo that June. Over the next two years Milosevic attempted to hold onto power by holding democratic elections but manipulated the electoral process and in October 2000 mass protests and national strikes saw his presidency come to an end. Milosevic was arrested in 2001 and sent to be tried in The Hague for crimes against humanity but died in prison in

2006 before his trial ended. The Federal Republic of Yugoslavia was dissolved on 4 February 2003 and the state of Serbia and Montenegro was established. In 2006 Montenegro exercised its right to leave the union and become an independent state. Two days later Serbia declared itself a successor state and three months later had its own constitution. In 2008 Kosovo declared itself independent of Serbia but although Serbia was powerless to stop it, it does not acknowledge the succession.

3. Geography and weather

Serbia is land locked bordering Hungary to the north, Romania to the northeast, Bulgaria to the southeast, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania to the south, Montenegro to the southwest, Bosnia

& Herzegovina to the west and Croatia to the northwest. Northern Serbia is dominated by the flat, fertile farmland of the Danube delta and Tisa valleys. The scenery varies from rich Alpine valleys, vast fertile plains and rolling green hills to bare, rocky gorges as much as 1,140 metres deep, thick forests and gaunt limestone mountain regions. Belgrade, the capital, lies at the confluence of the Danube and Sava rivers. Serbia has a mild continental climate with cold winters and warm summers. The best time to visit is from May to September.

4. Money

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

We will stop for money exchange at the border between Bulgaria and Serbia. Please, bring EURO currency in cash, because there are no ATM machines on our way to Kruševac

5. Working out your budget

Entrance fees- included in tour price.

Tipping

“Meal for 2 persons, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course 19 €”
“Domestic Beer (0.5 liter draught) 1.10 €”
“Cup of Coffee / Cappuccino (regular) 1.00 €”

It is customary to give the waiter 10% on top of the bill if you are happy with the service.

6. Local food and drink

Food

Grilled meat dishes are especially popular. Most fish dishes are freshwater fish. Vegetarian choices are limited. Keep a look out for national specialities such as: pihitje (jellied pork or duck), cevapcici (charcoal-grilled minced meat), raznjici (skewered meat), sarma or japrak (vine or cabbage leaves stuffed with meat and rice) and pljeskavica (meat patties of pork, beef and lamb).

Drink

You can also try national drinks such as: slivovica (a potent plum brandy), rakija (spirit usually made from grapes), loza and maraskino (made of morello cherries), Wine: ljutomer, traminer, riesling and vugava and Turkish coffee (Turska kafa).

Vegetarians

Strict vegetarians might struggle as chicken and fish are classed as vegetarian food and vegetable soups are likely to be flavoured with smoked ham.

Bosnia and Herzegovina dossier:

1. The facts

Official Name: Bosnia and Herzegovina **Capital:** Sarajevo

Population: 4.6 million

Total Area: 51,129 square kilometres

Official Language: Bosnian, Serbian and Croatian. The Croats and Bosniaks use the Latin alphabet, whereas the Serbs use the Cyrillic.

Religions: 45% Muslim, 36% Orthodox, 15% Roman Catholic, 4% Protestant, Jews and other denominations.

Local currency: The monetary unit in Bosnia and Herzegovina is the Konvertibilna Marka (KM) (1EUR≈1,95 KM)

Voltage: 220 volts AC, 50Hz. Two-pin plugs are in use.

Dialing Code: +387

Time Difference: GMT/UTC + 1.



