

ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

1. View from Gardos Tower



JOURNAL CONCIERGE
An Insider's Guide

BELGRADE

Part Old World Europe, part midcentury modern,
part still under construction

VISITORS TO BELGRADE often hesitate to tell friends about the city's charms. In the calm of the last decade, the capital of Serbia has experienced a cultural explosion and today it feels distinctly like Europe's best-kept secret.

On Knez Mihailova in the city's downtown, sidewalk cafes sit in the shade of 19th-century mansions. Designers have turned a long-abandoned shopping arcade into the Belgrade Design District, where indie boutiques sell draped dresses and punk-inspired jewelry. On summer weekends, the streets of hipper neighborhoods are as full at 3 a.m. as at 8 p.m. You might have to wait hours for a table at the waterfront restaurants in the suburb of Zemun, but never mind—the spicy Serbian wines served at the bars will keep you occupied.

By European standards, Belgrade is architecturally new. A strategic outpost at the confluence of the Sava and Danube Rivers, it has been fought over for eons. When the Serbs gained control in the late 19th century, much of the city was razed and rebuilt, leaving a landscape that's part romantic Prague, part midcentury modern, part still under construction.

In spaces that were left to languish after Yugoslavia's breakup, there are now galleries, design shops, restaurants, concert spaces and hybrids like Grad, a warehouse that hosts art exhibits, public debates and Buddhist meditation sessions—and has a garden cocktail bar. Many such amalgams are tucked into apartment blocks or gritty storefronts in the Savamala area. They lack websites but reverberate with energy, retaining a sense of the Old World while celebrating a new one.

—Julia Cooke

10. D.O. Shop



9. Ada Ciganlija



8. D.O. Home



7. Znak Pitanja



6. Centrala



2. Grilled octopus at Saran



3. Klub Knjizevnika



4. Gardos Tower



5. Mikser House



Nemanja Pancic for The Wall Street Journal



The Journalist
Vesna Milosavljevic
Director and co-founder of online Balkan arts and culture portal SeeCult



The Athlete
Janko Tipsarevic
Top-ranked professional tennis player, winner of four ATP world titles



The Builder
Vesna Vucinic
Co-founder of local architecture studio Arhikultura



The Performer
Dragan Micanovic
Belgrade-based actor whose credits include 'Coriolanus,' 'RocknRolla' and 'Layer Cake'

Past Perspective // Museum of Yugoslav History. A must-see for anyone who wants to understand love and hate in the Balkans. In 1980, Josip Broz Tito was interred in the House of Flowers, now part of the museum. *Boticeva 6, mij.rs*

Flashback Cafe // Centrala (6). Owned by an artist and partygoer, Centrala is an oasis of the anarchic, casual Belgrade spirit from the '80s. It's in one of the city's oldest districts, Dorcol, surrounded by fancy restaurants and cafes. *Simina 6, 381-11-334-6109*

Electric Afternoon // Nikola Tesla Museum. The famous scientist of Serbian origin visited Belgrade only once—in June 1892—but his personal belongings are here, including books and designs. A replica of his high-frequency oscillator is on display. *Krunska 51, tesla-museum.org*

Art Exploration // Gallery walk. The biggest museums in Belgrade are closed due to never-ending reconstruction, but a diverse art scene thrives downtown—check out the Cultural Centre of Belgrade, Remont, Galerija 12+ and Street Gallery. On the Sava and Danube riverbanks, there is the Zemun Small Art Center, ITS-ZI, Third Belgrade and Museum Macura.

Native Drink // Rakia Bar. Sample our brandy, made from fruit—plums, apricots, cherries, quince—herbs and honey. Rakia is responsible for Belgrade's good night (and day) life. *Dobracina 5, rakiabar.com*

All-Night Party // Mr. Stefan Braun. Belgrade is famous for its nightlife. Mr. Stefan Braun is a small club in the center of the city. The atmosphere is completely off the hook from the moment the place opens until it closes around dawn. *Nemanjina 4, 9th floor, mrstefanbraun.rs*

High-Cal Treat // Punjena pljeskavica. This is loosely translated as "soft hamburger." It is a beef patty filled with ham and cheese and wrapped in bacon. It's good almost anywhere.

