Serbia is a country located in the Balkans, in southeast Europe. It was one of the six republics of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is surrounded by Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, North Macedonia, Albania, and Romania. It is situated on one of the major land routes from Central Europe to Turkey and further on to the Near East.

Sources: wikitravel.org and serbia.com

Where is Serbia? – click here

THE NATIONAL ANTHEM OF SERBIA – Hear the national anthem of the Republic of Serbia

God of Justice; Thou who saved us when in deepest bondage cast
Hear Thy Serbian children's voices, be our help as in the past.

With Thy mighty hand sustain us, still our rugged pathway trace;
God, our hope; protect and cherish, Serbian lands and Serbian race!

Bind in closest links our kindred
Teach the love that will not fail,
May the loathed fiend of discord
Never in our ranks prevail.

Let the golden fruits of union
Our young tree of freedom grace;
God, our Master! Guide and prosper,

Lord! Avert from us Thy vengeance,
Thunder of Thy dreaded ire;
Bless each Serbian town and hamlet,
Mountain, meadow, heart and spire!

When our host goes forth to battle
Death or victory to embrace—
God, our Master! Guide and prosper,
Serbian lands and Serbian race!

On our sepulchre of ages
Breaks the resurrection morn,
From the slough of direst slavery
Serbia anew is born.

Through five hundred years of duration
We have kneeled before Thy face,
All our kin, O God! Deliver
Thus entreats the Serbian race!
NATIONAL SYMBOLS

• The coat of arms includes the crown of the Nemanjić dynasty. The shield on the eagle’s chest bears the national symbol, the Serbian Cross, which has been an official symbol since 1691. It is thought to be based upon the tetragrammatic cross of the Palaiologos dynasty from the 13th century, the last ruling dynasty of the Byzantine Empire. The **Serbian Cross** includes 4 stylized Cs or “firesteels”/fire starters. The Cs are the Cyrillic letter C, which is the Latin (English) letter S.

• The coat of arms of the Republic of Serbia was established on 16 June 1882. Its famous two-headed eagle is shown: one head represents the direction towards heaven, while the other head is turned towards earth.

• **FUN FACT:** The Cyrillic Cs represent the motto “Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava” or “Only Unity Saves the Serbs.” It has been a rallying call for the Serbians to preserve their heritage, faith, and nationhood throughout their history.

• *Photos: srbija.gov.rs*
Craft – Make an Eagle

With a few items in your home, you can make a majestic eagle!
(We have them here in America as well!)

CLICK HERE to learn how.
Serbian Language

• The official language is Serbian. Both the official Cyrillic script and the more familiar Latin script, which is very widespread in Serbia, are taught in school.

• After a reform in 1868, the alphabet and spelling were radically simplified resulting in the Serbian Cyrillic script consisting of 30 letters. Even today, it is learned according to the principle: “Write as you speak and read as it is written.”

• **SPEAK SERBIAN:** Once you know how to say the name of each letter, you know how it is always pronounced in a word and how the whole word is pronounced!

• **Serbian Alphabet:** The website below not only has the Serbian alphabet in both Cyrillic and Latin, but also has a short video with sound pronunciation for each letter. Listen carefully! Many sound alike!
Now you can speak Serbian!

- To hear every day, familiar phrases such as those (and more) below, click here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Serbian (Latin)</th>
<th>Serbian (Cyrillic)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good morning</td>
<td>Dobro jutro</td>
<td>Добро јутро</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good day/Hello</td>
<td>Dobar dan</td>
<td>Добар дан</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good evening</td>
<td>Dobro veće</td>
<td>Добро вече</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- To learn how to identify family members, click here. Then, scroll down to the bottom of the page under the heading “Themes” and select, “Family.” You can also select any other theme to learn phrases in that subject as well!
Write Serbian - The beautiful Cyrillic alphabet. Can you try to recreate these alphabet letters? Source: serbiancitizenship.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CYRILLIC</th>
<th>LATIN</th>
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<th>PRONUNCIATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>English a in father</td>
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<tr>
<td>English b</td>
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<tr>
<td>English v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English p in go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[A sound like] j in Jew, but slightly softer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English e in pet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English z in pleasure, French j in jouir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English i in machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English y in yet</td>
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<tr>
<td>English ě in yet</td>
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<tr>
<td>English e</td>
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<tr>
<td>[A sound between the English i in June and c]</td>
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<tr>
<td>English u in rule</td>
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<tr>
<td>English j</td>
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<tr>
<td>English m</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| THE SERBIAN AND CROATIAN ALPHABETS |

