

Zoned in... Belgrade

In a city known for its unpolished style, the sleek bars and cultural hotspots of the

WORDS JAMES WILLIAMS



Clockwise from above: DJs in KC Grad; alcove booths in Brankow bar; Public Dine & Wine serves Mediterranean-style dishes; the Square Nine dining room; the funky bar at KC Grad; minimalist interior at Comunale. Opposite, from top: tuna sashimi and the main bar at Iguana

PHOTOGRAPH: ANDRIJANA RMUSH

post-industrial Savamala neighbourhood are a radical new departure



EAT

Bright yellow cranes frame the entrance to the Beton Hala (concrete hall), a port-side warehouse now filled with hip new art studios and bars. At starkly decorated Italian restaurant **Comunale**, beautiful, well-heeled women park their shopping bags to tuck into risotto and antipasti, and suited entrepreneurs do business over steaks, Serbian wine and a view of the Sava River through its double-height windows. *Karadordeva 2-4 (00 381 11 303 7337).*

Dinner for two from 3,700 Serbian dinars (about £25)

■ Ascend the narrow Velike Stepence (steps) behind Beton Hala and you'll be rewarded with views of New Belgrade's socialist skyline from **Public Dine & Wine**. Quirky style is everywhere here, from the black-and-white cut-outs of Serbian mothers and men in 1960s suits on the walls to the toothbrushes in the bathrooms. Politicians and local celebrities come to Public to dine on home cooking with Mediterranean ingredients: turkey breast wrapped in San Daniele ham from the lava-stone grill; and deli platters of meats and cheeses with wines from Spain and Montenegro.

Kosančićev Venac 29 (00 381 11 328 3680; www.restoran-public.rs). Dinner for two about £30

DRINK

Comunale's owners also run **Iguana** bar, two doors down, where cigar smoke wafts up onto the low-lit stage. The syncopated soundtrack of live jazz is underscored by a 50-strong list of Champagnes and wines and a menu of simple, Asian-infused dishes which includes Thai beef salad and mirin-glazed salmon. *Karadordeva 2-4 (00 381 11 328 3749; www.iguana.rs). Dinner for two about £30*

■ The Savamala district's resurgence began in 2009 with **KC Grad**, a 19th-century warehouse turned cultural centre which hosts music nights, debates and art exhibitions in the shadow of Brankov Bridge. Read the latest Balkan design magazines in a 1960s armchair, and catch the conversations between university professors and young creatives sipping cappuccinos and talking art and politics. *Braće Krsmanović 4 (00 381 11 328 2370; www.gradbeograd.eu)*

PARTY

It used to store lavatory parts, but now **Brankow**, underneath its namesake bridge, is one of Savamala's newest and coolest bars. A grown-up crowd huddles in the black-and-red alcoves to listen to jazz and soul bands, and sip Mojitos muddled by

smartly dressed bar staff. There's live music from 10pm to 1am four nights a week, plus DJs till 4am at weekends. *Crnogorska 12 (00 381 69 830 0777; www.brankow.com)*

SHOP

Up-and-coming designers can be found at KC Grad's monthly Takeaway Fashion sales, but don't miss **Belgrade Design District**, a former shopping centre which was reborn in 2010. It's a 10- to 15-minute walk from Savamala, but worth the trip for more than 30 upmarket boutiques ranging from fashion and jewellery to interiors. Designers are often on-site to talk about their work. *Entrances on Terazije and Makedonska (http://belgradedesigndistrict.blogspot.co.uk)*

SLEEP

Five-star hotels are best sought in central Stari Grad (old town). The finest, **Square Nine**, opened to great acclaim last year, and its globetrotting owner spared no expense in the design. Clad in dark-hued Brazilian wood and linen wallpaper, its 45 bedrooms have onyx sinks and vintage chairs; downstairs, dappled light hits the 18-metre lap pool in the stone-lined spa. The courtyard restaurant is overseen by ex-Claridge's chef Goran Kovačević. *Studentski Trg 9 (00 381 11 333 3500; www.squarenine.rs). Doubles from €235*

Don't miss

THE BEAUTIFUL IF SOMEWHAT NEGLECTED ARCHITECTURE ALONG SAVAMALA'S MAIN ARTERY **KARADORDEVA**, INCLUDING THE BELGRADE COOPERATIVE BUILDING (AT NO 48), ART NOUVEAU-STYLE HOTEL BRISTOL (NO 50), SECESSIONIST DORDE VUCO'S HOUSE (NO 61), AND THE ELEGANT, 19TH-CENTURY GLAVNA RAILWAY STATION (CORNER OF SAVSKI TRG)