



EXPLORE!

Serbian Summer Festivals

11 days

Serbia - Trip code SEF

Serbian Summer Festivals

On this Beyond trip we'll get to discover not just one, but four unique festivals as well as experiencing the summer highlights of Serbia. We'll tuck into goulash while listening to trumpets blowing at the Guca Trumpet Festival, which is like a cross between Glastonbury, FA Cup final day and the Olympics as trumpeters compete to win the Golden Trumpet! In Nis we'll attend the International Jazz Festival along with the chance to sample hearty Serbian cuisine at the Wine and Fine Fair. Lastly we'll finish off with the fun and live music of the Belgrade Beer Festival where we can try the local brew and dance the night away.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Guca Trumpet Festival** - At this energetic festival you can listen to brass band music, drink homemade plum brandy and tuck in to delicious barbecued meats and goulash
- ★ **Nisville International Jazz Festival** - Visit one of the largest jazz festivals in Europe where you can listen to both traditional and contemporary music in Nis's citadel
- ★ **Nis Wine and Fine Fair** - Chance to sample wine from around 30 different Serbian vineyards along with locally produced brandy, olive oil and cheese
- ★ **Belgrade Beer Festival** - See Serbia's capital city come alive at this annual celebration of both domestic and international beers accompanied by a variety of live music
- ★ **Tara National Park** - As well experiencing Serbian culture and music we will discover its wildest and most attractive national park

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:

12 - 18

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 trip begins 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 visitors it's now rising from its turbulent past and is quickly becoming one of the 'must see' places in the Balkans.

You'll find a selection of great restaurants and bars to choose from this evening. Paprika is arguably the most popular ingredient in Serbian cooking and they tend to use the red fruit itself rather than the dried spice. You'll find it chopped up in salads with tomatoes, cucumber and cheese, chargrilled with barbequed meats, pickled, stuffed and even mashed. They also love cream and kajmak, a partially fermented thick cream, which is often served with grilled meats or fresh bread. It's a bit like a cross between sour cream and clotted cream. Rakia is the most popular spirit and it's normally distilled from plums or grapes, but you can also find more unusual variations like quince, walnut or honey.



Accommodation: Hotel Prag (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Explore Belgrade on foot; visit Nenadovic Tower in Valjevo

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 rebuilt since.

This afternoon we drive to the historic town of Valjevo in western Serbia, which sits on the banks of four rivers and has two old quarters. On one side of the city lies the old centre of Tesnjar, with its Ottoman architecture of small houses and cobbled streets, it's often used as a film shooting location. Whereas the other old quarter feels far more Western European. This afternoon we'll visit the square stone Nenadovic Tower, which was used by rebel fighters during the First Serbian Uprising. We'll also see the National Museum, which has more than 50,000 items on display and includes the Muslim's Lodgings which date from the 18th century and is the oldest building in the town.



Accommodation: Hotel Omni (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Walk in Tara National Park and take a train journey in the mountains

This morning 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 we'll be able to look out over the Drina Canyon and see the mountains in the distance, which really captures the stunning scenery of Serbia.

We then drive to Mokra Gora where we board the famous Sargan Eight narrow-gauge railway, which once ran daily between Sarajevo and Belgrade and this section was reopened to tourism in 1999. It was once admired the world over as a piece of world-class engineering, 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. 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 a strong Serbian coffee at the top.

After our train ride we drive to Kustendorf where we will stay the night. This distinctive mountain village was built by the international film director, Emir Kusturica, for his movie 'Life is a Miracle'. Everything here is constructed from wood and he wanted to recreate a traditional Serbian village, with the exception that all the streets are named after famous film directors. Now days, it is his home, a hotel and also home to an annual international film and music festival. As well as the chance to enjoy the fantastic mountain scenery, here there is also a small art gallery exhibiting local Serbian artists.



Accommodation: Hotel Mecavnik (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Swimming pool available



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 4 - Visit Sirogojno Open Air Museum; attend the Guca Trumpet Festival

Our day begins by driving 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 craftsmanship. Covering nearly 15 hectares, it contains a collection of 19th century wooden buildings that have been assembled here from across the region, including a bakery, an inn and a dairy.

We drive to the village of Zlakusa and make a brief visit to the Ethnographic Park of Terzica Avlija with its colourful country houses dating between 1907-1925 and see its picturesque flower filled gardens. After time for lunch where you can choose to taste homemade juices and traditional Serbian cuisine such as cabbage rolls or the meat and vegetable stew of muckalica.