The alphabetical order of the Latin alphabet is the following:

a, b, c, d, e, f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, x, z.
Embroidery, crochet, and rug weaving are hallmarks of Serbian culture. These art forms are called “Ručni Rad,” which means “made from hand.” These folkart traditions bring beauty and color to clothing, tabletops, floors, and more.

Examples of Serbian Needlework

Kilim Woven Rugs

A “kilim”/čilim – traditional rug, woven of fine threads to a flat, napless rug of beautiful colors and which often feature designs that are “signatures” of Serbian artistry. In the town of Pirot, centuries of weavers have produced Serbia’s most beautiful and sought-after rugs. For centuries, there were thousands of weavers. Today, 30 women weave rugs to preserve the art form.

Click Here to watch the video about these amazing weavers.

To learn more about the rugs of Pirot, CLICK HERE.
Kolo Dance

• Kolo is a traditional, collective folk dance performed by interlinked dancers who form a chain, usually moving in a circular line holding hands. It is performed at private and public gatherings and involves all members of the local community. Kolo is a symbol of national identity and is performed during important events. Professional troupes, local communities, and artistic cultural societies preserve this traditional dance by organizing local, regional and national fairs, festivals and competitions. Direct participation is the most common way of teaching and learning the dance. Skilled dancers motivate others to learn and improve their own performance. Knowledge is also acquired through the regular education system and in ballet and music schools.

• Source: ich.unesco.org

• Learn the basic steps: VIDEO

• To see the Twin Cities’ own Serbian Dance Ensemble, (from St. Sava’s Church in So. St. Paul), CLICK HERE.

• For more information about this topic, CLICK HERE
Music

• SERBIAN MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS
  • The Balkan region have many musical instruments in common. Here are examples of some used to play Serbian music: Gajde (bagpipe), Gusle and Tambura/Tamburitza (lute), Frula/Kaval (flute).” Source: Serbia.com
  • For more information about this topic, CLICK HERE

• THE GUSLE
  • Photo at left: sdkultura.org
  • The ‘Gusle’ is a single-stringed musical instrument (and musical style) that is always accompanied by singing; musical folklore, specifically epic poetry. It consists of a wooden sound box, covered with an animal skin and a neck. The most common and traditional version is single-stringed with thirty horsetail hairs making one string. A bow is pulled over the string/s, creating a dramatic and sharp sound, expressive and difficult to master. Singing to the accompaniment of the Gusle was how cultural stories and histories were passed down through generations and is an important part of Serbian heritage. Source: Wikipedia.com

• To watch and listen to the Gusle and singing, CLICK HERE

• CRAFT ACTIVITY: TO MAKE YOUR OWN GUSLE-INSPIRED STRINGED INSTRUMENT, CLICK HERE
Folk costumes, once everyday clothing, are the main characteristic of ethnicity that made Serbs distinctive from people of other nationalities. Serbian folk costumes have a distinctive place in Serbian culture and tradition. The costumes from the 19th and the first decade of the 20th century, with their varied decorations and shapes both on female and male costumes, have been preserved. Every region inhabited by the Serbs has distinctive folk costumes. The way of dressing was a recognizable sign of one’s regional ethnicity. Throughout history, different folk costumes had multiple meanings in everyday life, but they were also influenced by different ethnicities, therefore folk costumes are symbols of time in which they were created and worn.

