

KOPRIVNICA - KRIŽEVCI COUNTY

A diveristy of experiences

Koprivnica-Križevci county lies on the fertile Drava river basin, between the Hungarian border along the river Drava and the forested Kalnik and Bilogora mountains. Its natural wealth, rich culture, and traditional values expressed in modern form through naïve painting, local cuisine, events, folklore, and faith have made it a favourite year-round destination for day trips.

However, the friendliness and hospitality of the county's residents and the diverse, lively experiences the region has to offer provide a wealth of reasons to stay for more than just a day.













With five nature reserves, a forest park, two protected landscapes, four natural monuments, two park design monuments and Regional Park Mura – Drava, Koprivnica-Križevci county offers a wide range of interesting, special destinations amid pristine, protected nature. Here, you can enjoy the mild, picturesque fields and meadows of the Drava river basin, experience the confluence of the river Mura into the Drava, discover the hidden world of the banks and channels of the Drava, explore the Veliki Pažut zoological reserve near Legrad, and walk the vast forests of Kalnik and Bilogora.

Fun and entertainment at Šoderica lake

This beautiful lake is just fifteen kilometres from Koprivnica, and it is a favourite among locals for swimming and fun in summer and for fishing, hiking, and recreation in nature all year

Recreation E relaxation in nature

round. During summer weekends, Šoderica plays host to a diverse range of events: Moto Meeting, Partyloop Open Air, Rocklive Festival, Beer Throne Challenges, and theatre plays. One of the most interesting events here is **Country Weekend**, an event that brings the Wild West to life through country music, dance, fun and games in a real cowboy town (complete with a saloon, jail, and bank).

Peace and quiet in Repaš and Čambina

The ancient forest of Repaš, rich in wild game, and the protected landscape of Čambina just a few kilometres away are places of peace and quiet, perfect for relaxation in nature. At just over 50 hectares, Čambina is a shallow, horseshoe-shaped pond ecosystem rich in water vegetation that offers guests the chance to encounter Croatia's rich swamp flora in a unique natural world on the channels of the river Drava. Birdwatching in this landscape is a truly incredible experience.

In addition to accommodation, Čambina hunting lodge offers a wide selection of homemade meals featuring wild game.

The desert experience of Đurđevački pijesci

In the centre of the Drava river basin, near the town of Đurđevac, lies the 20-hectare Đurđevački pijesci desert, a geographical and botanical reserve and a unique natural phenomenon. The only desert in Croatia, its distinctive relief, dunes, wind, and sand offer both a unique desert experience and the chance to encounter the unique world of the plants and animals that inhabit this place.







Crni jarki - pristine nature

This forest near the village of Kalinovac is one of the most beautiful stands of black alder in Europe. This ancient plant community of various kinds of sedge and other plants is a unique forest vegetation reserve. This natural area has survived as a witness of times long past, providing visitors with a unique, enchanting experience in untouched nature.

From the Town's Fishermen

The fishing areas of Koprivnica-Križevci county are richer in fish than any other in Croatia. The first and foremost among them is the 65km stretch of the river Drava that flows through the county, followed by around 40 small and large lakes, backwaters, and ponds. Šoderica, Jegeniš, Čingi-Lingi, Ravenska Kapela, Čabraji, Separacija Gat, and other lakes and ponds are rich in all kinds of freshwater fish. The most important catch-and-release lakes in the county are Autoput II, Ješkovo, Rasinja, and Drnić. Every year just before Easter, the members of the Koprivnica Fisherman's Club organise a big fishing event in Koprivnica called 'From the Town's Fishermen'. Visitors can take part in a fish paprikash cook-off, catch fish from a pool full of carp, and sample delicious fire-roasted fish, fish paprikash, and other local fish specialties.

Through nature on horseback

This region proudly boasts Croatia's first landscaped and marked horseback riding trail for tourists. At around three hundred kilometres in lengths, it crosses the entire county, from the mild plains of the Drava basin to the meadows, clearings, and forests of the slopes of Bilogora and Kalnika mountains. Within the town of Križevci, a number of horse breeders offer supervised horseback riding for beginners and guided field riding for more experienced riders.

