

# SERBIA



## REGIONAL INFORMATION



## General Info

*Serbia – a forgotten land*

Serbia, with its rich heritage and tradition and an intriguing history, is a country that seems to have been forgotten by the outside world. Home to stunning and vibrant Orthodox monasteries, quaint villages, fantasy landscapes and a warm and welcoming people, there has never been a better time to visit Serbia.

## People



## Religion & Culture

*Predominantly Serbian Orthodox*

Serbia is made up of many religious communities – Orthodox Christians, Muslims (particularly in the Southern regions), Catholics (particularly in the Northern Vojvodina province) and smaller numbers of Protestants and Jews. Orthodox Christians (Serbian, Romanian, Russian and Greek orthodox) make up about 85% of the population, Catholics about 6% and Muslims around 5%.

## Population

*Serbs, Hungarians and Bosniaks*

Serbia's population is made up of about 83% Serbs, 4% Hungarians (mostly in Vojvodina), 2% Bosniaks and smaller numbers of Romany and Yugoslavs. The total population is just over 10m, and the average life expectancy is just over 73 years. The literacy rate is an impressive 96.4%. Belgrade is the main urban centre with about 1.2m people, followed by Novi Sad (in Vojvodina) with about 220,000 and Nis with 180,000.

## Language

*Serbian is the official language*

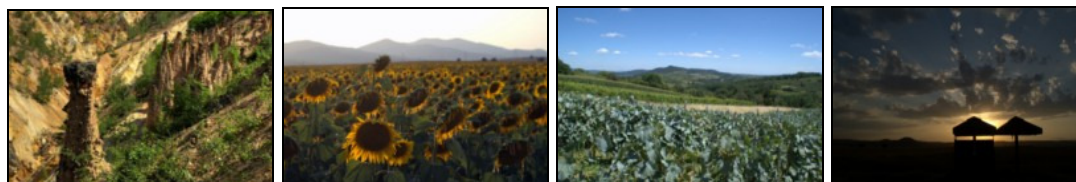
Serbian is the one and only official language of Serbia and it is spoken by virtually all of the inhabitants of Serbia. In written form both Cyrillic and roman alphabets can be used and both are common. Many linguists consider Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and Montenegrin as one language known as Serbo-Croatian. Other languages commonly spoken in Serbia are Albanian, Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak, Croatian and a dialect called Torlakian (spoken in many Southern regions).

## **Food**

*Mediterranean, Turkish and Hungarian influences*

Serbian cuisine is a unique mix of various traditions including Mediterranean, Oriental and Hungarian. Barbequed meat (especially pork) is consumed in large quantities and is generally very good quality. Common spices are black pepper, paprika and parsley. Cheese, and mince pastries known as burek are common for breakfast. Proja (cornbread) is delicious when eaten warm. Rakija, a fruit brandy, usually made with plums is widely consumed.

## **Environment**



## **Geography**

*Mountains, plains and the Danube*

Serbia is a landlocked Balkan country in the Pannonian Plain. It borders onto Bosnia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo. In the Northern province of Vojvodina the land is flat and fertile and the Danube brings much needed water and transport links. Central and Southern Serbia is characterised by hills, mountains, rivers and creeks. Serbia covers about 88, 300 square kilometres, making it comparable in size to Portugal.

## **Flora & Fauna**

*Abundant flora and protected species*

For such a small country Serbia boasts an impressive 2% of the world's flora. The most common trees are oak, beech, pines and firs. It's abundance of mountains and rivers make it an ideal environment for a variety of animals, many of which are protected including wolves, lynx, bears, foxes and stags. Serbia is also home to about 380 species of bird, including the imperial eagle, the great bustard, the white head vulture, the corn crake and the Madagascar pochard.

## **Climate**

*From continental to Adriatic*

Climate varies considerably according to region. The northern province of Vojvodina has a continental climate with cold winters, hot, humid summers and well distributed rainfall throughout the year. Further South a Mediterranean or Adriatic climate can be found with hot dry summers and autumns and relatively cold winters. Heavy snowfall are common inland, particularly in mountainous regions.

## **History & Economy**



### **History**

*A procession of great civilisations*

Around the 6th Century AD Slavic people started to gather in large numbers on the fringe of Byzantium in what is now Serbia. The land of modern Serbia has been ruled by Greeks, Romans, Huns, Ostrogoths, Franks, Bulgarians, Hungarians and Ottomans making for a rich historic tapestry. After world war II Josip Broz Tito became the leader of a socialist Yugoslavia (of which Serbia was at the heart) and transformed a rural backwater into an industrial country. Under Sloban Milosovic the country broke up after many independence wars but today peace has returned and relations are improving.

### **Economy**

*From sanctions to liberalisation*

In the late 1980s Serbia changed from a planed economy to a free market. Its progress however was severely hampered by the sanctions imposed by the UN between 1992 and 1995 as well as NATO bombing. Since 2000 however the economy has been liberalised and economic growth has been high. Today services account for about 63% of Serbia's economy and many big multinationals such as Microsoft, Coca-Cola, Fiat, Gazprom, Siemens and US Steel have operations in Serbia.