

Serbia Србија

Serbia (Srbija) is yet to come within most tourists' comfort zone, but having got rid of Slobodan Milošević and become a democracy, the nation is now knocking on the doors of Europe, and in the meantime is a safe and welcoming place to visit. The most exciting spot is undoubtedly its capital, Belgrade, a gritty, energetic city. Cultural buffs can revel in its architecture and museums, foodies in its restaurants, while party animals will get no rest exploring its incessant nightlife.

Vojvodina's flat plains and the tranquil Fruška Gora monasteries provide an effective antidote to urban chaos, while Novi Sad is home to the world-famous Exit music festival. Serbia's proud and traditional south is a land of lush rolling hills and wooded valleys brushing up against rugged mountains. The medieval monasteries of Manasija, Sopoćani and Studenica remain the keepers of Serbian faith and Byzantine art, while the mountains of Zlatibor and Kopaonik provide snow fun in winter and glorious hiking in summer. Mosques mix with monasteries in Novi Pazar, where life in the Turkish quarter continues much as it did a century ago when the Turks were still in power.

A few kilometres south lies Kosovo, a disputed land riven by different interpretations of history. For Serbs it is the cradle of their nationhood, for Kosovo Albanians it is their future independence. The UN still recognises Kosovo as part of Serbia until current talks decide its future.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 102,350 sq km
- **Capital** Serbia – Belgrade; Kosovo – Prishtina
- **Currency** Serbia – dinar (din): €1 = 88din; US\$1 = 63din; UK£1 = 117din; A\$1 = 47din; ¥100 = 58din; NZ\$1 = 43din; Kosovo – euro: US\$1 = €0.79; UK£1 = €1.47; A\$1 = €0.59; ¥100 = €0.67; NZ\$1 = €0.50
- **Famous for** Basketball players, Slobodan Milošević
- **Official Language** Serbia – Serbian; Kosovo – Albanian
- **Phrases** Serbian – *zdravo* (hello), *hvala* (thanks), *da* (yes), *ne* (no), *govorite li engleski?* (do you speak English?); Albanian – *allo* (hello), *ju falem nderit* (thanks), *po* (yes), *jo* (no), *a flisni Anglisht?* (do you speak English?)
- **Population** 7.5 million, excluding Kosovo (estimate 1.9 million)
- **Telephone Codes** ☎ 381 international access code ☎ 99
- **Visas** not required by most visitors, see p778



HIGHLIGHTS

- Tap into Belgrade's infectious **party scene** (p760).
- Explore old Serbian villages and sip plum brandy with the locals around **Zlatibor** (p769).
- Gawk at the wondrous and ancient frescoes in central Serbia's **medieval monasteries** (p770).
- Wander around Turkish-influenced **Prizren** (p775), which is dominated by an old castle, and take in a mosque, baths and riverside bars and cafés.

ITINERARIES

- **One week** Revel in Belgrade's attractions and take some day trips to Novi Sad, Topola, Smederevo and Manasija Monastery.
- **Two to three weeks** Add in Subotica, catch the bus or train to Užice, and enjoy the mountains and old Serbian villages around Zlatibor. From Novi Pazar the curious can slip into Kosovo.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The north has a continental climate with relatively cold winters and hot summers. The upland regions have hot, dry summers and cold winters, while the mountain areas have heavy snowfalls. The ski season is generally from December to March.

HISTORY

A nation is often shaped by external events. Serbia's history has been punctuated by foreign invasions, from the time the Celts supplanted the Illyrians in the 4th century BC, through to the arrival of the Romans 100 years later, the Slavs in the 6th century AD, the Turks in the 14th century, the Austro-Hungarians in the late 19th and early 20th

HOW MUCH?

- **Short taxi ride** Serbia/Kosovo 150din/€2
- **Internet access** 60-100din/€1 per hour
- **Coffee** 75din/€1
- **Bottle of plum brandy** 600din/€7

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **Litre of petrol** Serbia/Kosovo 82.50din/€0.95
- **Litre of bottled water** 70din/€1
- **Beer** 60-80din/€ 1
- **Sweat T-shirt** Serbia 1000din
- **Street snack (slice of pizza)** 50din/€0.60

centuries, and the Germans briefly in WWI. A pivotal nation-shaping event occurred in AD 395 when the Roman Emperor Theodosius I divided his empire giving Serbia to the Byzantines, thereby locking the country into Eastern Europe. This was further cemented in 879 when Sts Cyril and Methodius converted the Serbs to the Orthodox religion.

