



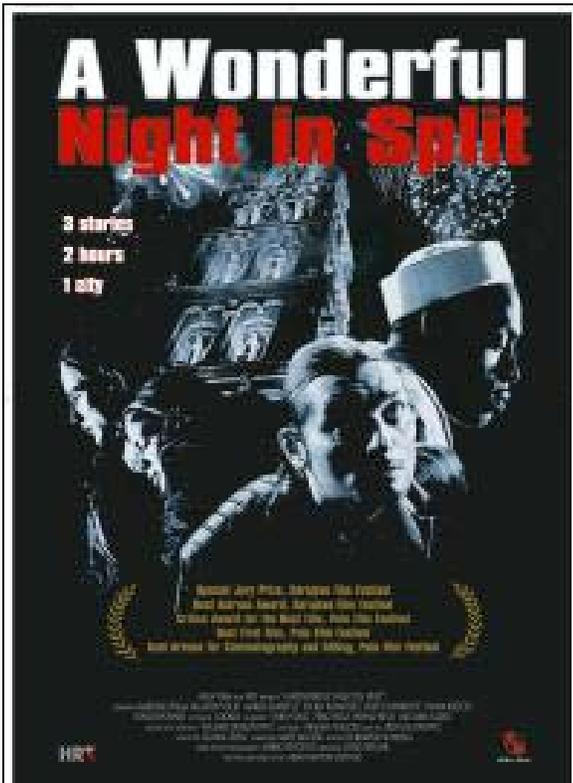
THIS WEEK...

- President Mesic, Prime Minister Sanader and Parliament Speaker Seks Extends Best Wishes for Orthodox Christmas
- Croatia Ranked 55th in 2006 Index of Economic Freedom
- Gavrilović - Investment in the U.S. Market
- Croatian Film in Contest for the Academy Award
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Time Magazine: Croatia – Place to Watch in 2006



Croatian Contestant for OSCAR



Janica – the Eighth World Wonder



PRIDE, DETERMINATION, HEART = JANICA

Croatia was ranked 55th among 161 countries on the **2006 Index of Economic Freedom**. The Index was published by the Heritage Foundation, in coordination with the Wall Street Journal. According to the report Croatia is making constant headway in economic freedom.

President Mesić, Prime Minister Sanader and Parliament Speaker Šeks Extend Best Wishes for Orthodox Christmas



President Mesić (center), Prime Minister Sanader (right) and Parliament Speaker Šeks extend their best wishes to all Orthodox faithful who celebrate Christmas according to the old Julian calendar. [Photo: [Večernji list](#)]

ZAGREB, Croatia, Jan. 4, 2006 – Croatian President Stjepan Mesić wished a Merry Christmas to all Christian faithful celebrating this holiday according to the old Julian calendar, with the traditional greeting “The Christ is Born!” “A holiday of joy, peace, togetherness and solidarity, Christmas is always an encouragement to all believers and people of good will to persist in promoting life’s optimism and (...) commitment to personal, family and social progress,” Mesić said in a message. The President also sent a separate message to Jovan Pavlović, the Serb Orthodox Metropolitan Bishop of Zagreb, Ljubljana and Italy, saying that Christmas inspires us (...) to restore the values of the good, peace, togetherness, solidarity, dialogues and reconciliation. “In the year behind us, in which the Republic of Croatia took a crucial step on its path to full membership in the European Union, the Serb Orthodox Church made a significant contribution to the affirmation of these values which, despite all the problems, make our country a stable and safe one and a factor of peace and dialogue among the people and countries of Southeast Europe. The successes we have achieved and the task that stand before us compel us to direct our efforts and prayers towards attaining social peace, spiritual and material development and prosperity for every inhabitant of our country. I therefore wish that dialogue and cooperation between the Serb Orthodox Church and the authorities of the Republic of Croatia would continue to improve this year and contribute to the personal prosperity of every believer and citizen and the general prosperity of this country,” Mesić said in the message.

Prime Minister Sanader also extended his best wishes to Jovan Pavlović. “May the holiday of the newborn Christ bring you peace, good health and strength in the spiritual leadership of the people, and encourage them to follow the path lit by love, peace, and justice. May it bring you joy and courage before all challenges that we will meet together in 2006,” Prime Minister Sanader said in his message.

