

# EXPLORE!



## Highlights of Serbia

8 days

Serbia - Trip code SRB

## Highlights of Serbia

We'll make the most of our week to uncover the highlights of this intriguing and varied country, Serbia. We'll have the chance to learn about the nation's recent and ancient history in both Belgrade, once known as the capital of Former Yugoslavia, and Novi Sad, as well as visit the country's more wild side including both Tara National Park and Uvac Special Nature Reserve in the west. Along the way we'll experience the wonderful Serbian hospitality and try the hearty cuisine.

## Trip highlights

- ★ **Belgrade** - The old capital of Yugoslavia, discover the city's Ottoman, Roman and most recent Communist history
- ★ **Rakia distillery, Banjina Basta** - See how the locals manufacture their traditional fruit brandy, Rakia
- ★ **Tara National Park** - A chance to explore Serbia's most wild and beautiful national park
- ★ **Sargan 8 Railway** - Ride the old, narrow-gauge railway through the mountains
- ★ **Uvac Special Nature Reserve** - Griffon vulture spotting in Uvac Canyon and a trip into Usac Cave
- ★ **Topola** - Visit Saint George's Church, the Karadjordjevic family Mausoleum and the House of King Peter

#### ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

##### Standard

Our standard, mid-range accommodation offers a good level of service, often with other amenities such as a restaurant, bar, garden or swimming pool. Generally rooms will be comfortable with en suite facilities.

#### TRIP PACE:

##### Full on

Full on paced trips are for travellers who like their holidays packed with activities and experiences, moving on quickly from place to place with lots of early starts and long, busy days. Some may find them tiring, but others get a buzz from packing their precious holiday-time as chock-a-block full of new experiences as possible!

#### GROUP SIZE:

##### 10 - 16

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

## Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

### DAY 1 - Join trip in Belgrade

Our discovery of Serbia will begin in the capital, Belgrade. This romantic city lies on the confluence of the Sava and the Danube Rivers and it's said that Belgrade, meaning 'The White City', is where the rivers met and fell in love. However, it's certainly not always been a peaceful picture, but bustling with locals and tourists it's now rising from its turbulent past and is quickly becoming one of the must see places in the Balkans.



**Accommodation: Hotel Kasina** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

### DAY 2 - Discover Belgrade on foot; option of a boat trip on the Danube

Today will begin with a guided walking tour of the capital to discover the fascinating history including that of the Roman and Ottoman empires through to the more recent conflicts of the early nineties. The city's highlights include Belgrade Fortress and the surrounding Kalmegdan Park, overlooking the rivers. Built by the Celts, the fortress has been strategically used by the Ottomans and Romans, burnt down by the Goths and Huns and since rebuilt. This afternoon we have free time to wander at our own pace and, now much of the city has been pedestrianised, it's a leisurely experience. Alternatively, you can join a boat trip along the Danube and Sava Rivers, which lasts for about 1.5 hours, in order to see the city from a different perspective. Tonight you can choose to dine at one of the many restaurants or cafes, often with outdoor seating, so you can sit enjoy watching the world go by.



**Accommodation: Hotel Kasina** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 3 - Train to Novi Sad and walking tour; Drive to Sabac

Early this morning we will head to Novi Sad by train. Novi Sad, meaning 'New Garden', is the second largest city of Serbia but it boasts a more laidback atmosphere; with most locals choosing to enjoy a coffee on the banks of the Danube rather than rush anywhere. On arrival we'll have a guided walking tour including Petrovaradin Fortress from where the city originated. The fort is known locally as 'The Gibraltar on the Danube' due to its shape rather than its size (despite what the locals say!). The 16 kilometres of hallways deep under the fortress lead to dungeons, which have been home to Karadorde, leader of the first Serbian uprising against the Ottomans, and Tito, the former Yugoslavia's long reigning president. Like Belgrade, Novi Sad's position on the river has made it a frontier hard to break in many wars and is rich in Roman, Greek and Byzantine history. The afternoon will be free to explore before a late afternoon journey to Sabac in time for dinner.



**Accommodation: Hotel Tammy Konak** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

## DAY 4 - Rakia tasting; afternoon walk to Banjska Stena viewpoint

After breakfast we'll set off on a 3 hour journey to Bajina Basta in West Serbia. The Drina River roams through this small town and is the border between Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. We'll enjoy a traditional lamb lunch in Bajina Basta's oldest pub before heading to the town's Rakia distillery. Although the distillery doesn't look like much from the outside, inside we will see how they create Serbia's favourite fruit brandy and have a chance to try some of their produce. This Rakia factory, like many others, was state owned during the years of Yugoslavia and just before it nearly shut down the local people and one main investor pulled together to privatise it so they could continue production. Next, we make our way into Tara National Park. According to mythology, Tara Mountain gets its name from the ancient, Slavic God Tar who chose this area as his home due to the outstanding natural beauty. We will take a one hour walk along the gravel path to Banjska Stena which is arguably the best view in Serbia. From this vantage point you'll be able to look out over the Drina Canyon and mountains in the distance. It will be quite the contrast to bustling Belgrade and Novi Sad and it really captures the beauty of Serbia. We'll then take the drive to Mokra Gora which is our home for the night.



