

# BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## PREFACE

Bosnia and Herzegovina is a mountainous Balkan country bordering Croatia, Serbia, and Montenegro. Bosnia and Herzegovina are two distinct regions divided by the Dinaric Alps. Bosnia takes its name from the Bosna River; Herzegovina from the word herceg (duke), the title of the region's late 15th century rulers. The medieval Balkans experienced a bewildering series of population shifts and boundary changes until the Ottomans completed their conquest of the peninsula in the 16th century. Bosnia and Herzegovina remained under Ottoman rule until 1878, when the Congress of Berlin transferred it to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After World War II, Bosnia and Herzegovina was incorporated into Yugoslavia as one of six federal republics.

The name Bosnia and Herzegovina is often shortened to Bosnia or BiH. The three main ethnic groups in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina are Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims), Bosnian Serbs (who are predominately Orthodox), and Bosnian Croats (who are predominately Catholic), and the languages spoken are Bosnian, Croatian and Serbian (formerly Serbo-Croatian). Yugoslavia's unraveling was hastened by Slobodan Milosevic's rise to power in 1986. Milosevic's embrace of Serb nationalism led to inter-ethnic strife. In March 1992, the Bosnian government held a referendum on independence, and Bosnia's parliament declared the republic's independence on April 5, 1992. However, this move was opposed by Serb representatives, who favored remaining in Yugoslavia. Bosnian Serbs, supported by neighboring Serbia, responded with armed force in an effort to partition the republic along ethnic lines.

The conflict continued through most of 1995, ending with the November 21, 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, which was formally signed on December 14, 1995 in Paris. Today, Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is largely Bosniak and Croat, and the Republika Srpska, which is primarily Serb. Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs are recognized as constituent peoples throughout the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Travelers are beginning to return to Bosnia and Herzegovina, but because of political deadlock, stunted economic development, poor transportation infrastructure and the presence of thousands of active mine fields, it will be many years before the country is able to realize its full tourism potential. Bosnian people are friendly toward visitors, and in most urban areas English is a common second language.

## AREA, GEOGRAPHY, AND CLIMATE

Bosnia and Herzegovina is located on the Balkan Peninsula, and is bordered by Croatia on the west and north, and Serbia and Montenegro on the east. It is almost entirely landlocked, except for a narrow outlet to the Adriatic near the Neretva River delta, which gives Bosnia and Herzegovina 12.4 miles of Adriatic coastline. The size of Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a territory of 19,781-square miles, is slightly larger than the State of Tennessee. The northern and central regions of Bosnia are mountainous and are covered with thick forests while the

Herzegovina region is mostly rocky hills and farmland. Major rivers in Bosnia include the Bosna, Drina, Neretva, Vrbas, Una and Sava.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has scenic, snowy winters, and a rainy season in the early summer. Summers are warm in the mountain valleys, but cool at higher elevations. The far northern part of the country has somewhat colder winters and warmer summers. The average January temperature in Sarajevo is 30°F. The average July temperature is 66°F. Sarajevo is known for its juxtaposition of Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, and Byzantine architecture, reflecting its location as a crossroads of civilizations. The country enjoys proximity to the beautiful Adriatic coast and its islands, all of which are part of Croatia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is excellent for winter sports. Its open ski slopes became especially popular after the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo. Warmer weather attracts hikers, rafters and fishermen. Land mines in large numbers are scattered throughout the country. Caution is required when outdoors. It is safe to venture off-road only with an experienced local guide.

## **POPULATION**

Bosnia and Herzegovina's population of approximately 4 million consists primarily of three ethnic groups – Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks), Bosnian Serbs, and Bosnian Croats. The three official languages are Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian, which are very similar and are mutually intelligible. According to unofficial estimates, Muslims constitute 45 percent of the population, Serb Orthodox Christians 36 percent, Roman Catholics 15 percent, Protestants 1 percent, and other groups, including Jews, 3 percent. Bosniaks are generally associated with Islam, Bosnian Croats with the Roman Catholic Church, and Bosnian Serbs with the Serb Orthodox Church. The Jewish community, with approximately 1,000 members, maintains a historic place in society. Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of two entities -- the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (largely Bosniak and Croat), and Republika Srpska (primarily Serb) along with the administrative district of Brcko.

Bosnia is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. At different times in its history, the area of present day Bosnia-Herzegovina was controlled of the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the principalities of Serbia and Croatia, and the kingdom of Hungary. Slavs came to the region in the 7th century, mixing with the local Illyrian population. Bosnia emerged as a sovereign state in the early 12th century and remained independent until it was conquered by the Ottoman Empire in 1463. The Ottomans brought Islam to the region, adding Muslims to the complicated patchwork of Catholic and Christian Orthodox communities. In 1878, Bosnia came under the control of Austrian-Hungarian Empire, where it remained until World War I, which saw its start in Sarajevo with the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by Serb nationalist Gavrilo Princip. After WWI, Bosnia joined the newly-formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. When the Kingdom of Yugoslavia was conquered by Nazi forces in World War II, all of Bosnia was ceded to the Independent State of Croatia, whose nationalist leaders led a campaign of extermination of Serbs, Jews, Roma, and others who resisted the occupation. The post-war period saw the establishment of the Socialist Federal

Republic of Yugoslavia, which unified Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia.

Yugoslavia's unraveling and the rise of Slobodan Milosevic to power brought nationalist politics to the forefront. Croatia and Slovenia's declarations of independence from Yugoslavia and the subsequent warfare led to a significant split within Bosnia-Herzegovina on whether to stay with Yugoslavia (favored by Serbs) or seek independence (favored by Bosniaks and Croats). On January 9, 1992, Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic proclaimed the existence of a fully independent Republic of the Serbian People of Bosnia-Herzegovina (which became Republika Srpska in August 1992). In March 1992, the Bosnian Government organized a referendum on independence from Yugoslavia, which passed with a majority but was boycotted by the Bosnian Serbs. Civil war broke out between the three main groups -- Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs -- in 1992 and lasted until 1995, killing approximately 260,000 people and driving 1.8 million from their homes. While war crimes were committed by all warring parties, the worst atrocity was the Bosnian Serbs' slaughter of 7,500 Muslims in Srebrenica in July 1995. The killings galvanized the international community to intervene to end the war. The conflict ended with the U.S.-brokered Dayton Peace Agreement, which concluded on November 21, 1995 in Dayton, Ohio, and was formally signed on December 14, 1995 in Paris.

