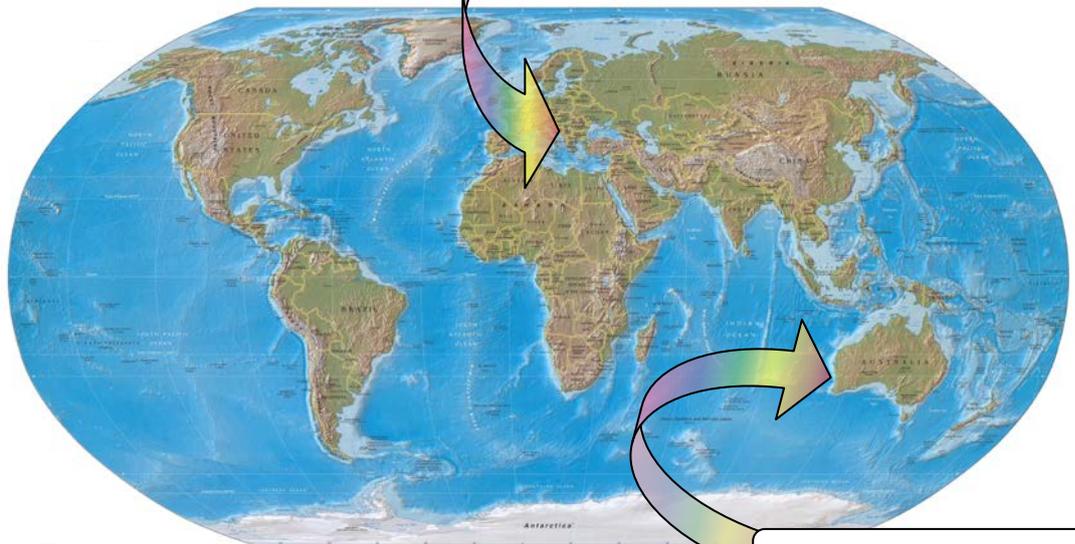


# SERBIA



We were there



Now we are here

## FACTS:

- **Full name:** Republic of Serbia
- **Population:** 7.5 million (2002 census, excludes Kosovo; UN mission estimates Kosovo population as circa 2 million)
- **Capital:** Belgrade
- **Area:** 88,361 sq km (34,116 sq miles) (includes Kosovo)
- **Major language:** Serbian
- **Major religion:** Christianity
- **Life expectancy:** 71 years (men), 76 years (women) (UN)
- **Monetary unit:** Dinar = 100 paras
- **Main exports:** Manufactured goods, food and live animals, machinery and transport equipment
- **GNI per capita:** US \$3,280 (World Bank, 2006)
- **Internet domain:** .rs and .yu
- **International dialing code:** +381

## **Serbian Community in WA**

**Serbian Community Centre** 498 Kenwick Rd, Maddington WA 6109 ph: 9452 0391

**Serbian National Federation of WA Inc.** P.O.Box 586, Mt. Lawley WA 6929

**Serbian Ethnic Community of WA** 19 Williamson Way, Trigg WA 6029 ph: 9448 2805

**Serbian Orthodox Church** Hall 38 Marlborough St, Perth WA 6000 ph: 9328 5871

**Serbian Orthodox Church of "St Sava"** 31 Smith St, Highgate WA 6003 ph: 9328 6753

**Serbo-Australian Information and Welfare Centre** 102 Caledonian Ave, Maylands WA 6051

PO Box 227 Inglewood 6052 Western Australia ph: 9371 7772 fax: 9370 4701

**WA Serbian Orthodox Community** 4 Firsby St, Osborne Park WA 6017 ph: 9349 3802

**Yugal Club of WA (Yugoslav)** 228 Oxford St, Leederville WA 6007

## **Overview of cultural groups**

Ethnic Serbs constitute a majority in Serbia at about 63%. Other ethnic groups are: Albanians 14%, Montenegrins 6% Hungarians about 4%.

The remaining 13% consists mostly of Slavic Muslims, Bulgarians, Slovaks, Macedonians, Croats, Roma, Ruthenians, Romanians, Vlachs, Bunjevci and Turks.

## **Language/dialects spoken**

National, official language in Serbia is Serbian. Regional languages are: Hungarian, Gheg Albanian and Slovak.

Serbian is the most spoken South Slavic language. It is one of the standard versions of the Shtokavian dialect, used primarily in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, and by Serbs in the Serbian Diaspora. It counts among official (and minority) languages of Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Romania, Republic of Macedonia and Hungary.

Two alphabets are used to write the Serbian language: a variation on the Cyrillic alphabet, and a variation on the Latin alphabet.

## **Dietary preferences**

The Serbian cuisine is very diverse, influenced by Mediterranean (Byzantine Empire/Greece), Oriental (Turkish) and Austro-Hungarian.

It has unique mix of various traditions; Serbian confectioneries are places where koljivo, baklava, nut roll and sachertorte live in perfect harmony. In recent times the Serbian Diaspora has spread the kitchen across the world.

Most people in Serbia will have three meals daily, breakfast, lunch and dinner, with lunch being the largest in the Mediterranean fashion.

A number of foods which are simply bought in the West, are often made at home in Serbia; this include **rakija** (fruit brandy), jam, jelly, **various pickled foods**, notably **sauerkraut** (*kiseli kupus* - pickled cabbage), **ajvar** and even sausages. The reasons for this ranges from economical to cultural. Food preparation is a strong part of the Serbian family tradition.

Serbian cuisine is generally lacking in spices and herbs: practically only black pepper and ground paprika are in widespread use, along with parsley used for soups.