We arrive in Guca village later this afternoon where we attend the Guca Trumpet Festival - the largest brass band event in the world! This celebration is like a cross between Glastonbury, FA Cup final day and the Olympics, as trumpeters compete for the honour of winning the Golden Trumpet. This normally sleepy village with around 2,000 residences sees in excess of 600,000 people come to listen to brass band music, drink homemade plum brandy and tuck in to delicious barbecued meats and goulash. The inaugural event took place in 1661 in a small churchyard where just four local orchestras competed but by the 1970s it had gained international recognition and has continued to grow ever since. After spending the afternoon at the celebrations to enjoy the energetic atmosphere and stirring music we drive to Kraljevo and check-in to our hotel for the night.



Accommodation: Hotel Crystal (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 5 - See a medieval fortress and churches; attend Nisville Jazz Festival

We start off today by visiting the Serbian Orthodox monastery of Ljubostinja, which is set in a small mountain river valley. The monastery was built in the 14th century on the spot where Prince Lazar met Princess Milica for the first time and the name Ljubostinja means 'place of love'. Sadly Lazar was killed in the Battle of Kosovo and his beloved wife then as an act of mourning choose to become a nun.

We drive on to the city of Krusevac where we'll have the opportunity to get lunch. After this we'll visit the ruined medieval fortress of Lazarev Grad, which was built to protect the former capital of Prince Lazar. We also discover the Lazarica Church, which is a wonderful preserved example of Serbian architecture from the same period and is the last fully intact part of what would have been a vast fortress complex.

This afternoon we arrive in Nis. This cosmopolitan city is a place where old meets new, where you can see new cars travelling beside horse and carts. It's a university city, so its old alleyways are home to sophisticated cocktail bars, as well as pop-up markets in summer and it has a burgeoning music scene, which we'll get to experience at the Nisville International Jazz Festival. It's one of the largest jazz festivals in Europe and here we can listen to both traditional and contemporary music in Nis's historic citadel.

Different events start in the early afternoon so you can choose which stage to visit depending on your own personal tastes and there also a number of exhibits to see. We'll collect our wristbands on arrival, so you'll be free to come and go as you please and our hotel is just a very short walk from the festival site. The festivities will go on to the small hours of the morning, but you of course could decide to head for bed earlier than this if you wish to. Whilst wandering between the music stages in the centre of Nis you can also visit the Nis Wine and Fine Fair where you have the chance to sample and purchase wine from around 30 different Serbian vineyards along with locally produced brandy, olive oil and cheese.



Accommodation: Hotel Niski Cvet (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Lunch in a village wine cellar; attend Nisville Jazz Festival

This morning we'll explore Nis' surroundings and visit the red bricked Latin Church and Cegar Hill where the battle of Cegar took place between the Serbian Revolutionaries and Ottoman army, as part of the First Serbian Uprising in 1809. We drive on to Malca village where we'll have lunch in a small local wine cellar. We'll get to sample local specialities and of course a variety of their red and white wines.

After lunch we'll return to Nis to once again visit the jazz festival. Each day there will be a range of different performers to see and like yesterday you'll still have your wristband on and be able to come and go as you please and see whatever acts take your fancy.



Accommodation: Hotel Niski Cvet (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast and Lunch

DAY 7 - Free day in Nis; chance to visit the infamous Skull Tower

After two evenings spent attending the music festival we take a break today, so that you can relax and catch up on sleep in if you want to. Alternatively you might like to take the opportunity to discover more of Nis. You may want to take a stroll through the historic Bubanj Memorial Park, which was built to commemorate the execution of over 10,000 of the city's residents during World War II. Or maybe you could visit the iconic Skull Tower which is embedded with the skulls of the rebels that fought and lost to the Ottoman forces at the Battle of Cegar. Perhaps choose to go to the Red Cross Nazi Concentration Camp where you can learn the harrowing stories of the 30,000 Serbs, Parisians, Jews and Roma that were imprisoned here and hear about those that attempted to escape in the biggest ever breakout attempt from a World War II concentration camp. For something more light hearted you could visit the ruins of Constantine's Imperial Villa where you can see the ancient Roman mosaic floors and other finds preserved in their archaeological museum.



Accommodation: Hotel Niski Cvet (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Go to Ravanica Monastery and the impressive Resavska Cave

Today we will get to experience both great architecture and natural beauty on our way to Topola. We start by driving to the Ravanica Monastery at the foot of the Kucaj Mountains, which is where Prince Lazar is buried after he died at the Battle of Kosovo. Here we can also admire the colourful frescoes dating from around 1385 and the medieval architecture. Next we head for Resavska Cave which is located beneath the limestone hill of Babina Glava. This huge cave system is around 4.5 kilometres long and we'll get to explore a section of this to see the cavernous halls and channels with their red, white and yellow rock formations and range of stalactites and stalagmites. We drive on to the historic small town of Topola in the Oplenac wine region where we will check-in to our hotel and have the rest of the afternoon free.



