

Croatia: CHRISTMAS, Dec 25th

- **A national holiday in Croatia, along with St. Stephen's Day, Dec.26.**
- Over 85% of people in Croatia declare themselves as Catholics, so Advent is an important time for them.
- It's traditional to have **an Advent wreath made of straw** or evergreen twigs **which has four candles**. The wreath symbolizes endlessness and the four candles symbolize different parts of history and life:
 - First Candle: creation - hope
 - Second Candle: embodiment - peace
 - Third Candle: redemption - joy
 - Fourth Candle: ending – love.
- Before Christmas we have one giving day, **St Nicola's eve**. Children clean their shoes or boots and leave them in the window. They hope that St Nicola will leave some chocolate and small presents. If they were naughty, **Krampus** (a big monster with horns, who sometimes travels with St Nicholas!) leaves them golden twigs to remind them to behave.
- On **St Lucia's day** we put wheat to grow young sprouts as a symbol of birth.
- We build a **Nativity scene** under a **Christmas tree**, which is decorated on Christmas eve.

- **On Christmas Eve**, most people eat dried-cod called 'bakalar' or some other kind of fish because on Christmas Eve it's considered as a day you don't eat meat.
- There's an old Croatian tradition that young men gave their girlfriends a decorated apple at Christmas.
- **The main Christmas Day menu** is often roasted turkey, goose or duck. A popular side dish is sarma (cabbage rolls filled with minced pork meat).
- There's also always lots of small cookies and cakes to eat.
- **In Croatian language, Merry Christmas is "Sretan Božić"**
- The Christmas celebrations finishes on **Epiphany (6th January)**.