Serbian independence briefly flowered from 1217 with a golden age during Stefan Dušan's reign (1346–55). After his death Serbia declined and at the pivotal Battle of Kosovo in 1389 the Turks defeated Serbia, ushering in 500 years of Islamic rule. Early revolts were crushed but one in 1815 led to de facto Serbian independence that became complete in 1878.

On 28 June 1914 Austria-Hungary used the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Bosnian Serb to invade Serbia, sparking WWI. In 1918 Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Vojvodina, Serbia and its Ko-

MONEY MATTERS

During the 1990s, economic sanctions and gross mishandling of the economy led to the worst hyperinflation in European history. Bank notes became so worthless that it was cheaper to use them to paper walls rather than buy wallpaper and, in the end, smaller notes were only printed on one side to save ink. At the height of inflation (330,000%), a 500-billion-dinar banknote was issued to replace a 50-billion-dinar note that had only been in circulation one week.

Many state industries couldn't pay their employees so they were paid in kind or issued worthless shares. Later, when a multinational bought up the local brewery in the small town of Apatin, the locals found their shares to be worth a fortune. Apatin is now one of the richest municipalities, per capita, in Serbia.



sovo province, Montenegro and Macedonia were joined together into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes under the king of Serbia. This lengthy title remained until 1929 when the country became Yugoslavia (southern Slavs).

In March 1941 Yugoslavia joined the fascist Tripartite Alliance, which sparked a military

coup and an abrupt withdrawal from the alliance; Germany's reaction was to bomb Belgrade. Rival resistance movements fought both each other and the Germans, with the communist partisans led by Josip Broz Tito gaining the upper hand. In 1945 they formed the government, abolished the monarchy and declared a federal republic, which included

FOR SALE: ONE NAVY

Montenegro's vote for independence in May 2006 closes the book on Yugoslavia, a federation that lasted in various forms for 88 years. Montenegro's vote also means independence for Serbia, which less than a decade ago was led by a leader hell-bent on creating a greater Serbia. Now Serbia has shrunk to a shadow of its former self and will get smaller if Kosovo gains independence.

Serbia is now a landlocked country. What will it do with its navy, and will Montenegro give it port facilities at Bar? Probably some deal will be done, and regardless of the separation, Serbs will still flock to the Montenegrin coastline for holidays. Montenegrins would also like to continue their free access to medical and education services in Serbia.

Serbia and its autonomous provinces Kosovo and Vojvodina.

Tito broke with Stalin in 1948 and Yugoslavia became a nonaligned nation, albeit bolstered by Western aid. Within the nation, growing regional inequalities and burgeoning Serbian expansionism pushed demands by Slovenia, Croatia and Kosovo for more autonomy.

By 1986 Serbian nationalists were espousing a 'Greater Serbia' to encompass Serbs in the other republics. This doctrine was appropriated by Slobodan Milošević, Communist Party leader in Serbia, to attempt to dominate Yugoslavia. This horrified the other republics, which then had to fight bloody wars against the Serbian-controlled Yugoslav army to gain their independence.

In April 1992 the remaining republics, Serbia and Montenegro, formed a 'third' Yugoslav federation without any provision of autonomy for Kosovo. This was the latest event in a series of brutal repressions by Serbia of the majority Albanians in Kosovo and violence, largely provoked by the army and police, erupted in January 1998.

The West produced a storm of protest plus an arms embargo. In March 1999 peace talks in Paris failed when Serbia rejected a US-brokered peace plan. In response to organised resistance in Kosovo, Serbian forces moved to empty the country of its Albanian population. Hundreds of thousands fled into Macedonia

and Albania, galvanising the US and NATO into a 78-day bombing campaign. On 12 June 1999 Serbian forces withdrew from Kosovo.