Parliament Speaker Vladimir Šeks also offered his best wishes for Christmas to the Metropolitan Bishop and the Orthodox faithful in Croatia.

2006 Index for Economic Freedom Ranks Croatia 55th Among 161 Countries



WASHINGTON, D.C., Jan 4, 2006 – The latest Index of Economic Freedoms compiled by the Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal ranks Croatia 55th on the list of 161 countries in 2005. The placing represents progress as the country was 74th last year. On the scale of 5 to 1, Croatia has improved from the 2004 Index of 3.00 to 2.78, placing it in the “mostly free” category.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Note: The Index of Economic Freedom is an annual report published by the Wall Street Journal and the Heritage Foundation. The index measures how countries score on a list of 50 independent variables divided into 10 broad factors of economic freedom. The higher a country’s score on a factor, the greater the level of government intervention in the economy and the less economic freedom there is. The Heritage Foundation’s view that countries with the most economic freedom also have higher rates of long-term economic growth and are more prosperous than those with less economic freedom. Depending on their score, countries are then separated into four categories: Free, Mostly Free, Mostly Unfree, and Repressed.

To see the Heritage Foundation and the Wall Street Journal report on Croatia, please visit:

<http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index/country.cfm?id=Croatia>

For the full 2006 Index of Economy Freedom ranking, go to: http://www.heritage.org/research/features/index/indexof_freedom.cfm

Leading Croatian Meat-Processing Company Makes Comeback to U.S. Market



ZAGREB, Croatia, Jan. 5, 2006 – Croatia’s leading meat-processing company “Gavrilović” exported 35 tones of its brand products to the United States in the last two months. Gavrilović delivered its most famous brand products including the liver pate and canned luncheon meat to the Chicago-based AB Company. Gavrilović reported that the return of its product on the U.S. market after a 15 year-long break was ensured after the U.S. authorities issued all necessary licenses to the Croatian company for the export of its food product to the U.S.

To see Gavrilović’s official web site, please visit: <http://www.gavrilovic.hr/flash/index.htm>

Croatian Film in a Ballot for OSCAR



A scene from “A Wonderful Night in Split” [Photo: [Arsen Anton Ostojić](#)]

LOS ANGELES, California, - The official Croatian candidate for this year’s 78th Annual Academy Award is the emotionally charged film “A Wonderful Night in Split”, directed by Arsen Anton Ostojić. The film, among other awards, was nominated for the European Film Award last year and was the winner of the Best Directory Award at the Queens Film Festival in New York a month ago.



An American rapper Coolio best known for the song “Gangsta’s Paradise” from the “Dangerous Minds” soundtrack “ plays the role of the sailor Frankly in the film. [Photo: [Arsen Anton Astojić](#)]

Story: In the dark and deserted streets of the Croatian city of Split’s medieval Ghetto, during the final two hours of New Year’s Eve, three separate love stories – not directly involved in the festivities – intertwine with each other. Three couples find themselves near the main Roman Squire: a smalltime drug dealer Nick and a widow Maria with her son; a young junkie, Maja, going through a crisis, a depressed American sailor Franky and a pair of naïve teenagers, Luke and Angela. They all unsuccessfully try to escape their individual extreme situations only to find their lives permanently and irreversibly changed. As we see their stories develop a major concert performed by a lively singer unfolds before an emotional crowd gathered to usher in the New Year, along with a traditional fireworks display at the stroke of midnight.

To read the full synopsis of the film, go to:
http://www.arsenantonostojic.com/ao/projects/films/wonderful/wonderful_synopsis.html

Brave Janica Beats Birthday Pain

ZAGREB/SLJEME, Croatia, Jan. 5, 2006 – Home favorite Janica Kostelić skied through the pain barrier after losing her right pole to finish third behind Austrian Marlies Schild in a “Snow Queen” World Cup slalom held on Mount Sljeme overlooking Zagreb.



Birthday girl Janica Kostelić showed her brilliance finishing third after losing her right pole. [Photo: [Igor Kralj/24 sata](#)]

Kostelić, celebrating her 24th birthday, dropped the pole before the first gate of her second run. The Croatian skier, seventh after the first leg, was overtaken by the final pair, Katrin Zettel and Marlies Schild, but still claimed her fourth consecutive podium in the discipline. She showed great deal of determination while she was in obvious pain after she lost her right glove.