Kalnik - recreation and adrenaline

Kalnik, a mountain the locals say everyone must climb, is a protected natural landscape. The ruins of Mali Kalnik castle from 1240 AD are on the western part of the mountain, while the Veliki Kalnik fortress is located on a lower rocky hill called 'Katalina', which offers one of the most beautiful views of the rolling landscape of the region. During the Tatar invasions, Croatian-Hungarian King Bela IV hid here. According to legend, the local residents fed him with plums, and he rewarded them with noble titles. These nobles are still referred to as 'šljivari' today (Cro. *šljiva* = plum).

In addition to a 5km educational trail featuring 10 informative panels, visitors can walk the spacious meadows and hiking trails of Kalnik. For those looking for a bit more adrenaline, Kalnik features a number of bike trails through its forests and hundreds of rock climbing routes on its steep cliffs. Kalnik's low altitude, easily accessible launch areas, excellent winds, and many thermals make Kalnik an ideal destination for hang gliders looking for hours of gliding and long flights. In the central part of the mountain, at an altitude of 480 metres, is the Kalnik mountain lodge, which is accessible from the village of Kalnik by paved road. It is a favourite destination for day hikes, and is especially well-known for its local specialty – savoury cheese strudel.













The phenomenon and beauty of naïve art

In the town of Hlebine in the heart of the Drava basin, the 1930s saw the creation of *naïve* art, a special form of artistic expression spearheaded by two self-taught painters, Ivan Generalić and Franjo Mraz. Their success inspired a whole host of locals to try their hand at painting, and they were joined on the international art scene by creative naïve painters Mirko Virius, Josip Generalić, Mijo Kovačić, Ivan Večenaj, Ivan Lacković-Croata, Martin Mehkek, and many others. Naïve art spread from Hlebine throughout all of the Drava basin (Gola, Molve, Gornja Šuma, Kloštar Podravski, Koprivnica, Đurđevac), and naïve painting became a phenomenon that brought Hlebine, the region, and Croatia worldwide recognition.

The power and beauty of naïve art lies in the traditional, somewhat nostalgic atmosphere of its paintings, most of which are painted on glass. Since 2012, painting with oil paints on glass in the naïve style of the **Hlebine patinting school** has borne the status of Croatian intangible cultural heritage. Despite modern trends, naïve painting has been preserved, and the Hlebine circle of painters numbers at around 200.

Artistic experiences

The true experience of naïve art requires getting to know it in the environment where it was created. You can do exactly that on the **Gallery Route** – a route connecting more than 15 galleries. In addition to the famous **Hlebine Gallery**, which houses the works of Ivan Generalić, there is also **Večenaj Gallery** in Gola, **Stari Grad Gallery** in Đurđevac, which houses both the works of Ivan Lacković-Croata and his endowment of more than a thousand paintings by more than two hundred authors from twenty countries, including some of Croatia's most famous painters (Vladimir Becić, Vlaho Bukovac, Oton Gliha, Oton Iveković, Đuro Pulitika, Krsto Hegedušić, Zlatko Prica, Vilim Svečnjak...). This impressive endowment has won the gallery the local nickname of "the little Croatian Louvre".

The region also features valuable open-air sculpture collections – the **Ecological Garden of Peace** in Podravske Sesvete (featuring full-sized oak wood sculptures of famous figures for whose works were imbued with closeness to nature and water), the **Biblical Garden of Peace** in Kalnik (featuring sculptures of biblical figures), and the **Eco Garden of the Drava Basin and the River Drava** at Ješkovo lake near Gola, managed by the Motacilla Alba Association. There are two fascinating ethnological collections in the region as well – the Slavko Čamba Collection in Đurđevac and the Josip Cugovčan Collection in Podravske Sesvete, which in addition to its ethnological collection also features rich archaeological and paleontological collections, as well as a collection of Easter eggs.













An Easter egg from the heart

The Koprivnica-Križevci county tourist board has created and realised a project that merges the tradition of painting Easter eggs (which has had the status of Croatian intangible cultural heritage since 2008) with naïve painting – An Easter Egg from the Heart. Today, these huge two-metre polyester Easter eggs painted in the naïve style grace numerous galleries, squares, and spaces throughout Croatia and the world, from New York, Paris, Rome, Prague, Vienna, and Budapest to Salzburg, Marseilles, Riga, Munich, Zagreb, Dubrovnik, Vukovar, Varaždin, and many other cities. One of these Easter eggs was even given as a gift to Pope Benedict XVI. Before Easter every year in Koprivnica, the only exhibition of large Easter eggs in the world is held on the main square.