**Accommodation: Hotel Mecavnik** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## DAY 5 - Narrow gauge railway; afternoon in Zlatibor mountain resort

This morning we'll ride the famous Sargan Eight narrow-gauge railway on which the affectionately known 'Cira the Steam Train' once ran daily between Sarajevo and Belgrade. The Sargan Eight section was reopened to tourism in 1999. It was once admired around the world as a piece of world-class construction, for it allows the train to make the steep climb through the mountains on rails that form a figure of eight as they weave through 22 tunnels and cover just over 15 kilometres. As the crow flies, the distance between the stations of Mokra Gora and Sargan is a mere 3.5 kilometres. The train route once brought prosperity to a cut-off region of West Serbia but now offers nostalgic rides up the mountain to visitors mostly from Serbia and the neighbouring countries. The train will make multiple stops along the way for the chance to overlook the wilderness of Tara National Park and there's time for an ice cream or strong, Serbian coffee at the top. After our ride we'll have a fish lunch and head to the mountain resort of Zlatibor. This afternoon you are free to wander at your leisure. The village has a very traditional market selling local food produce that they are happy to offer tastes of, as well as handicrafts and there's also an array of coffee bars and Serbian restaurants. However, if you'd prefer to relax in the sunshine, the lake is the centre of the village where you may just choose to watch the world go by. This evening we'll make the 2.5 hour transfer to Sjenica where we'll be staying for the night.



**Accommodation: Hotel Lane** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

## DAY 6 - Griffon vulture spotting in Uvac Canyon; stay in Sirogojno

Today we go in search of the griffon vultures in their homeland of Uvac Nature Reserve. Our destination is only a short distance from Sjenica and we'll begin by taking a leisurely walk out to the viewpoints where we hope to see vultures soaring above the limestone cliffs across the canyon. The reserve is also home to 104 other types of Eurasian birdlife and offers spectacular views of the Uvac River which meanders below. We'll gently hike down the side of the canyon to the riverbank for a boat ride and even from the water you may catch a glimpse of the vultures in the nests they've built cautiously into the rock face. Our boats will take us to the entrance of Usac Cave which forms the greatest part of the extensive underground network in the area. Our guide will show us the abundance of beautifully formed stalactites and stalagmites by torch light as we proceed 500 metres along the path into the 7 kilometre long cave. A picnic lunch will later be enjoyed in this wild setting. After a day out in the fresh air we'll journey to the highland village of Sirogojno. Once famed for its high-quality knitwear during the 1970s, Sirogojno sweaters graced the catwalks from Paris to Rome. Today, its home to an intriguing open-air museum where visitors can learn about traditional Serbian lifestyles and will be our home for the night in typical wooden lodges. Tonight you may wish to go to the small village tavern for a drop of Rakia or a coffee.



**Accommodation: Old Village Hotel** (or similar)



Simple Guesthouse



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

## DAY 7 - Traditional lunch and visit to Saint George's Church

After a chance to look around the museum at Staro Selo, we will start on the journey back to Belgrade. We'll stop off at Terzica Avlija, a not-for-profit museum created to capture the rural culture, traditions and customs. The park features an old classroom from the early 1900's, a traditional house setting, weaving workshop and pottery barn, as well as many displays of Roman, Ottoman and World War I artefacts found in the region. Here we will also have a typically hearty Serbian lunch cooked traditionally in clay pots in their Log Cabin Inn. This afternoon we'll take a two hour drive north to Oplenac, where we will visit the fascinating Saint George's Church and Mausoleum of the Karadordevic family. Karadorde Petrovic, grandfather of King Peter I, was the leader of the first Serbian uprising against the Ottoman Empire and the patriarch of the Karadordevic family dynasty. The family's checkered history and ongoing blood feud with the Obrenovic Dynasty led to the family being exiled from Serbia but after the Obrenovic family was killed in a military coup, Peter Karadordevic returned to Serbia to reclaim the throne in 1904. Once appointed he immediately began work to build Saint George's Church on Oplenac Hill as a family mausoleum and it was beautifully constructed

with five white marble domes and decorated with Venetian mosaics throughout. There are now six generations buried here and his wishes to have his family buried together have led to exhumations in Britain, USA and most recently in 2012 in Switzerland. We'll also visit King Peter's House, now a museum that was built opposite the church for the purpose of overseeing the construction. Here our guide will show us around the small summer residence which now features exhibits from the Karadjordjevic reign, including letters discussing the commencement of World War I. Late afternoon we'll take the 1 hour drive back to Belgrade to arrive early evening in time for a last night group meal.