## **PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS**

The Dayton Peace Accords created a new constitutional framework for the country. The state is led by a three-person presidency, representing and elected by each of the three constituent peoples-- Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs. There is also a Council of Ministers, consisting of a Chairman and 10 ministers. The Council is responsible for carrying out policies and decisions in the fields of defense, intelligence, foreign policy, foreign trade policy, customs policy, monetary policy, finances of government institutions, international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, immigration, refugee and asylum policy, international and inter-entity law enforcement, establishment and operation of common and international communication facilities, regulation of inter-entity transportation, air traffic control, facilitation of inter-entity coordination, and other matters as agreed by the entities.

The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Republika Srpska are responsible for most other government functions and services. Both entities are governed under parliamentary systems headed by prime ministers, with executive powers assigned to the president and vice-president. The Federation is divided into ten cantons.

The Parliamentary Assembly is the state-level lawmaking body in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It consists of two houses: the House of Representatives and the House of Peoples. The House of Representatives is comprised of 42 members, two-thirds of whom are elected from the Federation and one-third elected from Republika Srpska. The House of Peoples includes 15 delegates, two thirds of whom come from the Federation (5 Bosniaks and 5 Croats) and one-third from Republika Srpska (5 Serbs).

The international community has assumed special responsibilities for the maintenance of peace and security in Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Dayton Peace Accords. Overall supervision is

provided by the Peace Implementation Council (PIC), which appoints a High Representative to implement both the Dayton Accords and PIC decisions. The High Representative has the power to recommend and, if necessary, impose laws, and to dismiss public officials in certain circumstances. The EU established an office of the EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2002, which was expanded significantly in 2011. A number of other European and international organizations, including the OSCE, exercise specific functions and provide various forms of assistance. The multinational Force (EUFOR), responsible to NATO and the EU, monitors military forces and ensures peace and stability throughout the country. Approximately 600-800 EU troops remain deployed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and NATO maintains a small headquarters to assist with defense reform and NATO integration.

## **ARTS, SCIENCE, AND EDUCATION**

Until recent decades, Bosnia and Herzegovina's rugged mountains kept the country geographically isolated. This helps to explain the unique cultural heritage in BiH. Although the Ottoman and Austrian empires left their marks, the people of BiH are proud of their indigenous art and music. Sarajevo, in fact, was a cultural center for the former Yugoslavia. During the 1992-95 siege of Sarajevo, culture and arts were pivotal for defending democracy and multiculturalism. As much as food and water, citizens of Sarajevo understood that the arts would help them endure the hardships of the siege. This helps explain why people chose to walk for hours through sniper zones and under the threat of artillery shells simply to attend a concert.

Following the war, artists from Bosnia and Herzegovina continued their distinguished work, receiving more than 250 international film awards, including the American Academy Award, Golden Globe, and Berlinale Golden Bear. Visual artists, such as the internationally recognized Safet Zec and Mersad Berber, have exhibited in Paris, London, Vienna, New York, and Berlin.

Although Sarajevo and Banja Luka are the cultural centers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, smaller cities also have energetic artistic activity; examples include puppet theaters in Mostar, a documentary film festival in Siroki Brijeg, the Bosnian National Theater of Zenica, and several summer artist colonies scattered around the country's inspiring rural landscape.

### **Museums**

The largest museum in the country is the National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina ([www.zemaljskimuzej.ba](http://www.zemaljskimuzej.ba)). Founded in 1884, the museum has three main branches: archeology, ethnology, and natural history. Its most famous artifact is the Sarajevo "Haggadah," an illuminated medieval manuscript that tells the story of the Jewish Passover. The Historical Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, located beside the National Museum, has permanent exhibits on the country's turbulent history, including the recent siege. The Museum of the Republika Srpska, in Banja Luka, houses an extensive art and scientific collection. Many smaller museums can be found across Bosnia and Herzegovina, including excellent collections in historic Orthodox, Dervish, and Catholic monasteries.

### **Art Festivals**

There are three major festivals held every year in Sarajevo – the Sarajevo Film Festival ([www.sff.ba](http://www.sff.ba)), the International Theater Festival MESS ([www.mess.ba](http://www.mess.ba)), and the Sarajevo Winter Festival ([www.sarajevskazima.ba](http://www.sarajevskazima.ba)). There is also Bascarsija Nights in July, which features international and local performers.

### **Libraries**

The National Library of Bosnia and Herzegovina ([www.nub.ba](http://www.nub.ba)), located in the “Old Town” section of Sarajevo, was destroyed by artillery on August 25, 1992. An invaluable collection was burned, but the building is now undergoing reconstruction. The National and University Library of the Republika Srpska ([www.nub.rs](http://www.nub.rs)), in Banja Luka, houses an American Corner Library in addition to its large collection.

### **Universities**

There are eight public universities scattered throughout BiH and a growing number of private universities (more than 30 as of January 2012). The private universities are largely unregulated. Their existence attests to the fact that public universities have been slow to adopt reforms needed for degree recognition outside of BiH. Corruption, including the purchase of grades and diplomas, is perceived to be a problem.