2. Brief history

Bosnia and Herzegovina has been inhabited since the Neolithic age (around 9500 BC) and has been occupied by the Illyrians, the Romans, the Byzantines and later the Slavs in the medieval period. The Turks dominated during the 400 year-long Ottoman rule of 1463-1868 and reorganised society along class and religious lines.



of relative peace and prosperity, Islam became the dominant religion with Orthodox and Catholic Christians in large minorities. Many of the country's most important architectural achievements were made during this time, including the Stari Most (bridge at Mostar) and Gazi Husrev-Beg Mosque in Sarajevo. During the last 100 years of Ottoman rule, the situation deteriorated with plagues, military failures and revolts, and in 1875 a widespread peasant rebellion led to the Ottomans succeeding power to the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1878.

leaders built catholic cathedrals and encouraged a pluralist multi-religious nation, as well as introducing coal mining, railways and other infrastructure. Political unrest rose as Bosnia's Catholic and

Orthodox population started to identify themselves with neighbouring Croatia or Serbia respectively. After a Serb nationalist assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne in Sarajevo in 1914 sparking the beginning of World War I, Bosnia and Herzegovina joined the South Slav Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which became known as Yugoslavia in 1929. Tensions remained over national identities within the kingdom and the map was redrawn many times in an effort to erase traditional geographical divisions between major ethnic groups and formerly separate nations. Yugoslavia was invaded by Germany in 1941 during World War II and Croatia sided with Germany to persecute Croatia's and Bosnia's Jewish and Serbian population. Bosnia and Herzegovina declared its independence from the former Yugoslavia on 3 March 1992, which was followed by three years of civil war between Bosnian Serbian forces and Bosnian Muslims as well as between Muslims and Croats. A peace agreement was signed in 1995 and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was created (Muslim & Croat), alongside the Serb republic Republika Srpska. Parliament has since been centralised in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the country has a democratically elected parliament.

3. Geography and weather

Often referred to as 'heart shaped', Bosnia and Herzegovina share borders with Serbia in the east, Montenegro in the southeast, and Croatia to the north and west. It has a short Adriatic coastline of 20km (12 miles) to the south. Two major rivers to the north (Sava) and east (Drina) shape the country borders.

Much of the terrain is mountainous and hilly. The climate is variable with moderate continental climatic conditions marked by very cold winters and hot summers. Snowfall can often last until April.

4. Money

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

After crossing the border in the afternoon we will visit the famous bridge of Mehmed Pasha.

Here you will be able exchange all Serbian Dinars you have after leaving Serbia into local currency Konvertibilna Marka. You can also exchange EURO into local currency. There is an ATM machine which you can use.

Cash machines can be found also in cities like Sarajevo and Mostar.

5. Working out your budget

Entrance fees-walking tour in Sarajevo included in price

During day 4 you have some free time and there is possibility to visit other sites and museums (~10-20 euro)

Tipping

It is customary to give round up the taxi fare and leave an extra 1-2 KM extra at restaurants. "Meal for 2 persons, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course 13 €" Tipping guides at the end of excursions is "Domestic Beer (0.5 liter draught) 1.0 €" always appreciated and your tour leader will "Cup of Coffee / Cappuccino (regular) 0.80 €" advise you on the amount for this.

6. Local food and drink

Ask your tour leader if they can recommend any restaurants in the area to suit your taste or budget or have fun exploring independently. **Food**

You will find that the region's traditional cuisine exhibits Turkish influences, with plenty of grilled meat dishes. You may want to try national specialities such as jagnjetina (flame-grilled lamb or mutton), bosanski ionac (meat stew cooked on an open fire), cevapcici (small sausages made from a lamb and beef mix), burek (layered meat or cheese pie made with filo pastry), Baklava (sweet nuts and honey in pastry) and tufahije (apple cake).

Drink

Spirits made from fruit are popular, so look out for sljivovica (homemade plum brandy) and ioza (made from grapes). Turkish-style coffee is also widely available. Popular wines to try are zilavka (white) and blatina (red). All drinks such as bottled water or soft drinks are at your own expense at all times and are fairly inexpensive. Alcoholic drinks vary in price, with wine and beer generally being the cheapest options.

Vegetarians

Vegetarians may occasionally struggle to find suitable dishes, although you may find vegetarian versions of dolma (vegetables such as peppers or aubergines stuffed with rice) and zeljanica (spinach in a flakey filo pastry), as well as plenty of pasty options, kljukuša (batter with shredded potatoes, baked) ljevača (batter with vegetables, baked), vegetable soups and salads.