**Accommodation: Hotel Kasina** (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

## DAY 8 - Trip ends in Belgrade

This morning after breakfast the trip ends at our hotel.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



## Why book this trip

This trip is a chance to discover Serbia's wild side. A walk in Tara National Park will bring us to the Serbia's most beautiful outlook, Banjska Stena. An unexpected spot in the middle of the woods, where you can take in the spectacular scenery of the Drina River, neighbouring Bosnia and Herzegovina and the rugged mountain backdrop. We'll also go in search of griffon vultures. These birds are protected here and have chosen the vertical cliffs of Uvac Canyon as their nesting ground. We'll try to spot them soaring above whilst hiking down to the river bank and once aboard our boat we'll hope to catch a glimpse of their nests.

# What's included?



## Included meals

Breakfast: 7  
Lunch: 4  
Dinner: 2



## Transport

Bus  
Boat  
Train



## Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader



## Accommodation

1 nights simple guesthouse  
6 nights standard hotel

# Trip information

## Country information

### Serbia Trips

#### Climate

Serbia has a continental climate with warm summers and cold winters. There is a chance of sporadic rain in spring and autumn, though generally it is in the form of short showers. Thunderstorms can occur in summer, generally helping to cool the air. Temperatures from May to October are generally in the low to mid 20's (in °C), but can reach into the 30's (in °C) in July and August - although sometimes warm air currents from Africa can reach here and push the temperatures as high as 40°C.

#### Time difference to GMT

+1

#### Plugs

2 Pin Round

#### Religion

Christian (mainly Serbian Orthodox)

#### Language

Serbian

## Budgeting and packing

### Optional activities

Belgrade: Danube and Sava Rivers boat trip from €7.00.

### Clothing

July and August are the hottest months, but the weather is changeable all through the year. Light rainwear may be needed at any time of year.

### Footwear

Lightweight trail boots or trainers for the national parks and sandals for relaxing.

## Luggage

20kg

## Luggage: On tour

One main piece of baggage and daypack. Remember you are expected to carry your own luggage so don't overload yourself.

## Equipment

A torch, water bottle, insect repellent, suncream (at least factor 15), good quality sunglasses and a lipsalve with sun protection.

## Tipping

### Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Tour Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

### Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognized part of life in this region of the world. Some local staff will look to members of the group for personal recognition of particular services provided. Accordingly you should allow approx. £10 for gratuities for local staff. In order to make things easier for you, the Tour Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the tour.

## Country Information

### Serbia Trips

#### Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

##### Lunch price

£8

##### Dinner price

£12

##### Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

##### Water price

£1

#### Foreign Exchange

##### Local currency

Dinar.

##### Recommended Currency For Exchange

Euros, US Dollars and Pound Sterling can all be exchanged for local currency. However, Euro is the best currency for exchange in most places. Please note if using Pound Sterling then only Bank of England issued bank notes are accepted. Scottish and Northern Irish bank notes are not accepted. Please consult your Explore Leader for more information on currency exchange.

##### Where To Exchange

Banks or official Forex Offices in the main towns and cities. British banks don't generally exchange Dinars, so you should exchange any unwanted local currency before you leave Serbia. Your Explore Leader will advise you on arrival.

##### ATM Availability

Generally widespread, but limited in more rural areas.

##### Credit Card Acceptance

Accepted in major restaurants and hotels.

##### Travellers Cheques

Travellers Cheques can be exchanged for the local currency but only in banks and they are only accepted in major hotels and shops in the main towns and cities.



## Transport, Accommodation & Meals

### Transport Information

Bus, Boat, Train

### Accommodation notes

#### Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

The accommodation at Staro Selo, Sirogojno consists of a variety of wooden cottages typical to the Dinaric Alps of Serbia. Built on stone foundations, they feature log walls and high thatched or wooden rooftops with cone-shaped chimneys. Their interiors are simple and rustic, and include a hearth fireplace where traditionally the household would gather each night for the preparation and consumption of dinner. There is no single room option available on this night as each lodge has varying capacity between 2 - 5 people. Bathrooms are shared, modern and have hot water. Although simple, they are located near the old village tavern and offer excellent views of the surrounding area.

## Essential information

### FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

#### Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

### Essential Information

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

### Visa Information

Serbia: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com) to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

### Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our Essential Information and Booking Conditions.

### Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)



### **Booking a land only package with Explore**

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

### **Joining Tour Abroad**

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer click [here](#)

## **Insurance**

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

## **Flight information**

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

### **Flight Information**

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

### **Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore**

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

## **Included activities**

This trip is designed to acquaint you with the highlights of Serbia in just 8 days. For a majority of the trip we will travel by private bus to make the best use of our time. Once we reach each destination our explorations are mostly done on foot, so please bring sensible footwear and be prepared for the busy nature of this enthralling holiday.

## **Non refundable permits**

### **Serbia Trips**

#### **Vaccinations**

Nothing compulsory, but we recommend being up-to-date with your routine vaccination courses and boosters as recommended in the UK including protection against measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, diphtheria, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio. Tick-borne encephalitis protection is recommended by some medical sources at certain times of the year. Ticks are most active between spring and late autumn. Check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at <http://www.explore.co.uk/Travelhealth/> and from your local healthcare provider. Vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed before departure.