

16 November, 2018

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Belgrade:

### The 'must sees'

- Zemun (Old Town), including Gardos
- Site of NATO bombings (Nemanjina and Kneza Miloša)
- Kalemegdan (Belgrade Fortress) and surrounding park
- Church of St. Mark (Kosovska)

To travelers who have been fortunate enough to grace Belgrade's cobblestoned streets, massive summer boat parties and uncounted museums full of repressed lore a common theme seems to underlie: it's another happy accident on the continent. I too fall into this category. As I hopped the midnight train from Budapest one cold night in January. I was surprised that Belgrade even existed and was a travel option. In my tentative planning of my trip I assumed Budapest was the end of the line in South Central Europe, a great void separating me from the coveted Grecian ruins of Thessaloniki or the exalted beaches of Western Croatia. Many dormant discoveries laid waiting for me in Serbia's ancient capital. Forever, a historical and cultural dynamo.

Within a week of passing through the welcoming gates of Central Station (Glavna železnička stanica) I had found a paying cash in hand bartending job and a volunteer position at a local hostel (Stella di Notte, Dečanska) without even really looking for such prizes. Even more, I had picked up a few basic phrases in Serbian which allowed me to start delving deeper into what makes this city and country so great.

Without leaning too hard on the political and historical foundations of what Serbia is today, what I saw in my three months in Belgrade were a group of people who are extremely inviting, acutely intelligent, and love the finer things. Whether you're enjoying some jazz relics at Sinatra Jazz Bar (Žorža Klemansoa) or down the street listening to some banging Psytrance at KPTM, winter or summer the air will be electric and the drinks will be flowing along with some very interesting, and hopefully opinionated conversation.

If you are into history though, especially military history there's one museum that will complete your entire European adventure. I'm talking about the Yugoslavian Military Museum (Carigradski drum). As the former capital of the old Yugoslavian republic (now Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Bosnia) this area has seen heavy military action for

the last millennia. A Serbian friend joked with me that “if Serbia is at peace for more than 50 years, something’s gone horribly wrong”. There are artifacts spanning at least 1000 years and the museum holds the largest contingent of medieval combat artifacts that I’ve ever seen. It’s located near Kalemegdan but go early because there’s enough material to last at least a full day.

The underground culture in Belgrade is thriving like never before. Near the Yugoslavian Contemporary Art Museum (Ušće) there’s a large skate park and a nice sitting area to enjoy a warm summer day. Two less frequented bars that are relatively close keep the more specific grooves alive within the city. I’m talking about Freakbar (Viale della Repubblica) where you’ll find cheap drinks, and the most eclectic dj mixes in the city. I swear I even heard Ska there once. Sinkopa (Čumićeva) was an absolute dream come true. Imagine a bar with Drum and Bass playing every second from 9 am until the last person decides to call it a day. Of course there’s live music during the weekends with an open mic every once and a while.

If I didn’t mention the food, I’d regret it. Most produce you buy in the grocery stores around Belgrade will be from a Serbian farm. As for specific dishes, meat lovers will be in love with a Pljeskavica burger which is a mix of pork, lamb and beef served with kaimak which is Serbian clotted cream. There’s a bakery on every street corner of Belgrade so make sure to have a spinach or meat filled pita. You may also be fortunate enough to experience some village delicacies. Horse meat is something I thought I’d never try but sometimes you just have to saddle up and try something new. So much of Serbia has a refreshing DIY mentality so I highly recommend trying some Serbian craft beer, especially Kabinet, but make sure not to mix it with rakija, plum infused homemade moonshine, otherwise you may never leave.