Old Town of Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina

Croatia dossier:

1. The facts

Official Name: Republic of Croatia

Capital: Zagreb

Population: 4.5 million

Total Area: 56,542 square kilometres

Official Languages: Croatian (others Serbian, Italian, Slovenian, Hungarian, Czech) English is widely spoken in the main cities.

Religion: Roman Catholic 88%, Orthodox 4.4%, Muslim 1.3%

Local currency: The monetary unit in Croatia is the kuna (HRK). (1 EUR ≈ 7.68 HRK)

Voltage: 220-240V. Sockets are of European two pronged round pin variety.

Dialling code: +385

Time Difference: GMT/UTC + 1.

2. Brief History

Croatia was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until the end of World War I. In 1918, the Croats, Serbs, and Slovenes formed a kingdom known as Yugoslavia. Following World War II, Yugoslavia became a federal independent Communist state under the strong hand of Marshal TITO. Although Croatia declared its independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, it took four years of sporadic, but often bitter, fighting before occupying Serb armies were mostly cleared from Croatian lands. Under UN supervision, the last Serb-held enclave in eastern Slavonia was returned to Croatia in 1998. On 1st of July 2013, Croatia became the 28th member of the European Union.



Dubrovnik, Croatia

3. Geography and weather

Croatia is situated in southeastern Europe, bordering the Adriatic Sea, between Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia. Geographically diverse, the country has flat plains along the Hungarian border, low mountains and highlands near Adriatic coastline and islands. The climate is predominantly continental with hot summers and cold winters, although the coast is more Mediterranean with mild winters and dry summers.

4. Money

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

The easiest way to obtain money in Croatia is to draw it out of an ATM (cash machine) on a credit or debit card. ATMs are widely available throughout Croatia and credit cards are accepted in many restaurants and shops. It is possible to exchange money at hotel reception also.

5. Working out Your budget

Entrance fees – walking tour in Dubrovnik included in price

During day 6 you have some free time in

Dubrovnik. There is possibility for: “Cup of Coffee”/“Cappuccino (regular) 1.20 €” self museums

visiting; walk on the city wall of the old town or using gondola lift to the top with spectacular view over the old city boat trip to the surrounding islands around ~ € 80

“Meal for 2 persons, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course 20 €”
“Domestic Beer (0.5 liter draught) 1.60 €”

Tipping

In a restaurant, round up the bill unless a service charge has already been added or the service was not up to standard. You should also round up bar bills and taxi fares

6. Local food and drink

Food

Croatian specialties include Dalmatian or Istrian prosciutto, Pag or Lika cheese, sheep's cheese, Slavonian paprika-flavoured salami ("kulen" and Samobor or Zagorje garlic sausages ("ëešnjovka"). There is also a wide selection of meat dishes, including turkey with a special pasta known as "mlinci", roast lamb, roast suckling pig, and boiled or baked "strukli" (pasta with cheese). Croatian vineyards produce reasonable wine – particularly red and you will almost certainly come across plum brandy, a national favourite.

Montenegro dossier:

1. The facts

Official Name: Montenegrin Republic

Capital: Podgorica (administrative) Cetinje (historical and cultural capital)

Population: 685,000

Total Area: 14,026 square kilometres

Official Language: Montenegrin, Serbian, Bosnian, Albanian, and Croatian.

Religions: Majority Eastern Orthodox, with a Muslim minority.



Local currency- Montenegro is in the euro zone.