Accommodation: Tri O Hotel (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 9 - Visit to Saint George's Church and the Karadjordjevic Mausoleum

This morning we will visit Oplenac's most famous attractions, starting with the fascinating Saint George's Church and Mausoleum of the Karadjordjevic 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 Karadjordjevic family dynasty. The family's chequered 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, King Peter I 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 we will be shown around the small summer residence which now features exhibits from the Karadjordjevic reign, including letters discussing the commencement of World War I. Later this afternoon we'll drive back to Belgrade.



Accommodation: Hotel Prag (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 10 - Free time in Belgrade before attending the Belgrade Beer Festival

Today is free for you to enjoy the sights of Belgrade, where you can see grey socialist blocks nestled between Art Nouveau architecture and remnants from the days of the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps you'll choose to visit one of the many city museums such as the Museum of Yugoslavia or the art collection in the Zepter Museum. Also waiting to be discovered are a selection of upcoming neighbourhoods known for their eclectic mix of cafes, bars and galleries that still remain a secret to most tourists.

This evening we end our trip on a high by joining the lively celebrations at the Belgrade Beer Festival in the new part of the city, Usce, which is on the opposite side of the river to Belgrade's old town. Serbia's capital city comes alive at this annual celebration of both domestic and international beers accompanied by a variety of live music. There will be a huge variety of beers on offer from well-known brands to obscure local brews including lagers, amber ales, stouts, pale ales and wheat beers.



Accommodation: Hotel Prag (or similar)



Standard Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 11 - Trip ends in Belgrade

Our trip ends after breakfast at our hotel in Belgrade.



Meals Provided: Breakfast



Why book this trip

On this unique one-off summer departure you can experience Serbia's food, culture and music at four amazing festivals and also discover the country's architecture, history and natural beauty.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 10
Lunch: 2



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader
Driver(s)
Local Guide(s)



Accommodation

10 nights standard hotel

Trip information

Country information

Serbia

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

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Nis: Red Cross Nazi Concentration Camp, Skull Tower and Constantine's Imperial Villa: entrance to each is approximately €2.00 per person per site plus any additional public transportation cost.

Clothing

August is the hottest month and so lightweight cotton clothing is best with layers for cooler evenings. Light rainwear may be needed. Ladies should take a headscarf to cover their head when entering religious sites.

Footwear

We recommend taking comfortable walking shoes for exploring and trainers or sandals for relaxing.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

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

Equipment

We advise taking a water bottle as well as sun glasses, sunscreen and a sun hat. In case of emergency we recommend that you carry a first aid kit and a torch, which you might also find useful for viewing frescoes as churches which can be dimly lit. For the time spent in the countryside you might find mosquito repellent handy.

Tipping

Explore leader

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

Local crew

Although entirely voluntary, tipping is a recognised 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 please allow £20.00 for tipping.

In order to make things easier for you, the Explore Leaders may organise a group's tips kitty and if this is the case, they will account for it throughout the trip.

Country Information

Serbia

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

£1.20 - 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

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 Kustendorf is a distinctive mountain village which was built by the international film director, Emir Kusturica, for his movie 'Life is a Miracle'. Everything here is constructed from wood and he wanted to recreate a traditional Serbian village, with the exception that all the streets are named after famous film directors. Now days, it is his home, a hotel and also home to an annual international film and music festival. We stay in this unique location, which is equipped with a gym, indoor swimming pool, restaurant, bar and small art gallery exhibiting local Serbian artists.

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.

Price Guarantee

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 and Passport Information

Serbia: Visas are not required by UK, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

All visa information is subject to change. You should confirm all visa related questions with the relevant embassy prior to departure.

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 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.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

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, Polar, 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. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. 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

The 2019 dates of the Serbian festivals won't be confirmed by the organisers until after March 2019. Our trip departure date has been set following the advice of the organisers based on their preliminary event plans and historically the events take place at these times. If however the celebration dates change then we may need to alter the trip departure date or itinerary to fit with this or potentially we may no longer be able to fit in all the planned celebrations. Once you are booked on this trip if we then need to make any changes to your trip date or itinerary then we will write to inform you.

Non refundable permits

Serbia

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. Please 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 [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