Serbian folk dress is divided into several groups: Dinaric, Morava, Pannonian, and Vardar styles, all of which can also be placed under regional groups such as: Northern Serbia (which mostly includes Vojvodina), Central Serbia, Eastern Serbia, Western Serbia, and Southern Serbia. Source: Serbia.com

Examples of traditional Serbian costume
To learn more about traditional Serbian clothing, CLICK HERE. Source: Panacomp Wonderland Travel
Source: Silken Thread, svilenkonac.net / Photo: Dušan Nečeski.
And what about those shoes?? CLICK HERE to learn more about “Opanci”
FOOD

• 10 Serbian Recipes Everybody Should Know - [http://www.serbia.com/10-serbian-recipes-everybody-know/](http://www.serbia.com/10-serbian-recipes-everybody-know/)

• Urban Expedition: Serbian Recipes - [Try these Serbian Recipes](#)
Religion

• **THE SERBIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH**
  • *Photo: Kevin Stemwell*
  • The Serbian Orthodox Church is an ecclesiastically independent member of the Eastern Orthodox Church. It is the second-oldest Slavic Orthodox Church in the world, after the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The Serbian Patriarch is the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The Church also has its own flag consisting of the base tricolor Serbian flag and the Serbian Cross.
  • St. Sava was the one who requested the Constantinople Patriarchate’s (or “head”) blessing to have an independent member church for the Serbian people. That request was granted in 1219. St. Sava was the first Archbishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church.
  • The Serbian Orthodox Church weathered numerous changes throughout history, with the modern-day Serbian Orthodox Church being re-established in 1920.
  • *Source: The Government of the Republic of Serbia (www.srbija.gov.rs)*
  • For more information about this topic, [CLICK HERE](#)
Saint Sava

• Saint Sava is widely considered as one of the most important figures of **Serbian history**. Saint Sava is venerated by the **Serbian Orthodox Church** as its founder on January 27 [O.S. January 14]. He is the patron saint of Serbia, Serbs, and Serbian education. The **Church of Saint Sava** in Belgrade is dedicated to him and it is one of the largest church buildings in the world. Saint Sava was known as the **Enlightener**. He was a Serbian prince and Orthodox monk, the first Archbishop of the autocephalous (independent) **Serbian Church**, the founder of Serbian law, and a diplomat.

• *Source:* [http://www.serbia.com](http://www.serbia.com)

• To learn more about St. Sava, [CLICK HERE](http://www.serbia.com)
The marriage ceremony of the Serbian Orthodox Church is rich with symbolism. Each ritual has a special and significant meaning. The ceremony consists of the Services of the Betrothal & the Crowning.

**Highlights:**

- Both the bride and groom get wedding rings as symbols of betrothal. The Serbian Orthodox Church prefers that the wedding ring be worn on the right hand over the “vein amore,” the vein of love. The Church believes that the facts of faith are more important than of the heart, which can betray. The right hand is also preferred because that hand is used to cross yourself, Jesus Christ sits at the right hand of the Father, and on Judgment Day, the Lord will divide the people into two groups, with the righteous on His right.

- The Service of the Crowning is the wedding proper and includes the joining of hands and the crowning. The right hands of the bride and groom are joined and bound with a scarf. Symbolizing their “oneness,” their hands remain joined throughout the ceremony. Crowning is the climax of the wedding service. The bride and groom are crowned as king and queen of their own spiritual kingdom on Earth: their home.

*Source: Vesna Stemwell / Photos: Vesna Stemwell*
Special Days - Slava

- Slava is a Day of Glory. When Serbian families converted to Christianity many hundreds of years ago, their members were baptized into the Orthodox church. Each family took the Saint’s Day closest to their day of baptism as their patron saint.
- The same still holds true for converts to Serbian Orthodoxy. Today, individual families, as well as churches and their choirs, folk dance groups, and ladies auxiliaries/Circle of Serbian Sisters celebrate the slavas of their respective patron saint. Sunday Schools celebrate St Sava as their patron saint.

Source: www.serbia.com

- To learn more about Serbian celebration of Patron Saint Day, CLICK HERE

Sunday School St Sava Day Celebrations
Image: Saint Sava blesses Serbian Youth, Uroš Predić, 1921

Sunday School children participate in a Slava service at their church. Afterwards, they celebrate their Slava by putting on a program for their church family. Children read or recite from memory poems and traditional songs about St. Sava, Serbia, and Serbian traditions.