### **Education**

The BiH education system has yet to recover from the war – from physical damage to schools to the brain drain of teachers. The effects of nationalist politics are felt in curricula, textbooks, staffing, and educational management. In the Federation, approximately 56 so-called “divided schools” educate Croat and Bosniak children separately under one roof and offer students little chance to mix. In both entities, even schools that are not physically divided fall short when it comes to ethnic inclusion, placing an emphasis on religious studies and ethnicity-based curricula. The Brcko District has developed a joint, multi-ethnic school system and curricula, but other regions have not been willing to adopt the Brcko model. Responsibility for education rests with highly decentralized administrative units with little or no coordination between each other.

## **COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY**

Still regarded as a transition economy, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) sees the long-term goal of EU membership as a driver to further economic growth and development after the 1992-1995 war that devastated the economy and industry infrastructure. A high unemployment rate, slowdown of foreign direct investment and soaring public sector spending remain the main problems of the Bosnian economy. Unemployment is partly a legacy of the economic transition and war, but is also related to a generous benefit regime for war veterans. The lack of political stability also prevents improvements to the business environment which in turn prevents a sufficient level of foreign investment that could support economic growth. Foreign investors continue to face a number of serious obstacles, including a complex legal and regulatory framework, non-transparent business procedures, corruption and weak judicial structures. According to the World Bank “Doing Business 2012” report, BiH ranked 125th among 183

countries in terms of overall ease of doing business, improving slightly compared with the 2011 study, but ranking the lowest in the region. Few concrete actions have been taken by the government in recent years to encourage the privatization of state-owned enterprises. BiH has a large foreign trade deficit where imports are two times greater than exports. The most prominent foreign investors in BiH are from Austria, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

BiH has a currency board arrangement by which the Bosnian convertible mark (KM), the national currency introduced in 1998, is pegged to the Euro (exchange rate: USD 1= KM 1.50 on 12/19/11). Inflation is relatively low and stable on the level of about 3% annually. For BiH, the top economic priorities are: acceleration of the EU integration process, strengthening the fiscal system, public administration reform, and securing economic growth by fostering a dynamic, competitive private sector. Many development and infrastructure projects still largely depend on the involvement and support of development banks, the World Bank, the European Union and other international donors. The country has received a substantial amount of foreign assistance in the past, but must prepare for declining assistance flows in the future.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Automobiles**

Winters are long and road conditions throughout the country are poor. All vehicles are required to use snow tires from November 15 – April 15. Snow tires should have at least 4 mm of tread. While they can be purchased in-country, supply is limited and they are significantly more expensive than if purchased in the US. Vehicles are also required to carry chains in the winter if traveling outside of Sarajevo. Vehicles are also required to have a reflective triangle, tow rope, and first-aid kit.

Sarajevo is a very hilly city with extremely narrow streets and limited on-street parking. Drivers cope by double-parking and parking on the sidewalks. Most houses and apartments have very limited parking.

Cars can be purchased and/or serviced locally. Nissan, Toyota, Opel, Mercedes, Audi, VW, Ford, Kia and Hyundai have sales and service facilities.

Vehicle theft is not uncommon.

### **Local Transportation**

Public transportation is available throughout Sarajevo but is often crowded. Trams, buses, and electric trolley busses are very inexpensive. Tram and bus tickets can be purchased either from the driver or at certain kiosks. The price per ride is \$1.20. Monthly passes are also available for \$70, but require passengers to first obtain a public transportation photo ID. When riding a tram or bus in Sarajevo one should be alert for pickpockets who do work crowded trams, busses and streets.

Taxis are metered, readily available and relatively cheap. They are easily hired by visiting a taxi stand, calling a dispatch, or hailing one from the street. The price for a ride within the city is usually around \$5. Rounding the fair up is usually an appropriate tip.

## **Domestic Bus and Rail Service**

Trains in general are not the most efficient method for travel within the country. Transit times are long, service can be unreliable, and train conditions can be spartan. Trains run daily from Sarajevo to Zagreb (12 hours), Sarajevo – Ploce (the port at the Croatian coast -- 5 hours) and Sarajevo to Budapest (14 hours). Domestic bus service is more readily available than rail service, and connects most of the towns and villages within the country.

## **Regional Transportation**

Sarajevo Airport is located about ten kilometers from the city. International air carriers have daily flights from Sarajevo Airport. State-owned BH Airlines, Croatia Airlines, Austrian Airlines and JAT Airways keep their planes at the airport overnight. There are currently daily flights into Sarajevo from Zagreb, Vienna, Munich, Budapest, Istanbul, Ljubljana, and Belgrade. There are flights two days per week to Amsterdam and four days per week to Zurich. The low cost carrier German Wings operates two days per week to Cologne during the winter and four days per week during summer months. Norwegian Air Company operates flights from Oslo two days per week during the summer. There are no regular international flights operating out of the Mostar, Banja Luka and Tuzla airports.

During Sarajevo's long winter months (October - April), heavy fog and snowfall can limit airport operations. Flights are frequently cancelled in the winter, making travel somewhat unreliable and unpredictable. Several bus companies provide service to Croatia, Slovenia, Austria and Germany.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

### **Telephones and Telecommunications**

Local telephone service is fairly reliable but expensive. Long distance calls to the U.S. are expensive, so many people use personally procured Voice Over IP options, like Skype or Vonage, from their residences.

### **Internet**

Internet service varies, but broadband is available in most locations. Service is fairly reliable, but not up to the standard enjoyed in the United States. The speed and prices for Internet service vary greatly by neighborhood, but most people pay around \$50 a month for ADSL offering 2 MB (claimed).

### **Radio and TV**

Bosnia and Herzegovina has a large number of media outlets which tend to appeal to limited audiences. This is mainly due to narrow markets and financial constraints, and for some their political leanings.