Voltage: 220 volts / 50 Hz. European-style two-pin plugs are in use. **Dialling Code:** +382

Time Difference: GMT/UTC +1. For other

2. Brief history

Montenegro was originally settled by the Illyrians, followed by Romans and Slav colonies, then incorporated into the Serbian Empire in the 15th century before it was brought under Ottoman rule. Montenegrins refused to accept their Turkish rulers and in the 17th century rebelled numerous times, culminating with the Great Turkish War in which the Ottomans were defeated at the end of the century, making Montenegro the only country to defeat Turkish forces and become independent in 1878. The republic was succeeded to the Austro-Hungarian Empire when it was invaded in 1916 and King Nikola I and his government went into exile. In 1918, an Assembly in Podgorica deposed Nikola I and declared Montenegro part of the new 'Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes' under a Serbian King, a move that was resisted by some Montenegrins. The new state was renamed the 'Kingdom of Yugoslavia' in 1929. During World War II, Montenegro fell under the control of the Italians following the Axis powers' invasion of Yugoslavia. The communist leader of Yugoslavia, Josip Broz (Tito), granted Montenegro status as a republic in 1945 along with Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Serbia and Macedonia in the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). Montenegro remained an ally of Serbia in the early 1990s, fighting in Croatia and Bosnia and involved in the siege of Dubrovnik. When the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia broke up in 1992, Montenegro and Serbia declared themselves a new state under the same name, but Montenegro later distanced itself from Serbia and criticised its leader Slobodan Milosevic for his policies and his army's actions in Kosovo in 1998-1999. In 2002 the two countries' union loosened under a new agreement and in 2006 Montenegro held a referendum which resulted in moving towards independence. Serbia did not obstruct the ruling, confirming its own independence and declaring the union of Serbia and Montenegro ended shortly thereafter. Montenegro is now fully independent for the first time since 1916, and became the 192nd member of the UN on 28 June 2006.



Saint George Island, Montenegro

3. Geography and weather

The independent state of Montenegro is a small mountainous region located on the Adriatic coast north of Albania, bordering Bosnia & Herzegovina to the west, Serbia to the east and Albania to the south in Eastern Europe. Its small Adriatic coastline the main ports of Bar and those in the Gulf of Kotor. Montenegro has a Mediterranean climate on the coast, with alpine conditions towards the mountains on the borders with Serbia and Albania. The average summer coastal temperature is 27°C.

4. Money

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

Montenegro is in the EURO zone.

Some ATMs accept Visa or Mastercard, but few accept international debit cards. Carrying cash is advisable and may be necessary for most payments.

5. Working out your budget

Entrance fees- walking tour in Kotor included in *“Meal for 2 persons, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course 25 €” price.*
“Domestic Beer (0.5 liter draught) 1.50 €”

Possibility for short boat trip about 1h. in Perast *“Cup of Coffee / Cappuccino (regular) 1.30 €”* **and visit St. George Island (~15 euro) Tipping**

It is customary to give round up the taxi fare and leave an extra €1-2 extra at restaurants. Tipping guides at the end of excursions is always appreciated and your tour leader will advise you on the amount for this.

6. Local food and drink

Food

The cuisine in Montenegro has a distinctly Italian influence, so keep an eye out for national specialities such as lamb or kid's meat, pizza, polenta, stuffed capsicums, cheese and sour cream and Vienna-style bread, clear fish soup, and prsuta (smoked ham) and steak from a region in Montenegro called Durmitor. Turkish influences can be found in moussaka (a baked aubergine and minced meat) and ćevapi (skinless sausages or meatballs served with onions, peppers and bread). Other specialities include gibanica (thinly layered pastry, eggs and feta cheese, burek (a pastry layered with cheese or meat), and ajvar (a relish made of roasted red peppers, aubergine and garlic). Fresh fish such as carp, trout and eel come from the Skadar Lake. Vegetables such as chicory, asparagus, leeks, fennel and nettles are common to many dishes.

Drink

National drinks you may wish to try are plum brandy (slivovica), nikšicko beer, lozova rakija (grape brandy) and wine. Please note that most places serving alcohol close by 10pm.



Kosovo dossier: 1. The facts **Official Name:** Repu
GMT/UTC +1.