**Boranije** - Serbian for "green beans", is an easy to make dish that tastes very fresh. You can eat it with bread.

**Prekmurska Gibanica** - is a cake similar to Strudel, with poppy seeds, curd cheese, walnuts and apples. It is a national speciality of Slovenia.

## **Religion/spirituality/observances**

Among the Eastern Orthodox churches, the Church of Serbia is the westernmost. According to the 2002 Census, 82% of the population of Serbia declared their nationality as Serbian, who are

overwhelmingly adherents of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Other Orthodox Christian communities in Serbia include Montenegrins, Romanians, Macedonians, Bulgarians, Vlachs etc. Together they comprise about (84%) of the entire population.

Catholicism is mostly present in Vojvodina (mainly in its northern part), where almost 20% of the regional population (belonging to different ethnic groups such as the Hungarians, Slovaks, Croats, Bunjevci, Czechs, etc) belong to this Christian denomination. There are an estimated 433,000 baptized Catholics in Serbia, roughly 6,2% of the population, mostly bounded to the northern province.

### **Public Holidays:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>English Name</b>	<b>Notes</b>
January 2	New Year Holiday	
January 7	Orthodox Christmas Day	
January 27	St Sava's Day.	
February 15	Serbia National Day	Regional Only
Movable Dates	Orthodox Good Friday	
Movable Dates	Orthodox Easter	
April 27	Statehood Day	
July 13	Montenegro National Day	Regional Only

## **Customs/traditions**

Serbia is one of the Europe's most culturally diverse countries. The borders between large empires ran through the territory of today's Serbia for long periods in history. As a result, while the north is culturally Central European, the south is rather more Oriental. Of course, both regions have influenced each other, and so the distinction between north and south is artificial to some extent.

**Serbian Slava** - Of all Orthodox Christians, only Serbians have the custom of "slava". Slava is celebration of a saint; unlike most customs that are common for the whole people, each family separately celebrates its own saint who is considered its protector. A slava is inherited from father to son and each household may only have one celebration which means that the occasion brings all of the family together.

**Serbian Christmas** - Serbians have their own customs regarding Christmas. The Serbian Orthodox Church uses the Julian calendar, so Christmas currently falls on January 7 of the Gregorian calendar. Early in the morning of Christmas Eve, the head of the family would go to a forest in order to cut badnjak, a young oak, the oak tree would then be brought into the church to be blessed by the priest. Then the oaktree would be stripped of its branches and combined with wheat and other grain products would be burnt in the fireplace. The burning of the badnjak is a ritual which is considered a sacrifice to God so that the coming year may bring plenty of food, happiness, love, luck and riches. The house floor and church is covered with hay, reminding worshippers of the stable in which Jesus was born. Christmas Day itself is celebrated with a feast, necessarily featuring roasted piglet as the main meal. Another Christmas meal is a deliciously sweet cake made of wheat, called "koljivo" whose consumption is more for ritual than

nourishment. One crosses oneself first, then takes a spoonful of the cake and savors it. But the most important Christmas meal is "cesnica", a special kind of bread. The bread contains a coin; during the lunch, the family breaks up the bread and the one who finds the coin is said to be assured of an especially happy year. Christmas is not associated with presents like in the West, although it is the day of St Nicolas, the protector saint of children, to whom presents are given. Santa Claus (Deda Mraz) and the Christmas tree are also used in Serbia as result of globalization. Serbians also celebrate the Orthodox New Year (currently on January 14th of the Gregorian calendar).

**Kolo (Folk Tradition)** - The traditional Serbian dance is a circle dance called "kolo". It is a collective dance, where a group of people hold each other by the hands or around the waist dancing, forming a circle, semicircle or spiral.

## **Recreational activities**

Recreational activities and sports are well developed throughout the republic, with hundreds of thousands of individuals registered as active participants in sports organizations. Hunting and fishing are particularly popular, as are basketball, gymnastics, martial arts, volleyball, water polo, and soccer. Serbia has produced a number of notable players who have competed for the top soccer clubs of Europe, and Crvena Zvezda Beograd (Red Star Belgrade) is one of the sport's legendary teams.

**Sport Fest** – A yearly festival taking place in late May or early June on Belgrade's *Ada Ciganlija* island. With over 150 sports disciplines presented, it is a really fun (and free) way to spend the weekend. The festival covers: team sport, martial arts and contact sports, traditional skills, extreme sports, air sports, wheel sports, body sculpting, adventure park, indoor sports, chill-out zone, water sports, and presentations of disability sports.

**Golden Glove** – an international boxing tournament taking place in Belgrade every year in November.

**Spirits knightly tournament** – The Society of Serbian Knightly Fighting, gathers lovers of medieval combat skills. They organize an international knightly tournament in the summer in Belgrade, typically in mid-June.

**Tour de Serbie** – The international cycling tournament through Serbia takes place from every year in mid-June.

## **Environment**

Serbia is located in Europe, on the Balkan peninsula and in the Pannonian Plain. It is placed at the crossroads between Central, Southern and Eastern Europe. The Danube river is 588km long and forms the border with Croatia and part of Romania, alongside the Wallachian Plain in the east. The Sava River forms the southern border of the Vojvodina province. The eastern border of the country is determined by the Carpathian Mountain range, which runs through the whole of Central Europe.

The Serbian climate varies between a continental climate in the north, with cold winters, and hot, humid summers with well distributed rainfall patterns, and a more Adriatic climate in the south with hot, dry summers and autumns and relatively cold winters with heavy inland snowfall.

Average annual air temperature for the period (1961 – 90) for the area with the altitude of up to 300 m amounts to 10.9°C. The areas with the altitudes of 300 to 500m have average annual temperature of around 10°C, and over 1000m of altitude around 6°C.

## **Your Notes and Comments:**