Currently there are 144 radio stations, 45 television stations, and 6 public broadcasting services licensed to operate in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Communications Regulatory Agency monitors broadcast and electronic media to ensure compliance with the code of ethics while

print media is self-regulated through the Press Council. Major broadcasting networks include: BH TV 1, the countrywide public broadcaster; Federation TV and RTRS, the two entity-level public broadcasters; OBN, PINK, and TV1, private stations broadcasting countrywide; and private television stations broadcasting regionally, such as TV Hayat in Sarajevo, ATV in Banja Luka, and BNTV in Bijeljina. In November 2011, Al Jazeera Balkans began broadcasting regionally in the languages of the former Yugoslavia, with its headquarters located in Sarajevo.

There are no English-language television stations in BiH, although a number of popular European, American, and other international series and movies are carried in English with local language subtitles. Currently, there are 51 cable providers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, offering at least 60 channels to their users, including major international news, sports, and lifestyle channels in the English, German, and French languages, as well as regional channels in local languages.

### **Newspapers, Magazines, and Journals**

The major local news agencies are FENA, SRNA and ONASA; international news agencies AP, Reuters, and AFP also maintain offices in Sarajevo.

There are over 180 print media organizations registered in Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, only a limited number have significant circulation and influence. There are nine dailies in the country: Dnevni Avaz and Oslobodjenje (based in Sarajevo); Nezavisne Novine, Glas Srpske, Euro Blic, Press RS, and Fokus (based in Banja Luka); and Dnevni List and Vecernji List (based in Mostar).

## **HEALTH AND MEDICINE**

Prior to the war of 1992-1995, the hospitals in Sarajevo were among the leading educational, diagnostic and therapeutic institutions of Bosnia Herzegovina and Eastern Europe as well. During the war, the city's hospitals were targeted and suffered major destruction. Despite chaos, lack of electricity, gas, water, materials and medicines, the medical personnel cared for and operated on thousands of wounded people.

Since the war, hospitals continue to rebuild and reconstruct. Support from the World Health Organization (WHO), the international community and the domestic government has enabled Sarajevo hospitals to repair a large part of the damage. Some physicians have returned to Sarajevo and have brought with them outside training and experience. Breaking out of the Tito-era model of public health, some physicians are working in private practices. There are still serious challenges to implementing a real health care system with adequate infrastructure and conditions are still austere.

Common health problems encountered in Sarajevo include upper respiratory illnesses due to poor air quality, especially in the winter, and the prevalence of allergens like mold and pollen. Children who have a history of respiratory distress requiring emergency care have been more vulnerable to respiratory problems in Sarajevo during the winter months. Children with asthma requiring inhaled steroids during the winter months in the U.S. typically require them year-round in Sarajevo.

Smoking is extremely common. There are few smoke-free restaurants or public areas. Secondhand smoke exacerbates respiratory problems. Tuberculosis has been on the rise with the influx of refugees and the deterioration of public health services.

Bring an adequate supply of medications, especially inhalers, second generation antihistamines, etc. Some medications are available locally and are inexpensive. Others are simply impossible to purchase on the local economy.

### **Medical Facilities**

Local hospitals are not up to American or Western European standards. The poor economy is especially reflected on the health care of the country.

### **Community Health**

Health and sanitation in the Balkans has always taken its example from the most advanced closest neighbor. As a consequence you can drink the water from the tap and the food in the market is as healthy as Germany or France. Basic sanitation infrastructure is in place. Although some infrastructure was damaged during the most recent war, it has been repaired.

Sarajevo is in a mountain valley that is very smoggy in the winter. Wood and high sulfur coal are still used for heating in many residences. Those with respiratory problems are particularly susceptible to the winter air. Because winter fog causes the cancellation of many air flights, in some cases, those with severe respiratory or cardiac problems have been evacuated by ground ambulance to Zagreb, about 5 to 6 hours away.

There are a large number of feral dogs and cats running loose through the neighborhoods. Local law does not allow stray animals to be euthanized. Instead, they are captured, sterilized, and released back onto the streets. With small apartments, some of these loose animals are treated as community pets, having their shots and being fed. Packs of feral dogs can become aggressive, especially in the winter when food and shelter are scarce. Rabies is present in country, but at no higher rate than most of Western Europe, but there have been attacks and deaths in the villages.

There are many smokers in Bosnia, and it is nearly impossible to escape cigarette smoke in public venues. For those sensitive to cigarette smoke, summers are more tolerable because many restaurants and coffee shops have outdoor seating. Indoors, restaurants, bars, clubs, and even shopping centers and supermarkets tend to be very smoky.

### **Preventive Measures**

There are no unusual medical preventive measures necessary in Sarajevo. Immunizations are those required in the United States, and all medical conditions can be stabilized.

## **SECURITY**

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) is regarded as a relatively safe country. However, confrontational and violent crimes are becoming more common in its major cities and precautions applicable to any major metropolitan area should be followed. Vehicle theft (Audis and Volkswagens are the

most frequent targets) and theft from vehicles are the most common crimes committed against the American and international community. Pick-pocketing, petty theft and other street crimes do occur in heavily trafficked pedestrian areas and on public transportation and are on the rise but still are not as widespread as in other eastern European capitals. American citizens traveling alone in Sarajevo are sometimes victims of robbery after being drugged in public restaurants or bars, waking up later in a different location with their valuables stolen.

### **Terrorism**

There is a risk of terrorist activity in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most recent major event took place in October 2011, when a lone gunman shot at the American Embassy Compound with a semi-automatic weapon, injuring one police officer in the process. While the Government of BiH is cooperative in tracking terrorism and various groups, the threat remains real.

### **Political/Civil Unrest**

While the majority of demonstrations remain peaceful, they can quickly become unpredictable and ugly. In April 2011, for example, a Veterans protest at a Federation Government building turned violent and over 27 police officers were injured. Protests are not common, but tend to follow economic and political trends. In mid-2011, several football matches were marred by riots and conflicts between ethnic groups.

### **Local Travel and Transportation Considerations**

The use of taxis is considered safe and reliable. City buses and trams are useful, but they are often overcrowded and are known to attract pickpockets, so caution is required. Roads in cities are narrow and parking space is limited.