Above is the beautiful scene from Mountain Sljeme. Croatia once again performed a miracle in organizing a ski race. [Photo: [Igor Kralj/24 sata](#)]

Another Croatian skier, Nika Fleiss, finished the race in the 12th position, while Ana Jelušić finished race in the 25th position.

To read full CNN article about “Snow Queen” World Cup slalom held in Croatia and Janica’s brave performance, please visit:

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/SPORT/01/05/skiing.croatia/index.html>

For full New York Times’ story on Janica Kostelić, go to:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/06/sports/othersports/o6ski.html>

TIME

Time: Croatia – Place to Watch in 2006

NEW YORK, N.Y., Jan. 1, 2006 - Lisa McLaughlin observes in the latest edition of Time Magazine the beauty of the Dalmatian Coast and recommends this year to skip the French and Italian Riviera and head for Croatia's Dalmatian Coast, where mountains meet the shimmering Adriatic Sea. The region is still relatively undiscovered, which means unspoiled beaches and affordable prices even in the medieval walled city of Dubrovnik.

For the full text "What to Watch For In 2006", please visit: [http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0.9171.1145238.00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1145238,00.html)

Main Line Times on Croatian Tourism

PHILADELPHIA, Pennsylvania, Dec. 27, 2005 - The Main Line Times is the latest U.S. media to be inspired by the beauty of Croatia's Dalmatian coast, especially the archipelago Kornati, the city of Split and the Adriatic crown jewel, Dubrovnik. In the Dec. 21 and 27 web issues of the magazine, Ralph Collier recommends the untouched and rugged landscape of Kornati as the perfect hiking and swimming destination, while calling Split the *new riviera* where more and more sailors are docking ship and enjoying the blue sea. Noting that the Croatian kuna is much friendlier to the U.S. dollar than the euro is, Collier says that winter and spring are also good periods to visit the coast, since there are less tourists than in other times of the year. The articles praise the rich gastronomic offerings of Dalmatia, which is based on simple and fresh ingredients straight from the sea, and high quality local red and white wines offered by Croatian hosts. "In Croatian towns, the tourist is struck by the simple beauty of it all..." writes Collier, observing that mass tourism has been discouraged for the moment, making "individual travel (...) so much more rewarding."



Croatian city of Split at sunset [Photo: www.hrvatska.hr]

For full articles, please visit following sites:
http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=15785752&BRD=1676&PAG=461&dept_id=43786&rft=8
http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=15821847&BRD=1676&PAG=461&dept_id=43786&rft=8

Government Achievements (2004 – 2005)

- The start of EU accession talks and a national consensus through the Alliance for Europe
- A higher level of tolerance and culture of dialogue in political life
- The return of the debt to pensioners, a sticking point since 1993
- A record tourist season
- For the first time, the rate of exports grew faster than the rate of imports
- Decrease of budget deficit from 6.3% to 4.2%. Next year, deficit is expected to fall to 3.3%, and by 2007 to 3%, meeting the Maastricht criteria for entrance into the EU monetary union
- The completion of a modern, four-lane highway linking Zagreb and Split, the two largest cities, as well as other sections
- Time-limit by which natural gas will be fully available throughout the country shortened to 2009.
- Establishment of "HITRO.hr," with the purpose of shortening the time necessary to open a small business
- Land registry information available on the Internet
- Digitalization of land registry books in 93 courts
- e-Regos launched, the electronic service for insurance policy-holders

News in Brief...

- The Agency for the Supervision of Financial Institutions (HANFA) has officially begun working. It is responsible for the supervision of all financial institutions, aside from the banking sector.
- Foreign direct investment in Croatia in the first nine months of 2005 exceeded EUR 1.24 billion. In the period between 1993 and late Sept. 2005, foreign direct investments in Croatia totaled EUR 11.2 billion, according to figures released by the Croatian National Bank. The majority of investments in that period came from Austria, Germany and the United States.
- Croatia's export in the first 11 months of 2005 came to USD 7.99 billion (10.2 percent rise comparing to previous year) with the import totaling USD 16.99 billion (13 percent rise comparing to previous year)
- The permanent exhibition of the Croatian modern Gallery in Zagreb was opened on Dec. 30, 2005, by Croatian Culture Minister Božo Biškupić. The new permanent exhibition includes 650 works of arts of Croatian artist from 1800 to 2000.

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