Križevci - traditions

The town and its surroundings are best known for its numerous well-preserved architectural monuments. The oldest town in the county is known for a number of things; for being home to the county's patron saint and the third Croatian to be sainted, St. Marko Krizin; for the Greek Catholic Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, an artistic gem with a magnificent iconostasis; and for the Church of the Holy Cross in the old town centre, which boasts the painting *"Krvavi križevački sabor"*, one of the greatest works of painter Oton Iveković. Križevci also boasts numerous preserved traditions. The **Križevačko veliko spravišče** fair was one of the first traditional folk events in continental Croatia. It is founded on the legend of a reconciliation between the citizens of Križevci and the nobles of Kalnik, and it has been held every third weekend in June for nearly 50 years. The town is also known for its traditional wine celebrations and the Statute of Križevci, which, aside from defining the rules for a popular wine ceremony to bless young wine, also contains the first Croatian written rules of etiquette in company and at the table.

Koprivnica - Vegeta, bicycles, and historical experiences

The free royal city of Koprivnica was declared the metropolis of the Drava basin long ago in 1356 AD. The centre of the town is dominated by a city park and one of the most beautiful squares in continental Croatia, which features a group of two-storey buildings built between the Baroque and Art Nouveau periods. One of the most important of these buildings is the one housing the Kraluš pub, with its unique interior designed by well-known Croatian artists. The square is dominated by

the 1856 city hall building. Koprivnica is also a **city of bicycles**, and is among the cities in Europe with the most bicycle paths per capita. It is the headquarters of Podravka, Croatia's best-known food production company, whose Vegeta brand seasoning is one of the most popular and best-known international Croatian products. The town also features a unique museum – the Food Museum. Of the numerous events in the city, two stand out in particular. The **Renaissance Festival** is one of the largest historical spectacles in this part of Europe. It is held on the last weekend in August, and its unique atmosphere and events transport visitors to times long past, when knights sharpened their swords to win the hand of their maidens in duels, and traders and craftsmen hawked their wares from stands full of handicrafts beneath the city walls. Hunting falcons circle the air, and the delicious scents that spread through the air invite visitors to sample dishes made only from ingredients used during Renaissance times. **Podravski motivi** is the largest event celebrating naïve painting, old crafts, folklore, and local cuisine in the open air. It is held every first weekend in July.

Đurđevac - legends and art

Proclaimed Croatian intangible heritage, the **Legenda o picokima** is one of the trademarks of the city of Đurđevac. A festival under the same name brings the town to life across the three days of the last weekend in June, presenting the life of the region's inhabitants, traditions, and local cuisine. The main event is a unique play held in the historical atmosphere of the old city fortress, presenting an exciting visualization of the siege and defense of the town, which the citizens managed to save from the Turks using a clever trick featuring a chicken (*picok*). Đurđevac's Stari Grad fortress is a cultural monument from the 14th century, and it currently houses the City Museum and an especially valuable collection of paintings and sculptures endowed by Ivan Lacković Croata.

Molve - the Roman Marian holy site of the Drava basin

Amidst the gentle landscape of the heart of the Drava basin stands the monumental Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This symbol of the town of Molve dominates the broad plains of the basin. This spectacular, massive church features a 45 metre bell tower built in 1862 and 26 frescoes, and is a destination for local residents and numerous pilgrims from Croatia and other neighbouring countries. Near the church is the Chapel of the Virgin Mary of Molve, which holds a statue of Mary dating from the early Middle Ages. Each year, the statue is brought to the church in a procession for the Assumption of Mary.



Cycling tourism

Hundreds of kilometres of marked cycling trails

Koprivnica - Križevci county is interwoven with countless cycling trails - from the easy, recreational trails through the gentle plains of the Drava basin or the soft, forested meadows and foothills of Bilogora, to more demanding trails over Kalnik mountain.

There are many choices of cycling routes in the region: from short, hours-long or single-day routes to trips lasting multiple days. In addition to offering lovely rides through diverse, beautiful landscapes and protected nature areas, they also offer visitors a chance to encounter the culture and heritage of the region – from the rich naïve art museums in Hlebine, Molve, Batinska, and Gola, to the collections, exhibitions, and holdings of family farms, city museums, or the lovely frescoes of village churches.