Central Lodging // IN Hotel. We stay at this hotel when we play Davis Cup matches at home. It's the best overall in terms of price, quality, food and location. *Bulevar Arsenija Carnojevic 56, inhotel-belgrade.rs*

Urban Oasis // Belgrade Fortress. In this fortress and the surrounding enormous park, Kalemegdan, you forget you're in the middle of the city—especially when everything is green. It's really, really peaceful. *beograd.rs*

Classic Eatery // Saran (2). It's unfair to pick just one restaurant, but Saran is the best for river fish and has an elegant, warm atmosphere right on the waterfront. *Kej Oslobođenja 53, saran.co.rs*

Sport Stop // Tennis Center Novak. Novak Djokovic's only tennis academy. It has outdoor courts, lessons and a great cafe. *Tadeusa Koscuska 63a, teniskicentarnovak.com*

Scenic Ride // Gardos Tower (1, 4). Rent a bike and cycle along the river to Zemun, which in Austro-Hungarian times was a separate town but has since been folded into Belgrade. It is lovely to walk along the quay, through the old city and to the top of the 19th-century Gardos Tower. *Gradski hill, Zemun, kulanagardosu.com*

Tunes With a View // Cekaonica Jazz Club. I love to come here, day and night, for the music and the views of the rivers and the city. The building is a modernist icon, designed by Dragisa Brasovan in the 1930s. It used to house the State Printing Company of Yugoslavia. *Bulevar Vojvode Misica 17, 8th floor, jazzclubcekaonica.com*

Local Tastemaker // Dragana Ognjenovic (8, 10). She has a small empire, with two fashion boutiques and a home accessories store. I love her style because of its simplicity and her use of really soft fabrics. *D.O. Shop and D.O. Home: Kneza Sime Markovica 10; Software Beograd: Terazije 29; draganaognjenovic.com*

Old-World Eatery // Znak Pitanja (7). It's the city's oldest restaurant, in a building from 1823. It serves traditional food and has a historical ambience and rustic interior. *Kralja Petra 6, 381-11-263-5421*

Regal Haunt // The Residence of Prince Milos. This building from 1831 lies within Topcider Park, and is notable for its traditional Ottoman style. *Rakovicki put bb, imus.org.rs*

Fusion Fare // Reset. This relatively new place in the center of town has a fantastic chef. The space is small and casual, and the French-Serbian dishes, like homemade pâtés and savory pastries, are great. *Kralja Petra 70, 381-11-328-4131*

Tragedy and Comedy // Yugoslav Drama Theater. You can see Shakespeare, Molière or even musicals in Belgrade. This theater tends toward drama—"Othello" just played there—and they also stage works by some of the region's most famous writers, like Ivo Andric. *Kralja Milana 50, jdp.rs*

Shore Thing // Ada Ciganlija (9). We call it "Belgrade's Sea," even though it's really a lake made by the Sava River. During the summer, thousands of people swim and enjoy the cafes and music there. *adaciganlija.rs*

Bold Symphony // Belgrade Philharmonic Orchestra. They perform works by composers like Shostakovich, Wagner and Dvorák, as well as cycles featuring nontraditional instruments such as the ondes Martenot, and music inspired by great works of literature. *Studentski trg 11, bgf.rs*

Design Destination // Mikser House (5). You can hear a concert, have a cup of coffee, eat lunch or buy work by Balkan designers, including chairs, lamps, clothing and accessories. It also hosts the yearly seven-day Mikser Festival, one of the biggest cultural events in the former Yugoslavia. *Karadjordjeva 46, mikser.rs*

Plus Don't Miss... Klub Knjizevnika (3) This elegant open-air restaurant, under a soaring glass-and-steel roof, claims to have hosted Alfred Hitchcock, Elizabeth Taylor, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir, among other notables. *klubknjizevnika.rs* // **Belgrade Design District** Browse the wares of the 30-plus clothing, jewelry and interior-design shops in this arcade. *belgradedesigndistrict.blogspot.com* // **Gallery 12 New Media Hub** This gallery and performance space focuses on works that blur the boundaries between art, sound and technology. *g12hub.com* // **Cathedral of St. Sava** One of the largest churches in the world, this cathedral has been under construction off and on since 1935. Its exterior is finally finished, and interiors are nearly done. *Krusedolska 2a* // **Square Nine** A chic new hotel designed by Brazilian architect Isay Weinfeld. *www.squarenine.rs*