In the September 2000 presidential elections, the opposition parties, led by Vojislav Koštunica, declared victory but their claim was denounced by Milošević. Opposition supporters from all over the country swarmed to Belgrade, took over the streets and occupied parliament. When Russia then recognised Koštunica's win, it was all over for Milošević, who had to acknowledge defeat.

Koštunica restored ties with Europe, acknowledged Yugoslav atrocities in Kosovo and rejoined the UN. In April 2001 Milošević was arrested and extradited to the international war-crimes tribunal in The Hague.

In April 2002 a loose union of Serbia and Montenegro replaced Yugoslavia. The EU-brokered deal was intended to stabilise the region by accommodating Montenegrin demands for independence, but allowed for a referendum after three years. In May 2006 Montenegrins voted by 55.5% to leave the union.

In March 2003 Serbia's prime minister, Zoran Đinđić, was assassinated. He had been instrumental in extraditing Milošević and had been trying to get rid of criminal elements from politics and business. His alleged killers were crime bosses and Milošević-era paramilitary commanders.

Between 2003 and 2004 three attempts were made to elect a new president but they failed due to voter apathy. Parliamentary elections in December 2003 were inconclusive but saw a worrying resurgence of nationalism. Power-sharing deals installed Koštunica as head of a centre-right coalition relying on support from Milošević's Socialist Party. Finally, in June 2004, Serbia gained a new president in pro-European Boris Tadić.

On 11 March 2006 Milošević was found dead in his Hague cell, ending another chapter in the region's history. In the same month talks commenced on independence for Kosovo but these look headed for a stalemate. Serbia will give everything but independence and Kosovo Albanians want nothing but independence.

PEOPLE

Serbia's 2002 census excluding Kosovo (estimate 1.9 million) revealed a population of 7.5 million. Ethnically Serbia (excluding Kosovo) is made up of 83% Serbs, 4% Hungarians, 2% Bosniaks, 1.5% Roma, 1% Albanians, 1%

VOX POP

Who are you? Nikola Vrzić, trained as an anthropologist but working part time as a video editor in Belgrade.

What do you like best about Serbia? Wait, I have to think about that.

What would you like to change? Mentality of the people, not to live in the past.

Will you give up smoking? In 10 years I suppose.

Montenegrins and 7.5% other groups. Vojvodina is more multicultural, with perhaps 28 ethnic groups and sizable populations of Hungarians, Slovaks and Romanians.

There are large Slavic Muslim and Albanian minorities in southern Serbia and about 10,000 Muslims live in Belgrade.

In Kosovo the minority Serbs (7%) live in ghettos protected by Kosovo Force (KFOR).

RELIGION

Religion and ethnicity broadly go together. About 65% of the population is Orthodox; Roman Catholics, who are Vojvodinan Hungarians, comprise 4%; Albanian Kosovars and Slavic Muslims make up 19%.

ARTS Literature

Bosnian-born but a former Belgrade resident, Ivo Andrić was awarded the Nobel Prize for

literature in 1961 for his *Bridge over the Drina*. Other books worthy of the traveller's perusal are *In the Hold*, by Vladimir Arsenijević; *Words Are Something Else*, by David Albahari; *Petrija's Wreath*, by Dragoslav Mihailović; and *Fear and its Servant*, by Mirjana Novaković.

Cinema

The award-winning film *Underground*, by director Emir Kusturica, deals with Yugoslav history in a chaotic, colourful style. His latest film *Zivot Je Cudo* (Life Is a Miracle) is a dramatic story of a man who shuts his eyes to war and builds a scenic railway to attract tourists.

Bosnian director Danis Tanović's *No Man's Land* deals superbly with an encounter between a Serbian soldier and a Bosnian soldier stuck in a trench on their own during the Bosnian war.

Music

Serbia's vibrant dances are led by musicians playing bagpipes, flutes and fiddles. Kosovar music bears the deep imprint of five centuries of Turkish rule with high-whine flutes carrying the tune above the beat of a goatskin drum.

Blehmuzika (brass music influenced by Turkish and Austrian military music) has become the national music of Serbia, with an annual festival at Guča in August.

The modern music scene is fractured and covers everything from wild Roma music to house, techno, blues, jazz, drum'n'bass, or ethnic folk updated and crossed with techno, producing a variant that many call turbofolk.