The oldest and best-known cycling route in the area is the **Drava Route**, whose 80 kilometre course follows the river Drava through the a series of picturesque, interesting villages in the lowlands of the Drava basin – from the confluence of the Mura into the Drava near Legrad all the way to Križnica near Pitomača. The route's paved, gravel, and dirt roads pass alongside numerous river backwaters and canals, allowing you to encounter the diverse nature and simple lifestyle of the region. The Drava Route connects to cycling routes in Slovenia and Austria through Međimurje county in northern Croatia.

The **Bilodravska Route**, although somewhat more demanding, is no less interesting. At a length of nearly 38 kilometres, it connects Bjelovar and Đurđevac over Bilogora mountain before crossing the Drava Route at Novo Virje. This route connects cycling routes from the river Sava (Lonjsko polje) via Bilogora to the river Drava and on to Lake Balaton in Hungary.



More demanding cyclists will find their place on Kalnik mountain near Križevci. The 26.5km **Cycle round Kalnik route** begins near the mediaeval fortress of Veliki Kalnik. You can combine your cycling stay in the area with the **Cycle round Prigorje route** (Križevci - Kalnik and Križevci - Čabraji). On the Koprivnica side, try the **Bilogora Western Route** (Vinica, Vincekova humka, Rasinja, Koprivnica) or any of the marked cycling routes around Koprivnica (Draganovec, Jagnjedovec, Bilogora, Koprivnica).

The citizens of Koprivnica love saying that it is the most bicycle-friendly town in the world. Koprivnica's Biciklin Old Timer Club is the only one of its kind in Croatia, and they help maintain the century-old cycling tradition in the Drava basin (the first club was founded in 1898). In 2005, membres of the club erected the **first monument to the bicycle** and cycling in the world, and then placed replicas of historical bicycles – from Leonardo da Vinci's to modern ones – at eight locations on the squares and streets of the town. Thanks to them, the town of Koprivnica has become a unique **open-air bicycle museum**. It also boasts a range of cycling events, the most important of which is the Croatian Cycling Recreation Festival, which is held every year in early June. Urban street and BMX biking is becoming more and more popular among young people, and parks for these disciplines have been built. Koprivnica and its surroundings host the "XCM Koprivnica" mountain bike marathon, which draws more than 200 mountain biking lovers from Croatia and abroad every year. Koprivnica is also one of the first towns in Croatia to develop an extensive system of urban bike routes, enabling its citizens to use an ecologically-friendly mode of transport and allowing visitors to experience the town on two wheels.

The county also features Bike&Bed accommodation, which, in addition to breakfast or the use of a kitchen, provides cyclists a space in which to store their bikes and dry their clothes and travel gear, as well as providing tools for simple repairs.







The diverse flavours of tradition

Gastronomy is a part of culture, heritage, tradition, and everyday life. And, they say, it is also the best invitation to tourists. The situation here in Podravina and Prigorje is no different. The region's traditional dishes, which were strongly influenced by Austrian and Hungarian cuisine, will satisfy even the most demanding of gourmets. These dishes are mainly made with fried or baked meat or freshwater fish and various homemade dried meats: dried smoked tongue, ham hocks, aspic, homemade bacon, or ham... In addition to meat, there are also the inevitable side dishes: potatoes (mashed, roasted, fried), rice (*rizi-bizi*, rice with peas), polenta with milk or as a side dish with game, pasta (with roasts), and sauces made from roast drippings, mushrooms, and cream. The local dairy specialties are homemade cottage cheese with cream, buttermilk, and smoked cow's milk cheese (*prge*).

The local soups are clear broths, especially chicken and beef soup, which are slow-cooked with root vegetables and served with homemade noodles, semolina dumplings, or Leberknödel. Potato, bean, or cabbage stews are on the menu in wintertime, while summer sees light vegetable stews made with kale, peas, string beans, or cucumbers and cream, all spiced with red paprika and garlic. The most famous specialty made with cottage cheese are baked *štrukli*. But the most distinctive item on the regional menu is stinging nettle, an ingredient that has enjoyed a renaissance in the kitchens of the region's restaurants, both in savoury and sweet dishes.