2. Brief history

The history of Kosovo is intertwined with the histories of its neighbouring regions. The name Kosovo is derived from the Kosovo Plain, where the Battle of Kosovo was fought between Serbia and the Ottoman Empire. Kosovo's modern history can be traced to the Ottoman Sanjak of Prizren, of which parts were organized into Kosovo Vilayet in 1877. In antiquity, Dardania covered the area, which formed part of the larger Roman province of Moesia in the 1st century AD. In the Middle Ages, the region became part of the Bulgarian Empire, the Byzantine Empire and the Serbian medieval states. It was then conquered by the Ottoman Empire an exact 70 years after the Battle of Kosovo. In 1913 the Kosovo Vilayet was incorporated into the Kingdom of Serbia, which in 1918 became part of Yugoslavia. Kosovo gained autonomy in 1963 under Josip Broz Tito's direction, an autonomy which was significantly extended by Yugoslavia's 1974 Constitution, but lost its autonomous institutions in 1990.

In 1999 UNMIK stepped in to protect Kosovo, in response to extensive human rights abuses by Serb forces.

On February 17, 2008, Kosovo's Parliament declared independence, to mixed international reactions.

3. Geography and weather

Landlocked Kosovo shares borders with Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania. It is ringed by mountains: the Sharr Mountains are located in the south and southeast, bordering Macedonia. The Kopaonik Mountains rise in the north. The southwest borders with Montenegro and Albania are also mountainous, and are home to the nation's highest mountain, Gjeravica 2,656m (8,714ft) high. The central region is mainly hilly, but two large plains spread over Kosovo's west and east. Kosovo has a mild continental climate with cold, snowy winters and warm summers. May and September are the best months to visit.

4. Money

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs
Kosovo is in the EURO zone.

Most commercial banks have ATMs across Kosovo that can be used with international debit and credit cards. Usually ATMs are not hard to find. Visa and MasterCard are mostly accepted. Diners Club and American Express are not generally accepted.

5. Working out your budget

Entrance fees- walking tour in Prizen included in price

Tipping- in Kosovo generally tipping is not expected by anyone. In Albanian parts, tipping is generally not recommended at all.

Meal for 2 persons, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course 15 €
Domestic Beer (0.5 liter draught) 1.20 €
Cup of Coffee / Cappuccino (regular) 1.00 €

6. Local food and drink

Food

Cuisine in Kosovo is similar to Albanian cuisine, and has been significantly influenced by Turkish cuisine, as well as the Balkan cuisine. Common dishes include burek, pies, flija, kebab, sukhuk, sausages, stuffed peppers, lamb, beans, sarma, burjan, Pite and rice. However, the cuisine varies slightly between different regions.

Bread and dairy are important staples in Kosovar cuisine. The most widely used dairy products are milk, yogurt, ayran, spreads, cheese and kaymak. Meat (beef, chicken and lamb), beans, rice and peppers are, likewise, major parts of the Kosovan diet. Vegetables are used seasonally. Usually, cucumbers, tomatoes and cabbage are pickled.

Spices such as salt, black pepper, red pepper and Vegeta are also popular. **Drink**

One popular drink in Kosovo is boza, a malt drink made from maize and wheat, it's a refreshing summer drink. Another is grape rakija, the most widespread variety of rakija in Kosovo. Kompot, a drink made from pieces of fruits boiled with sugar, is served during the start of autumn when seasonal fruits such as apples and quince are ripe.

Ajran - a mix of yogurt, water and salt.

Albania dossier:

1. The facts

Official Name: Republic of Albania **Capital:** Tirana

Population: 3.6 million

Total Area: 28,748 square kilometers

Official Language: Albanian (official - derived from Tosk dialect), Greek, Vlach, Romani, Slavic dialects

Religions: Muslim 70%, Albanian Orthodox 20%, Roman Catholic 10% (estimates)

Local currency: The monetary unit in Albania is the lekë (ALL). (1.00 EUR = ~137 ALL)

Voltage: 220 volts / 50 Hz - Round pin attachment plugs and Shuko plugs and receptacles with side grounding contacts are in use. **Dialling Code:** +355

Time Difference: GMT/UTC + 1.