SINGING FOR EUROPE

In 2004 Serbia and Montenegro entered the Eurovision Hall of Fame by coming second with a haunting love ballad by a Serbian group that blended Serbian and Turkish influences. That song, issuing forth from radios, cafés, bars and mobile phones, then proceeded to annoy everyone for the next three months.

The 2006 entry was to be decided through a televised contest in Belgrade, where a Serbian entry would compete against one from Montenegro. The Serbian audience took exception to the Montenegrin boy band – aptly titled 'No Name' – (as you would), and booed them off the stage after they were judged to be the winners. The Serbs accused the Montenegrin judges of tactical voting.

Several Montenegrin newspapers expressed their annoyance the next day by saying that the union between the two countries couldn't even work musically let alone politically. A former Serbian prime minister commented later that the event had caused more excitement than the death of Milošević on the same weekend.

In the end no agreement on who should represent the union could be reached and Serbia and Montenegro withdrew from the contest. Coincidentally the Eurovision contest was held on the day before the Montenegrins decided that their future lay in independence.

ENVIRONMENT

In the north of the country, Vojvodina is pancake-flat agricultural land. South of the Danube the landscape rises through rolling green hills that crest where the Dinaric Alps slice southeastwards across the country. Within these mountains is Kosovo, a lowland vale.

The highest mountain is Djeravica (2656m) in western Kosovo, and the mountain ranges of Zlatibor and Kopaonik are the country's major ski resorts.

Wild animals inhabiting the mountains include the lynx, wolf and brown bear but they avoid humans so visitors are unlikely to come across them.

The major national parks are Fruška Gora and Kopaonik, and Unesco-recognised sites are Sopoćani and Studenica monasteries.

Sewage pollution of river waters, air pollution around Belgrade and emissions from decaying industrial plants are the environmental issues the country has to face. The most likely remedy for these problems will come with eventual EU ascension, when strict new laws will come into force.

FOOD & DRINK

Staples & Specialities

A favourite cheap snack is *burek*, a greasy-pastry pie made with *sir* (cheese), *meso* (meat), *krompiruša* (potato) or occasionally *pecurke* (mushrooms); with yogurt it makes a good breakfast. *Ćorba* (soup) or *ćevapčići* (grilled kebab) can make a filling midday meal.

Serbia is famous for its grilled meats, such as *ćevapčići*, *pljeskavica* (spicy hamburger), *ražnjići* (pork or veal kebabs) and *duveć* (grilled pork cutlets with spicy stewed peppers, courgettes and tomatoes on rice).

Regional cuisines range from spicy Hungarian goulash in Vojvodina, to Turkish kebab in Kosovo. In southern Serbia try *kajmak* (a salted cream turned to cheese).

Pivo (beer) is universally available. Many people distil their own *rakija* (brandy) out of plums and other fruit, and Montenegrin red wine, *venac* especially, is a rich drop.

Coffee is usually served Turkish-style, 'black as hell, strong as death and sweet as love'. Superb espresso and cappuccino is available at most cafés, restaurants and bars, and if you want regular tea, ask for Indian tea.

Vegetarians & Vegans

Eating here is a trial for vegetarians and almost impossible for vegans. Try the following salads, which can be satisfying: *Srpska salata* (Serbian salad) containing raw peppers, onions and tomatoes, seasoned with oil and vinegar; and *šopska salata*, consisting of chopped tomatoes, cucumber and onion, topped with grated soft white cheese. Also ask for *gibanica* (cheese pie), *zeljanica* (cheese pie with spinach) or *pasulj prebranac* (a dish of cooked and spiced beans). If you eat fish there's plenty of seafood and trout. As always, there's the ubiquitous vegetarian pizza.

Habits & Customs

Locals tend to skip breakfast and grab something on the way to work. Most people's work usually ends around 3.30pm, which becomes the time for lunch. This slides dinner back to 8pm, 9pm or 10pm if eating out.

