

MONTENEGRO

Montenegro boasts rugged mountains, medieval villages and a narrow strip of beaches along its Adriatic coastline. It is bordered by Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, and Albania. About half of Montenegro, which means “Black Mountain,” is covered in thick forest. The Bay of Kotor, resembling a fjord, is dotted with coastal churches and fortified towns. Durmitor National Park is home to bears and wolves and encompasses limestone peaks, glacial lakes and the 4,200 feet-deep Tara River Canyon, the deepest and longest in Europe. Montenegro emerged as a sovereign state after just over 55% of the population opted for independence in a 2006 referendum. The vote heralded the end of the former Union of Serbia and Montenegro— itself created only three years earlier out of the remnants of the former Yugoslavia. The major languages spoken are Serbian and Montenegrin, and the currency is the euro.

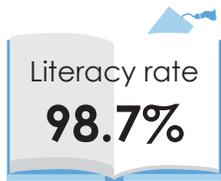


Population
614,249



5,333 MI²

slightly smaller than
Connecticut

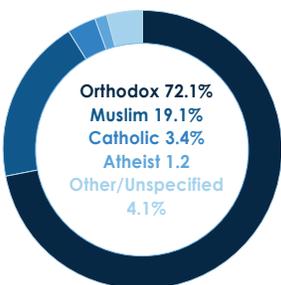


Literacy rate
98.7%

Ethnicities



Religions



FAMILY LIFE

Households usually consist of 2-3 generations and families generally have from 1-4 children. Extended relatives commonly live nearby. It is becoming more common for family members to work abroad and for youth to stay in the capital city after finishing university. It is common for both parents to work and often both are financially responsible for the family. There are generous maternity and paternity leave benefits offered for up to one year for either parent. Communication between family members is usually informal.

It is considered normal for family members to take time for themselves and pursue their own individual activities. Meals are commonly eaten together, but sometimes separately depending on schedules. When a family member would like to borrow something, it is generally understood they must ask first. Siblings of both genders often share rooms.

Children usually help in keeping their rooms clean and tidying up after themselves. Girls may help out with cooking if they are interested in learning, and boys may be expected to help out their fathers with physical chores around the household. Children rarely help with the laundry. Teenagers are responsible for their own transportation to school if it is not within walking distance.

Parental responsibility and decision making is usually shared between the mother and father and important decisions are made with the consensus of both. Parents are usually involved in assisting their children with scheduling and transportation for extracurricular activities. Parents generally do not monitor what their children do online, but usually limit time spent on the computer. Some parents will provide their children with an allowance since teenagers rarely work, but the general teaching of money management skills is limited.

Owning pets is uncommon, but adopting animals is becoming more popular.

FRIENDSHIP

Friendships are often formed through school, extracurricular activities, and with neighbors. Cousins are commonly referred to as brothers and sisters, and are often very close. It is acceptable for teenagers to socialize in groups or one-on-one with friends of both genders. They prefer to have many acquaintances and just a few friends. The term “friend” is used sparingly and only to refer to very close relationships. Friends spend time together by going for walks, sitting and talking in cafes and going out to clubs on weekends. Friends often buy items for each other, but borrowed money is expected to be returned. Parents set curfews for their children and the behavior of teenagers is generally monitored by those in the community, and brought to the attention of the parents as necessary.

SCHOOL LIFE

Students generally take 14-15 subjects which don't all meet every day. Students are evaluated through written and oral tests, homework, and participation. Student input in the classroom is not always appreciated or encouraged. Students study with the same group of students in one classroom, and the teachers rotate, with the exception of specific subjects such as physics and computer science. Students have little flexibility in choosing their courses and study each subject at the same level of difficulty.

Bullying and fighting are common issues and schools vary in how seriously they treat these issues. Behavioral assessments are made on each student's official school transcript. Cheating is discouraged in the classroom but it is tolerated as an accepted practice. If a student is caught cheating, they will usually fail the test or assignment. Schools do not teach students how to cite references or give credit to other sources in writing. Students usually dress informally for school. Bringing a lunch to school is not a common practice and food for lunch is usually purchased at small stores near the school.

The relationship between students and teachers is very formal. Students show respect to teachers by being engaged learners in class and often stand up when teachers enter a classroom. Sometimes students have a less formal relationship with younger teachers. Parents monitor academic performance through the homeroom teacher, who acts as a mediator between other teachers and the parents. Parents occasionally come to school to check on their child's grades and academic progress.

Common extracurricular activities at school include clubs focused on languages, journalism, performing arts, and volunteering. Sports are not usually offered in schools, but rather by organizations in the community, which are usually fee-based.

FOOD

Montenegrin cuisine includes a lot of meat, cheese, and potatoes. Pork is not eaten in Muslim areas of the country. Vegetarianism is uncommon, but is becoming more popular among the younger population.

RELIGION

Families rarely attend religious services on a regular basis, but will usually attend on Saint days and religious holidays. Churches that serve as community centers are more common in the Catholic religion, but other churches also have choirs and humanitarian service activities. People may be less open to learning about different religions since they were seen as a political tool in the history of former Yugoslavia, and were often used as a way to divide rather than unite people.

PERSONAL CARE

Montenegrins usually shower daily or every other day. It is not common to wash hair more than two times per week. Clothes are not generally washed after every use. Mothers commonly do the laundry for the household and often iron clothes after washing. Teenagers are responsible for tidying up the bathroom after use. Often times, bathrooms have both hand towels and shower towels, which are washed after one use.



The Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) program is sponsored by the U.S. Department of State. FLEX provides competitively selected secondary school students from 21 countries in Europe and Eurasia with the opportunity to spend the academic year in the U.S. living with a volunteer host family and attending a host high school. Begun in 1993, FLEX now has over 27,000 alumni.