2. Brief history

The country known to us as the Republic of Albania is known locally as Shqipëria. The heritage of Albanians can be traced back to prehistoric times, when the area was ruled by Illyrian tribes. The country was later taken over by Greeks, followed by Romans who occupied the land from 168 BC and incorporated it into the Roman Empire. Albania became part of the Byzantine Empire when the Roman Empire divided into east and west in 395 AD. During the 14th century AD the territory was turned over to the Ottoman Turks, who ruled throughout the medieval era into the Middle Ages subduing all resistance in the Balkan region, including the small strip of Albanian coastline which was famously crushed after staging a fierce but futile battle against the occupiers in the 15th century. Albania declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 after five hundred years of domination, but fell to Italian rule under Mussolini in 1939. Communist partisans later liberated Albania from Italian control and in 1941 Enver Hoxha became leader of the ruling Albanian Communist Party, a position he held until his death in 1985.

Albania was free of German control in 1944 and then allied itself with the USSR until 1960, followed by China until 1978. In the early 1990s, Albania ended 46 years of Communist rule and established a multiparty democracy. Albania is a member of the United Nations, NATO, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, World Trade Organisation, and is a potential candidate for EU accession and formally applied for membership in 2009.



The Albanians' Mosaic on National Historical Museum, Tirana, Albania

3. Geography and weather

Albania is bordered by Montenegro to the north, Kosovo to the northeast, Macedonia to the east and Greece to the southeast. It also has a coast on the Adriatic Sea and Ionian Sea. About 70% of the country is mountainous and over a third of the territory is forested. The climate is generally pleasant and mild, with cool, cloudy, wet winters and hot, dry, clear summers. It's generally drier towards the coastal lowlands where there's a more Mediterranean climate, whereas the interior is much hotter in summer and wetter as altitude increases.

4. Money

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

All major currencies can be exchanged at banks and bureaux de change. Currency markets operate on the street in front of the main post office or bank in most towns, a perfectly legal way to exchange your money and avoid bank commission. You will not be able to exchange lekë outside of Albania so make sure you exchange before you leave. There are ATMs in most towns which you can use to withdraw cash from most international Visa and Mastercard credit or debit cards.

5. Working out your budget

Entrance fees (3-5 euro) – walking tour in Tirana & Berat included in price. “Meal for 2 persons, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course 15 €” “Domestic Beer (0.5 liter draught) 1.00 €” **Tipping** is customary to give the waiter 5%-10% “Cup of Coffee / Cappuccino (regular) 0.80 €” on top of the bill if you are happy with the

service. Tipping guides at the end of excursions and treks etc is always appreciated and your tour leader will advise you on the amount for this.

6. Local food and drink

Food

Albanian cuisine is colourful and flavoursome and features a lot of Italian, Greek and Turkish influences. You will find plenty of tasty, spicy dishes to tempt you, Keep a look out for Mediterranean fish such as sea-bream and sea-bass, as well as eel. Traditional dishes often use vegetables and yoghurt or curd cheese to make the meat go further. You may want to try national specialities such as Koran, a species of trout unique to the Ohrid and Prespa lakes. If you're feeling daring, you could try Paçë koke (sheep's head soup). You may also come across Kukurec (sheep's innards in a gut casing). **Drink**

Albania offers many high-quality wines, some of it from indigenous grapes such as Kallmet (red) and Shesh (red and white).

National drinks include: rakia, a clear spirit made of grapes. Coffee is also very popular and is mostly served as cappuccino or espresso in bars and restaurants, or prepared the traditional Balkan way, with grounds and sugar brewed together, when served at home. **Vegetarians**

Vegetarians will find no shortage of fresh salads on offer

Macedonia dossier:

1. The facts

Official Name: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Capital: Skopje

Population: 2.1 million

Total Area: 25,713 square kilometres

Official Language: Macedonian (a slavonic language using the Cyrillic script) is the most widely used language. Albanian, Turkish and Serbo-Croat are also used by ethnic groups. English, French and German are widely spoken.