The Renaissance dining experience

Once a year, Koprivnica offers a special gourmet experience – the Renaissance dining experience. During the Renaissance Festival, Podravka's master chefs prepare meals in the traditional Renaissance fashion, using only ingredients that were used at the time – no tomatos, no potato, no corn, no ingredients that found their way to the region after the discovery of the Americas. The menu during the festival includes: baked loin of young wild boar in minced lard with game paté; Renaissance goulash; wild game goulash with Mediterranean herbs, juniper berries, and hand-pulled wheat noodles served in a bread bowl; royal platter; roulade of capon with ginger and nettle topping in chestnut sauce; pork fillet on a sword with zucchini, spiced with anise and mustard; magic bites (liver wrapped in thick bacon served on buckwheat porridge with leek); venison rump served on nettle mousse with an almond crêpe; sweet rolls with berries; millet rolls with jam and berries. And you can wash it all down with a glass of nettle beer. Bon appétit!











Sweet, delicious, and unique

Nut roll, poppy seed roll, cheese strudel with fruit topping, pumpkin strudel, corn-flour *zlevka* cake, jelly doughnuts, fritters, gingerbread, puff pastry, and butter cookies are only a few of the tasty treats that come at the end of the meal. Two special local cakes should be singled out, however – one sweet and one savoury, each a shining exemple of the region's unique traditional cuisine. The savoury cake is called **kašnjak**, a strudel made with buckwheat or millet and pumpkin seed oil. The sweet one, which was pronounced intangible Croatian cultural heritage in 2012, is called **bregofska pita**. It is a delicious cake that has been baked in the village of Bregi at Christmas time for more than 200 years. It is made by an old recipe handed down to each generation from their mothers, mothers-in-law, grandmothers, or great-grandmothers, and the main ingredients are local apples, ground walnuts, raisins, grapes, cinnamon, goose or chicken fat, sugar, cream..

Wine celebrations and winemaking traditions

Every good homemade meal deserves a good glass of local wine. And as luck would have it, there's plenty of good wine here. Koprivnica – Križevci county has over thirty registered winemakers who produce over a hundred varieties of wine with protected geographical origin. The foothills of Bilogora and Kalnik are covered in vineyards and cellars where the locals spend time together singing and socialising. St. Vincent's, St. Bartholomew's, and St. Martin's are the main winemaking holidays, and they are accompanied by festive celebrations. The **Velika martinjska špelancija** festival, held a week prior to St. Martin's, is the main event in the region and has a truly special atmosphere. This unique event brings together around fifty ceremonial wine masters (bishops) from all around Croatia. The programme also includes winemakers' associations and eminent winemakers from Croatia and abroad.

Award-winning wines

Koprivnica – Križevci county is divided into two winemaking regions: Koprivnica – Đurđevac and Kalnik. The Koprivnica – Đurđevac region runs along the entirety of Bilogora mountain, whose soil is fairly sandy, and the locals here exclusively grow local grape varieties. The most popular varieties today are: Graševina, Riesling, Pinot, Chardonnay, Sauvignon, Silvaner, Kerner, Traminer, Blaufränkisch, Zweigelt, Cabernet Sauvignon... The Đurđevac Wine Route runs alongside the magical vineyards on the sandy hills of Bilogora, which give a specific quality to the local wines similar to French wines.





The Kalnik region on Kalnik mountain seems to have been made for winemaking. The area has long been used to grow local varieties of grape – the old Kleščec variety is today making a comeback. The Križevci – Kalnik – Orehovec Wine Route is part of the Western Continental Croatia winemaking region and the Prigorje – Bilogora sub-region. White varieties are most common in this region with limestone soil, including Graševina, Chardonnay, Pinot Gris, Pinot Blanc, Riesling, and Kraljevina.

This is a place where people have always enjoyed wine, thanks in part to the soil conditions here provided by Mother Nature, but most of all to the hard-working local winemakers who work their vineyards year round and toil in their cellars to make the delicious wine they so happily serve their guests. Whether you find yourself in the wine cellar of a small winemaker or one of the larger wineries that has sprung up in recent times, the quality of the wines made here has been confirmed through numerous awards won at wine exhibitions both in Croatia and abroad. Just pick a winery and enjoy the company of your friendly hosts as you sample local wines you will fall in love with, heart and soul.





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