### **Threat from Land Mines**

BiH has a significant presence of landmines as a result of the conflict in the 1990s. Approximately 500 people have been killed by landmines since 1996, including four civilians who died in three separate incidents in the last week of November, 2011 alone. There are an estimated 220,000 landmines in approximately 11,000 known mine fields in Bosnia, and three to four unknown fields are discovered every year. Visitors cannot freely roam about the countryside and are advised to venture off established paths only with an experienced and reputable local guide.

### **Traffic Incidents**

Poor road conditions, inclement weather, and a combination of very slow and very aggressive drivers can make Bosnia a challenging place to operate a vehicle.

## **SARAJEVO**

Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is at the southeastern end of the Sarajevo-Zenica Valley and lies in the Dinaric Mountains not far from the origin of the Bosna River.

The city is famous for its silversmiths, carpets and street food. The city is also proud of its tradition of religious diversity, with adherents of Islam, Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Judaism coexisting in the city for centuries. Sarajevo is often called the "Jerusalem of Europe".

Sarajevo was ruled by the Ottomans from the mid-1400s to 1878, and their influence is marked by many mosques. Also famous is the site of the assassination of Austrian Archduke Francis Ferdinand, which led to World War I. From 1992-1995 Sarajevo was besieged and bombarded by the Serbian military during the ethnic conflicts that followed the breakup of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement, Sarajevo has been substantially re-built, although some evidence remains of the former conflict, including damaged buildings and the presence of thousands of land mines in surrounding areas. Care must be taken when traveling in the outdoors to stay on established roads and paths and to travel off-road only with an experienced local guide.

## **UTILITIES AND EQUIPMENT**

Electrical service in Sarajevo is generally reliable although there can be outages from time to time. Standard residential electrical service is 220v, 50 cycles, and outlets take the standard European two-prong plugs.

Water quality in Sarajevo is good and is safe to drink from the tap. Due to water shortages, some residences (primarily those centrally located in the city) are frequently affected by outages during the night, between the hours of 11 pm and 6 am.

## **FOOD**

The selection of goods in the city's larger stores is varied.

The open-air markets around the town sell fresh fruits and vegetables, flowers, plants and clothing. The quality of produce sold is uneven. Although the markets are open year round, the selection and quality of produce drops dramatically during the colder months. You may want to plan to freeze some fruits and vegetables when they are in season so that you can enjoy them in the winter months. In addition to Sarajevo's open-air markets, there are several large supermarkets (such as Mercator and Konzum) that sell a wide variety of European products along with fresh fruit, vegetables and meat.

In addition to large grocery stores, fresh meat can be bought in butcher shops (called Mesara) located all around town and at the open-air markets. Beef, chicken and lamb are the most popular types of meat. Bacon and pork are scarce but can be found in a few stores. It is generally safe to buy meat in Sarajevo, but the selections differ from U.S. cuts.

There are many small shops that are well-stocked with cleaning supplies, canned and frozen goods, pasta, eggs, yellow and white cheeses and other dairy products. Pasteurized fresh milk and long-life milk are both available. Cheese, yogurt and sour cream are good and inexpensive.

Bread is excellent, inexpensive and readily available. Because preservatives are not used, fresh bread must be bought daily or toasted. Special dietary foods such as low-fat, low-sugar, or low-salt items are available on a limited basis at larger stores.

In general, most food items can be found locally, although products are not continuously stocked as they are in the U.S. Items can disappear from shelves and brands and options can be limited.

## **CLOTHING**

Dress in Sarajevo is similar to that in Washington, D.C. or Western Europe. Cold weather clothing is an absolute necessity. Also, the spring season can be raw and rainy. Rain apparel, warm winter boots, and sturdy walking shoes are essential. The latter are important for Sarajevo's rough and often uneven streets. Thin-soled shoes are not recommended, as streets are often in poor condition. Winter weather in Sarajevo is cold and alternately rainy and snowy.

Summer can be quite hot. Fall begins early; October can be quite cool. A well-insulated, waterproof jacket and waterproof boots are mandatory for winter.

## **BASIC SERVICES**

There are many acceptable and reasonable beauty shops that give both men's and women's haircuts as well as other services such as skin care, body care and nail care at reasonable prices. Some hair products are available locally, but visitors are advised to bring a supply of their favorite brands. Photo developing facilities and print shops are available. Dry cleaning and tailoring shops are conveniently located. Car repair shops and car washes are abundant and inexpensive.

Computer equipment can be damaged due to power outages, so if you bring your own PC, include voltage or power surge regulators. Most computer shops stock basic supplies for home computing.

Please keep in mind that many shop keepers and shop workers do not speak English. In these situations, if you do not speak a local dialect (Bosnian, Serbian, or Croatian), it is sometimes possible to communicate in German.

## **Religious Activities**

There are many mosques in Sarajevo where Muslims may worship, and Orthodox and Catholic services, all in the local language. There is one active Jewish synagogue in Sarajevo, however, there is no rabbi. Services are limited and English is not spoken. There are Seventh-day Adventist and Jehovah's Witnesses congregations that hold services in the local language.

Church services in English are limited. There are Catholic and Anglican services in English. There is a small Mormon congregation made up of mostly expatriates that conducts Sunday services in English.

Services for most Protestant Christian denominations and eastern religions are not available.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Dependent Education**

QSI International School of Sarajevo, a private non-profit institution, was opened in September 1997. The school is accredited by the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. Classes are conducted in English. QSI-S has 120 students from pre-school to the twelfth grade. The school's primary purpose is to meet the educational needs of children in Sarajevo with a view toward continuing their education in their home countries with minimal adjustment. The curriculum includes English (reading, grammar, composition and spelling), mathematics, social studies (history, geography, economics, etc.), science, computer literacy, art, music and physical education are part of the regular program. After-school activities are offered three days a week. Advanced Placement (AP) courses are available for secondary students. Students age 5 and older have the option of taking Bosnian, German or French. The school is located at Omladinska 16, Vogosca, telephone (387) 33-424-450.