- Here are the children of St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church in South St Paul, MN with their recitations for 2021: Video
Special Days - Christmas

- The Serbia Orthodox Church still uses the old ‘Julian’ Calendar, which means that Christmas Eve is on January 6 and Christmas Day is January 7. Advent in the Orthodox Church begins approximately 40 days before Christmas. Some important dates observed during Advent are:
  - Sveti Nikola/St Nicholas Day – December 19th
  - Detinci/Children’s Day, Materice/Mother’s Day, and Oci/Očevi/Father’s Day – the 3 Sundays before Christmas
  - Badnji Dan/“Christmas Tree Day”/Christmas Eve – January 6th On this night, people will greet each other saying: Sretna Badnje Veče! / Happy Christmas Tree Evening!
  - Božić/Christmas Day – January 7th On this day, people greet each other saying: Hristos se Rodi! / Christ is Born!, and people respond by saying: Vaistinu se Rodi! / Indeed, He is Born!
The Christmas Tree

• On Christmas Eve (called ‘Badnji dan’ during the day and ‘Badnje veče’ after sunset) families gather. There are a lot of old Serbian traditions associated with the countryside. On the morning of Christmas Eve, the father of the family used to go into the forest to cut a young oak tree called the ‘Badnjak’, but today, most people simply purchase one.

• The Badnjak is then burned like a Yule Log. Some families decorate theirs with apples, oranges and twisted crepe paper streamers in the national colors of red, blue and white.

• Top photo: Woman shopping for right badnjak. Photo: BalkanInsight.com

• Bottom photo: An Orthodox priest places the badnjak on the fire during Christmas Eve celebration at the Cathedral of Saint Sava in Belgrade. Photo: Wikipedia.com
A Serbian Christmas Carol

- To hear the traditional Serbian Christmas Carol, Roždestvo Tvoje / “Your Birth” – CLICK HERE

- CLICK HERE to learn more about these and other Christmas traditions.

The English Translation:

- Your birth, Christ, our God, / the light of reason shines on the world, / for in him are those who served the stars / they learned from the stars to worship You, the Sun of Justice, / and to know Thee from the heights of the East, / Lord, glory to Thee. Praise the Lord!
Serbian Christmas Bread: Česnica

• At Christmas, a special kind of bread is eaten. It’s called ‘česnica’ and is made in a round shape. Each member of the family tears off a piece (and the house gets a pieces, too!). There is a coin hidden inside and whoever gets the coin will be particularly fortunate in the next year.

• Photo: Whychristmas.com

• source: www.whychristmas.com/cultures/serbia.shtml
Psenica: A Serbian Christmas Custom for the Christmas Table

- On the feast day of St Nicholas, which occurs on December 19, wheat grains (žito) are planted in a small bowl or plate for this Serbian Christmas custom. After a prayer is recited, the seeds are watered and left to grow for the remainder of Advent. The grains grow green shoots, a symbol of new life. The green shoots are bunched together with ribbon and a candle, then placed at the center of the family table on Christmas. After the Christmas period has passed, the Psenica is taken out into the garden. The person bringing it to the garden scatters the Psenica in a place where no person or animal will tread, leaving it for the birds.

- Source: myocn.net / the Serbian Orthodox Church

- **CRAFT ACTIVITY:** Make your own *Psenica* to celebrate the New Year. [CLICK HERE](http://myocn.net) TO VIEW INSTRUCTIONS. Note: you can use any type of grain seed – or even grass seed!

- Photo: myocn.net
Children’s Christmas Game: Gađanje Orašima/Shooting Walnuts

- Source: Čedo Krstić, Bijeljina, Serbia
- Instructions: Best played outside.
- Needed to play: 5 walnuts that are in their shells.
- (1) On a flat surface, build a 2-layer pyramid with 4 of the walnuts: 3 in the bottom layer and 1 on top. (2) Aim the 5th walnut at the pyramid to see how many walnuts can be bumped the farthest from the center of the pyramid. (3) Depending on the ability and/or age, kids can be allowed to stand closer or further away from the pyramid than the others.
- Photo: Eldin Memić
Serbian Children’s Day, Mother’s Day, And Father’s Day

- Among many national customs, the Serbs have a special one in which they ‘Remember’ and ‘Tie’ as well as give gifts on Children’s, Mother’s, and Father’s Day.