Religions: 67 per cent of the population are Eastern Orthodox Macedonians and around 23% are Muslim Albanians. There are also Muslim Turks and Serbian Orthodox minorities

Local currency: The monetary unit in Macedonia is the denar (MKD). (1EUR=60MKD)

Voltage: 220 volts / 50 Hz. European-style two-pin plugs are in use. **Dialling**

Code: +38

Time Difference: GMT/UTC +1.



2. Brief history

Macedonia is a landlocked country in the Balkan Peninsula of southeastern Europe, north of Greece.

Parts of the territory were occupied by Illyrians in antiquity, who were followed by various tribal peoples and Romans conquests - Alexander the Great was born there in 4th century BC. When the Roman Empire was divided in the 4th century AD, the region came under the Eastern Roman Empire, ruled from Constantinople. The Byzantines succumbed to Slavic raiders arrived during the 6th century and Christianity took hold in the 9th century when the Bulgarian Empire took hold, followed by the rise of Byzantine power again in 1018, and a brief Norman occupation in the 1080s. The Bulgarian Empire rose to prominence again in the 13th century but was plagued by difficulties and the Byzantine Empire took over again in the 14th century. This was followed by 'liberation' by the Serbian Empire, but the Balkan region was later divided and ruled by the Ottoman Empire for the following 5 centuries. The fight to establish an autonomous state of Macedonia started in the 1800s with the rise of various revolutionary nationalist organisations, culminating in the Ilinden uprising of August 1903, which was brutally suppressed by the Turks in October of the same year. After two Balkan Wars in 1912 and 1913 and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, the Balkan territory was divided up between Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. The new territory was named Southern Serbia and became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes after World War I, which was later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia was occupied by Axis forces during World War II and liberated in 1944. The People's Republic of Macedonia was formed in 1944, renamed Socialist Republic of Macedonia in 1963 and later dropped 'Socialist' from its title when it succeeded from Yugoslavia and held a referendum to become independent on 8 September 1991, formally ratified in January 1992. Macedonia remained at peace during the Yugoslav wars of the early 1990s but was destabilised by the influx of Albanian refugees from neighbouring states during the siege of Kosovo in 1999. Angered by perceived political and social inequalities, Albanian forces fought a civil war with support from Macedonian Albanians to try to establish a separate state, but peace was negotiated with NATO in 2001 resulting in law changes but no change to the borders. Macedonia became an official candidate for EU membership in 2005 and hopes to join NATO.

3. Geography and weather

Macedonia is a mountainous, landlocked, country bordering Serbia and Montenegro to the north, Albania to the west, Greece to the south and Bulgaria to the east. Macedonia has a continental climate, with very cold winters and hot summers.



Lake Ohrid, Macedonia

4. Money

Changing money, credit cards & ATMs

You can exchange most currencies although Euros are the most widely accepted. ATMs are available

5. Working out your budget

Entrance fees (~10 euro)

Tipping

In restaurants 15% is usually added to restaurant bills and you are obliged to pay this. It is also customary to give the waiter 5%-10% on top of this if you are happy with the service.

Tipping guides at the end of excursions and treks etc is always appreciated and your tour leader will advise you on the amount for this.

*“Meal for 2 persons, Mid-range Restaurant, Three-course
14 €” “Domestic Beer (0.5 liter draught) 0.80 €”
“Cup of Coffee / Cappuccino (regular) 0.70 €”*

6. Local food and drink

Food

Traditional cuisine is similar to that of Turkey and Greece, combining Balkan and Mediterranean influences. Keep a look out for national specialities. Different varieties of kebab can be found almost everywhere. Kebapci (barbequed meat rolls) are especially popular. Ajvar is the national sauce made from sweet red peppers. You can also try gravce tavce (beans in a skillet), burek (flaky pie filled with combinations of ham, cheese, spinach and ground beef). Also don't forget to try a fresh trout from Lake Ohrid if you get the chance.

Drinks

All drinks such as bottled water or soft drinks are fairly inexpensive. Alcoholic drinks vary in price, with wine and beer generally being the cheapest options.