## **RECREATION AND SOCIAL LIFE**

### **Sports**

Sarajevo has a variety of recreational facilities. Popular sports include: skiing, ice hockey, ice skating, handball, basketball, tennis, and soccer. A couple of indoor pools have recently opened with monthly/yearly memberships at fair prices. Sarajevo also has a four-hole golf course, which is expanding. The city has several fitness centers that offer taeko, aerobics, yoga and kick-boxing. There are several private tennis clubs that offer sheltered courts during winter months. Fishing is also popular since Bosnia has many beautiful rivers; fishing licenses are required.

### **Touring and Outdoor Activities**

Several companies offer organized tours of Sarajevo. Adventure travel tour companies organize hiking and rafting trips that afford outdoor adventurers opportunities to see Bosnia's beautiful rivers and creeks.

Just minutes from Sarajevo, one can stroll down a tree-lined path and picnic at the source of the Bosna River, where the current rushes out of solid rock at the foot of a mountain. Horse-drawn carriages can take you and your family from a parking area to the park for about \$10.

In winter, skiing is Bosnia's favorite sport. Tourist facilities are being rebuilt and new hotels are near ski areas. Downhill ski areas with chair lifts are within an hour of downtown Sarajevo. The more developed ski area called Jahorina Mountain has several new small hotels as well as some cozy restaurants. Rental of ski equipment is readily available; however, the equipment is not always the latest type.

Ice skating is also a popular winter activity in Sarajevo. In addition to the large indoor rink at the ZETRA Olympic hall, there are a number of small outdoor ice rinks in the squares outside a

number of area shopping centers throughout the city. While most of these rinks do rent skates, the local advice is to bring your own since most rental skates are rather old and neglected.

During the summer months most people visit Croatia's famed Dalmatian Coast, which is a 4-5 hour drive from Sarajevo. The most popular coastal attraction is the city of Dubrovnik. Dubrovnik is located on a peninsula that juts into the Adriatic Sea and features a historic walled Old City. Closed to vehicle traffic, the Old City is filled with restaurants and shops, as well as a number of traditional homes. In 1979, Dubrovnik joined the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. In addition to Dubrovnik, there are scores of small resort communities along the coast and on the beautiful off-shore islands.

On the way to the coast, travelers can visit the ancient city of Mostar with its famous Old Bridge and tourist markets.

Also near Mostar are a number of Herzegovina wineries and the town of Blagaj. Blagaj is the site of an old Dervish monastery, established in 1466 at the source of the Buna River, which flows out from beneath a magnificent cliff. One of the largest springs in Europe, the Buna breaks out into the surface carrying 43,000 liters of water per second, after flowing underground for over 19 kilometers.

Located in Bosnia's wine-producing mountains, a three-hour drive from Sarajevo, the small village of Medjugorje became a destination for pilgrims in 1981 when six children testified that the Virgin Mary had revealed herself to them. Since then, Medjugorje has been visited by millions of people from all over the world.

Because of the large number of active mine fields (approximately 11,000) and unexploded land mines (approximately 220,000), great care must be taken when spending time outside of cities and off of major highways. Every year there are severe injuries and fatalities in Bosnia from land mines, and previously unknown mine fields are continually being discovered. When traveling off-road, it is important to always have an experienced local guide who knows the area well.

### **Entertainment**

There are many good restaurants as well as numerous pizzerias and cafés in Sarajevo. Strolling and stepping into a café for coffee is a favorite Bosnian pastime and part of the culture. Visitors should be prepared for a smoky atmosphere in all restaurants and cafés. This may present a problem for families during winter months when outside seating is not possible. Concerts and plays take place in Sarajevo's theaters, particularly during the summer months. Exhibitions are regularly held in state and city galleries. Foreign films are usually shown in the city's several theaters in their original languages with subtitles in Bosnian. Movies for children are sometimes dubbed. While not all films come here, they often open the same day as in the U.S. The city has several bookstores that sell some English-language literature. Sarajevo has a number of cafés and clubs that offer different types of music and entertainment including live jazz. See <http://www.city.ba/en/> for a listing of current activities throughout the city.

In addition to these on-going activities, Sarajevo hosts numerous festivals throughout the year. The most honored of these is the Sarajevo Film Festival, held in the summer, featuring the best of southeast Europe's films. There is also the Sarajevo Winter Festival, Jazz Festival, Kids'

Festival and others. See the BH Tourism web page at URL <http://www.bhtourism.ba/eng/festivals.wbsp> for more information about these and other festivals.

## **RELATED INTERNET SITES**

Embassy of the United States Bosnia & Herzegovina - <http://sarajevo.usembassy.gov/>

The websites below are provided as a general indication of the online information available on this country. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial information sources.

### Sarajevo Information Resources

Sarajevo (Wikipedia) - <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarajevo>

Sonar.ba – Explore Sarajevo – <http://sonar.ba/>

Sarajevo Official Web Site - <http://www.sarajevo.ba/en/>

Sarajevo In Your Pocket - <http://www.inyourpocket.com/bosnia-herzegovina/Sarajevo>

Sarajevo Travel Guide – VirtualTourist -

[http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Europe/Bosnia and Herzegovina/Sarajevo-359732/TravelGuide-Sarajevo.html](http://www.virtualtourist.com/travel/Europe/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina/Sarajevo-359732/TravelGuide-Sarajevo.html)

Tourism Association of Sarajevo Canton - <http://www.sarajevo-tourism.com/eng/>

Remember Sarajevo: An ebook by Richard Rogers -

[http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0405/remember\\_sarajevo.pdf](http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0405/remember_sarajevo.pdf)