- The Church Books dedicate the two Sundays preceding Christmas to the Forefathers and Fathers, the Righteous Ones and the Prophets of the Old Testament. The Serbian people divided this commemoration of the Fathers so that one Sunday was dedicated to Children, one to Mothers and one to Fathers. Why? Because Serbs put a strong emphasis on the importance of unity and sharing in family life, and link, or tie, children tie their parents and parents tie their children.

- TYING symbolizes the bond between past and present generations. On Children’s Day parents tie their children, on Mother’s Day children tie their mothers, and on Father’s Day children tie their fathers. The loosening, or untying, begins with an exchange of gifts. Giving gifts represent devotion and expresses a mutual bond of love between the generations.

- Source: www.spc.rs and The Serbian Orthodox Church
In Serbia Easter is called *Uskrs*, meaning “Resurrection” and is sometimes also called *Vaskrs*.

Easter church services are followed by families having their baskets of colored eggs blessed by the parish priest. Many eggs are red symbolizing happiness, joy, rebirth and the blood of Christ. Families exchange eggs and say, “Hristos Voskrese” (Christ is risen), to which the response is “Voistinu Voskrese” (Indeed He is risen). Central to the Serbian celebration of Easter is the egg, the seasonal symbol of new life. Easter eggs in Western Europe can be made of chocolate and sold in supermarkets. However, Serbs use ordinary chicken eggs at Easter, boiling scores of them at home on Good Friday.

The Lenten ‘Carnival’ or Bele Poklade is a tradition with ancient roots, celebrating the return of the sun and the “rebirth” of spring. To learn more about this tradition: [Preparations for Lent](#).

To learn more about how Serbians celebrate Easter, [CLICK HERE](#).

Source: [Avax.news](#) / Church Calendar, [www.crkvenikalendar.com](#)

**CRAFT ACTIVITY:** Learn how to dye an egg using the old Serbian methods. [Easter Egg craft](#)
Casting and lighting the Farmer Candles

• In the week preceding Easter, from Tuesday to Holy Thursday, the locals of villages Zajac, Paskovica and one part of village Tršić perform casting of one half of “Farmer’s Candles,” while the casting of the second half of these candles is performed by the villagers of Korenita and the other part of Tršić. By mixing the wax from the previous year’s candles with new wax, two farmer candles’ halves are cast, which are about two meters high and weigh more than fifty kilos (110 lbs). These candle halves “meet” each other on Holy Thursday near the monastery Tronoša. Villagers decorate and wreath the candles with flowers, ivy and Christian icons. After the prayer, while the monastery bells toll, joint festive processions parade in a circle around the monastery and enter the monastery afterwards. The candles, made of pure bee’s wax, are set alight in the church.

• Throughout the following year, these massive candles will be burning during all major Christian holidays and on Sundays during the liturgy. What remains of those Farmer’s Candles will be recast again into the new candles, and in this way the Serbian people of this region have been maintaining the continuity of this old custom for more than one hundred and fifty years. The reason for maintaining this custom for so many years lies in the belief that the casting and lighting of the farmer’s candles in this manner protects villages from bad weather and provides better conditions for the land and crops during the growing cycle. The candles express villagers’ thankfulness to God for his blessings and favor.

• The Republic of Serbia’s National Committee for Intangible Cultural Heritage has also recognized the importance and significance of this old custom. The casting and lighting of farmer’s candles found its place on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Serbia due to the resolution of the Committee from 18 June 2012. and based on the suggestion of the Serbian Orthodox Church.

• Source & Photo: www.serbia.com
Bonus

• FAMOUS PEOPLE FROM SERBIA, OR WITH SERBIAN ANCESTRY - Famous Serbians

• WANT TO LEARN EVEN MORE? PRINT THESE FUN ACTIVITY PAGES!

Thank you for attending Urban Expedition: Serbia!