Montenegro (Crna Gora)

Known as the “Black Mountain,” Montenegro is a land of mountains and plateaus that rests on the Adriatic Sea, sharing long land borders with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania. Montenegro enjoyed only brief independence in the Middle Ages, as the Byzantine, Serbian, and Ottoman Empires all competed for control. Montenegrins fiercely resisted Ottoman occupation and gained de facto independence in the late 17th century. Montenegro thereafter came to be ruled by the warrior-princes of the Petrović-Njegoš dynasty as a theocracy, until 1852 when Prince Danilo II secularized the state so that he could marry. With the outbreak of World War I, Montenegro sided with the allies, and was invaded and occupied by Austria-Hungary. After liberation, the Montenegro chose to unite with Serbia (despite the protests of the “Greens” who began a doomed rebellion called the “Christmas Uprising” to preserve independence), which became Yugoslavia in 1929. During World War II, the Axis powers invaded Yugoslavia, and the Italians established a puppet government in Montenegro. Montenegro was liberated by Tito’s partisans in 1944, and was brought into the new, socialist, Yugoslavia. Montenegro didn’t regain formal independence until in 2006.

Montenegrins performing the Oro dance

Montenegro is a very religious country, with low rates of atheism. The majority religion, Orthodox Christianity (72.1% of the population), has deep historical roots in Montenegro, dating back to at least the early 6th century CE. Most of the population identifies with the Serbian Orthodox Church, but the newly formed Montenegrin Orthodox Church is gaining popularity. Islam is the largest minority religion (19.1%) and is mainly practiced by ethnically Bosniak- and Albanian-Montenegrins. Small Catholic and Jewish communities also exist.

RELIGION

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ETHNICITY

Understandings of identity in Montenegro have fluctuated substantially, depending on political circumstances, over the last 100 years. Since gaining independence, the Montenegrin state has strived to create a more distinctly Montenegrin national identity by encouraging the formation of a Montenegrin language and Orthodox Church, nominally separate from their Serbian counterparts. Today, 45% of the population identifies themselves as ethnically Montenegrin, while 28.7% claim Serbian ethnicity. Bosniaks make up 8.7% of the population, and Albanians 4.9%.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS & CUSTOMS

Honor and respect for parents and the keeping of one’s oaths (Zakletra) are very important to Montenegrins. The traditional Oro dance is a popular social event, in which young people can sing and flirt. Independence Day is celebrated on May 21-22.

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CONTEMPORARY MONTENEGRO

Following the fall of the communist government in Yugoslavia, Montenegro joined with Serbia to form the restructured Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). Montenegro was allied with Serbia throughout the Yugoslav Wars and sent troops to Croatia during the Croatian War of Independence. In 1996, however, Montenegrin authorities began to distance themselves from Slobodan Milošević’s government in Belgrade. This trend towards autonomy continued in 2003, when the FRY decentralized to become the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, and ended in independence in 2006. The 2006 independence referendum was carefully monitored by international observers, and barely passed, clearing the necessary threshold by a mere 0.5%.

The primary goal of the Montenegrin government since gaining independence has been to integrate with the rest of Europe; to this end, success seems imminent. Negotiations for admittance to the EU are continuing to progress, and in December 2015 Montenegro was invited to join NATO. Montenegro has also been successful in attracting foreign investment and tourism.

Montenegro is a Parliamentary Republic. Currently, the center-left DPS party is in power, headed by the somewhat controversial politician Milo Đukanović. Despite ties early in his career to the communist government and Slobodan Milošević, Đukanović has played an important role in Montenegro’s road to independence and recent economic growth.

NAMES

Montenegrin names consist of a given name and a surname. Family names commonly end with the sound –ić (e.g. Filipović, Ivanović). Typical male names include Nikola, Marko, and Dragan. Typical female names include Jelena, Milica, and Ivana.

FAMOUS MONTENEGRINS

Singer Stefan Filipović, NBA Basketball players Nikola Vučević and Nikola Peković, artist Boris Dragojević, Montenegrin-American actress Milla Jovovich, former governor of Alaska Mike Stepovitch

MONTENEGRIN WORDS

Hello ................................. Zdravo
How are you? ...................... Kako si?
Welcome! ......................... Dobrodošli!
My name is... ........... Moje ime je...
Excuse me ...................... Izvinite
Yes ................................. Da
No .................................. Ne
I understand...................... Ne razumijem
I don’t understand .......... Razumijem
Thank you! ....................... Hvala!
Goodbye .......................... Doviđenja
Cheers! ........................... Živjeli!

MONTENEGRINS IN THE USA

A small number of Montenegrins emigrated to the US as early as the mid-19th century. Perhaps the first of its kind, the “Serb Montenegrin Charitable Association” was established in 1880. More widespread emigration began in the early 20th century, with most immigrants settling in the northeast and Midwest. Many Montenegrins participated in the Alaskan gold rush, establishing communities in Fairbanks which persist to today. Currently, there are over 20,000 Montenegrins living in the United States.

USEFUL LINKS

http://www.montenegro.org/