Western Balkans: Insight on Conflict - <http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/western-balkans/>

### Bosnia and Herzegovina Information Resources

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Wikipedia) - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia and Herzegovina](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina)

Bosnia and Herzegovina cuisine (Wikipedia) -

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia\\_and\\_Herzegovina\\_cuisine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bosnia_and_Herzegovina_cuisine)

BH Tourism – The Heart-shaped Land - <http://bhtourism.ba/eng/>

Explore Bosnia-Herzegovina - <http://www.exploringbosnia.com>

### Bosnian Language Resources

Bosnian-English -- English-Bosnian Dictionary - <http://ba.rjecnik.com/>

Learn Bosnian - [http://mylanguages.org/learn\\_bosnian.php](http://mylanguages.org/learn_bosnian.php)

Bosnian language learning games - <http://www.digitaldialects.com/Bosnian.htm>

## **BANJA LUKA**

Banja Luka is the second largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the largest and most developed city in Republika Srpska. The city has a population of about 250,000 inhabitants and is the economic, administrative and cultural center of Republika Srpska. Banja Luka is located in the northwest part of Bosnia and Herzegovina and is surrounded by hills, woodlands and mountains. The city itself lies in the valley of the river Vrbas and is famous for its green parks and tree-lined avenues.

Banja Luka has a long history dating back to the Romans who built the first settlement and fortress on the site of today's city. Banja Luka was an important stronghold under both the

Ottomans from the mid 1500s to 1878 and the Austro-Hungarians from 1878 to 1914. The city was a Bosnian district capital under Ottoman rule and was later the capital of nine administrative provinces in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia from 1918-1941. Following the breakup of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Bosnian war, Banja Luka became the capital of the Republika Srpska, one of two entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **FOOD**

There are several large stores in Banja Luka that sell a wide variety of European products along with fresh fruit, vegetables and meat items, but the selection of certain goods is varied. There are many small shops that are well-stocked with cleaning supplies, canned and frozen goods, pasta, eggs, yellow and white cheeses and other dairy products. Long-life milk is widely available in all shops. Cheese, yogurt and sour cream are good and inexpensive.

There are several open markets in Banja Luka that sell fresh fruits and vegetables of excellent quality when in season. The main open market, "Gradska Trznica," located in the city center next to Boska, the main city shopping mall, offers the best selection of farmer's produce. Items such as flowers, plants and clothing may also be bought at open air markets. Although the markets are open year-round, usually from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., the selection of produce drops dramatically during the colder months. You may want to plan to freeze some fruits and vegetables when they are in season so that you can enjoy them in the winter months. Fresh herbs cannot be bought locally with ease.

In addition to all large grocery stores, fresh meat can be purchased in butcher shops (called Mesara) located all around the town and at the open-air markets. Beef, pork, chicken and lamb are the most popular types of meat. It is safe to buy meat in Banja Luka but the meat cuts are different from those in the U.S. Cold cuts and American style bacon are not available.

Bread is excellent, inexpensive and readily available. Because preservatives are not used, fresh bread must be bought daily or toasted. Special dietary foods such as low-fat, low-sugar, or low-salt items are available on a limited basis at larger stores.

## **CLOTHING**

The climate in Banja Luka is similar to Washington, D.C. or Western Europe. Visitors should plan clothing for four weather seasons. Cold weather clothing is an absolute necessity. Also, the spring season can be raw and rainy. Rain apparel, warm winter boots, and sturdy walking shoes are essential. Thin-soled shoes are not recommended, as streets are often in poor condition. Winter weather in Banja Luka is cold and alternately rainy and snowy.

Summer can be quite hot. Fall begins early -- October can be quite cool. A well-insulated, waterproof jacket and waterproof boots are mandatory for winter. Although good quality clothing and footwear is available in Banja Luka, Sarajevo and Zagreb, prices are generally higher than in the U.S.

## **BASIC SERVICES**

Banja Luka offers many beauty shops that give both men's and women's haircuts as well as other services such as skin care, body care and nail care at reasonable prices. Beauty treatments are available such as facials, waxing, tanning, massage, manicures and pedicures by appointment. The largest spa center is located in Laktasi fifteen minute drive from Banja Luka at hotel Kaldera <http://www.hotelkaldera.com/wellness.html> and offers body care treatments at affordable prices. Some hair products are available locally, but visitors are advised to bring a supply of their favorite brands. Tailors, dressmakers and cobblers are available locally and offer excellent service at fair prices. Dry cleaning services are also available but the service can be varied. Car repair shops and car washes are abundant and inexpensive.

Please keep in mind that many shop keepers and shop workers do not speak English, and so learning some local language can be of great assistance.

## **EDUCATION**

### **Dependent Education**

There are no international primary or secondary schools available in Banja Luka.

There are currently no schools offering instruction in English in Banja Luka. There are good local public schools that offer instruction in the local language (Serbian). Families with school-age children who are not speakers of one of Bosnia's local dialects (Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian) should seriously consider home-schooling or boarding school.

## **RECREATION AND SOCIAL LIFE**

Banja Luka offers diverse opportunities for recreation. The city has several fitness centers that offer pilates, aerobics and yoga. Fishing is very popular in Banja Luka and there are several fly-fishing posts but fishing licenses are required. The approximate price of a monthly fishing permit ranges from \$54 to \$170 depending on the area.

There are a couple of indoor pools offering monthly/yearly memberships at fair prices as well as an outdoor water park, "Auqana," (<http://www.aquana.ba/>) located in the center of the city.

### **Sports**

Tennis is very popular and there are a few outdoor and indoor courts. Popular sports include: skiing, handball, basketball, and soccer. Skiing is Bosnia's favorite sport during the winter months. The closest tourist facilities to Banja Luka are at Mount Vlasic, about 90 minutes away, offering lodges and ski areas. There is a more developed ski area near Sarajevo, about 4 hours away, called Jahorina Mountain, offering several new small hotels and some cozy restaurants. Rental of ski equipment is readily available; however, the equipment is not always of a high quality. Banja Luka has one small ice skating rink for children.

### **Touring and Outdoor Activities**

Banja Luka is great for outdoor activities. The Vrbas River flows through the city and one can stroll down tree-lined paths and have a picnic by the river. The most popular picnic site is Tresnjik. Another popular hiking and picnic area is a 30-minute drive away from the city and is called Krupa na Vrbasu. It offers fish restaurants and hiking trails. Rafting and kayaking is another popular activity during summer months and there are many tourist agencies that offer rafting day-trips at affordable prices. The area around Banja Luka offers interesting day-trips throughout the year. Visitors may explore Jajce, the former capital of the medieval Bosnian kingdom, offering an interesting tour of the old fortress and beautiful waterfalls.

During the summer months most people visit Croatia's famed Dalmatian Coast, which is a 4-5 hour drive. The closest destination at the Croatian coast is Brela and is four hours away. The most popular coastal attractions are the Istria peninsula to the north and the city of Dubrovnik to the south. Both are approximately 7-8 hours away by car. Dubrovnik is located on a peninsula that juts into the Adriatic Sea and features a historic walled Old City. Closed to vehicle traffic, the Old City is filled with restaurants and shops, as well as a number of traditional homes. In 1979, Dubrovnik joined the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. In addition to Dubrovnik, there are scores of small resort communities along the coast and on the beautiful off-shore islands.

On the way to the coast via Sarajevo, travelers can visit the ancient city of Mostar in the Hercegovina region of Bosnia, with its famous Old Bridge and tourist markets. Near Mostar are a number of wineries and the town of Blagaj, the site of an old Dervish monastery established in 1466 at the source of the Buna River, which flows out from beneath a magnificent cliff. One of the largest springs in Europe, the Buna breaks out into the surface carrying 43,000 liters of water per second, after flowing underground for over 19 kilometers.

Located in Bosnia's wine-producing mountains, a six-hour drive from Banja Luka, the small village of Medjugorje became a destination for pilgrims in 1981 when six children testified that the Virgin Mary had revealed herself to them. Since then, Medjugorje has been visited by millions of people from all over the world.

The Plitvice Lakes National Park, located in Croatia and only a three-hour drive from Banja Luka, is a popular destination for nature lovers. The park harbors a grand collection of waterfalls, lakes and forests. The lakes are famous for their color ranging from azure to green, gray and blue. The National Park was also listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site back in 1979.

Because of the large number of active mine fields (approximately 11,000) and unexploded land mines (approximately 220,000), great care must be taken when spending time outside of cities and off of major highways in Bosnia. Every year there are severe injuries and fatalities among the civilian population in Bosnia from land mines, and previously unknown mine fields are continually being discovered. When traveling off-road, it is important to always have an experienced local guide who knows the area well.

### **Entertainment**

Like many places across the Balkans, Banja Luka social life revolves around a very rich coffee bar culture where people meet over an espresso or a cappuccino, often followed by cigarettes. There are many good restaurants offering local specialties as well as numerous pizzerias and

cafés. Strolling and stepping into a café for coffee is a favorite Bosnian pastime and part of the culture. One down side is prevalent smoking in Bosnia which is part of the local coffee culture. Officers should be prepared for heavy smoke presence in all restaurants and cafés. This may present a problem for families during winter months when outside seating is not possible.

Banja Luka has a multiplex cinema "Palas" <http://www.bl-bioskop.ba/> and while not all films come to this part of the world, those that do are often open the same day as in the U.S.

Officers may visit the Banja Luka Contemporary Art Museum <http://www.msurs.org/en/index.php?sid=index&cid=0> that hosts diverse art exhibitions and the Banja Luka museum <http://www.muzeirs.com/home,1.html?sLang=en> .

Banja Luka hosts some very significant regional festivals and the most popular is "Kratkofil" an International Festival of short film held during the summer. A very popular fest is the "DFKBL" or Demo Rok Fest usually held in June and July.

## RELATED INTERNET SITES

Please see the following web sites for additional information about Banja Luka:

<http://www.blinfo.info/>

<http://www.banjaluka.com/>

<http://www.banjalukalive.com/>

<http://www.crnaovcamag.com/index.html>

## RECOMMENDED READING

These titles are provided as general references. The Department of State does not endorse these or other unofficial publications.

### Books:

Andric, Ivo. *The Bridge on the Drina*

Andric, Ivo. *The Days of the Consuls*

Bennet, Chris. *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse: Causes, Course and Consequence*

Brooks, Geraldine. *People of the Book*

Burg, Steven L. and Shoup, Paul S. *The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina : Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention*

Clancy, Tim. *Bosnia and Herzegovina: The Bradt Travel Guide*

Cohen, Roger. *Hearts Grown Brutal*

Donia, Robert J. and Fine John V A. *Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Tradition Betrayed*

Galloway, Steven. *The Cellist of Sarajevo*

Glenny, Misha. *The Fall of Yugoslavia*

Hobrooke, Richard. *To End a War*

Malcolm, Noel. *The Short History of Bosnia and Herzegovina*

Pinson, Mark (ed.). *The Muslims of Bosnia and Herzegovina: Their Historical Development from the Middle Ages to the Dissolution of Yugoslavia*

Silber, Laura, and Little, Allan. *The Death of Yugoslavia*

Simon, Scott. *Pretty Birds*

Sudetic, Chuck. *Blood and Vengeance*

West, Rebecca. *Black Lamb, Gray Falcon*

Movies:

In the Land of Blood and Honey (2011)

Circus Columbia (2010)

Behind Enemy Lines (2001)

No Man's Land (2001)

The Hunting Party (2007)

Welcome to Sarajevo (1997)