BELGRADE БЕОГРАД

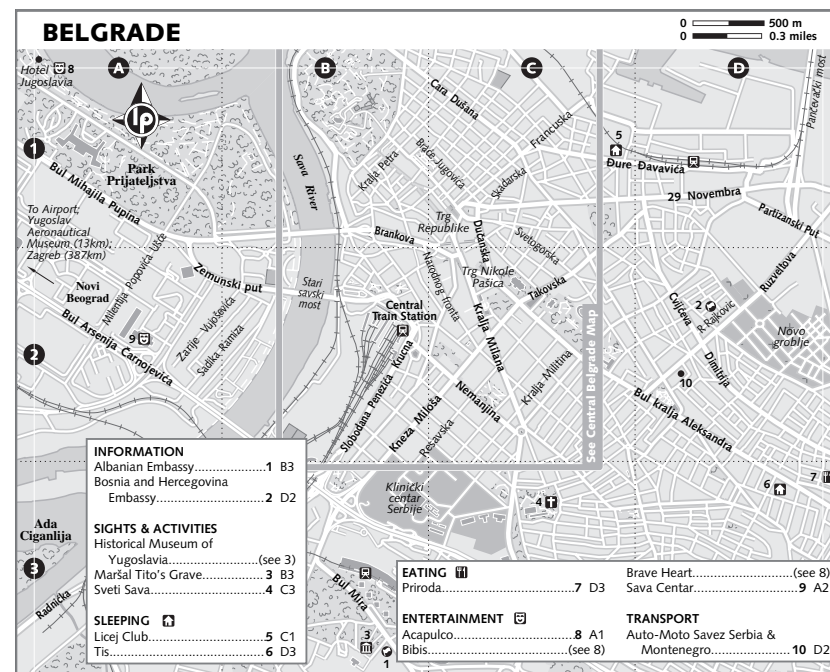
☎ 011 / pop 1.58 million

Belgrade is not a beautiful city – even Belgraders agree on that – but it is an interesting city that's full of hedonism, passion and finesse. Architecturally, it's a mishmash of two centuries of grandiose buildings and ugly Soviet-style concrete blocks.

Regardless, the city holds some real gems. Perched between the Danube and Sava Rivers, the ancient Kalemegdan Citadel has always sought (not always successfully) to protect the city. Leading from it into the city heart is the princely Knez Mihailova, a street of restaurants, bookshops, galleries and shops full of pretty things. Belgraders love to shop and party, which probably developed as an antidote to the numbness of the Milošević years.

'Does anyone work here?' you wonder, as you roam streets full of people. Every day seems to be Saturday; and if every day is Saturday, then every night is Friday night, with plenty happening. Belgrade's ultimate appeal is its nightlife. There's always another place to go to: underground clubs, apartment bars, and floating bars and clubs on the rivers. Everyone is ready to party at any time, dance the night away and go straight to work the next day.

Cheap food and drink, plus a distinctive national cuisine, make for a host of decent



restaurants bursting with lively eaters. Just check out the bohemian quarter of Skadar-ska. When it all gets too much, there are places to escape to and relax. Ada Ciganlija swarms with swimmers during hot summer days, and the nearby park has forests to walk in.

ORIENTATION

The central train station and two adjacent bus stations are on the southern side of the city centre. From a couple of blocks northeast, Terazije runs up to Trg Republike, the heart of Belgrade, from where Knez Mihailova, Belgrade's lively pedestrian boulevard, leads to the Kalemegdan Citadel.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Mamut (Map p756; ☎ 639 060; crn Knez Mihailova & Sremska; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Browsers heaven; books in English, CDs, DVDs, gifts and top-floor café.

Plato Bookshop (Map p756; ☎ 625 834; Knez Mihailova 48; ☎ 9-11am Mon-Sat, noon-11pm Sun) English literature, maps, books on Serbia and stationery.

Internet Access

SBB (Map p756; ☎ 324 3177; per hr 80din; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, 11am-midnight Sun) Located behind Makedonska 4.

XPlato (Map p756; ☎ 303 0633; Vase Ćarapića 19; per hr 100din; ☎ 9am-11.30pm)

Internet Resources

Belgrade City (www.beograd.org.yu)

Tourist Organisation of Belgrade (www.belgrade-tourism.org.yu)

Laundry

Wash Center (Map p756; ☎ 306 5924; Admirala Geparata Br 3; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) Washers and dryers; DIY laundry costs about 390din.

Left Luggage

Central train station (Map p756; Savski Trg 2; per piece per day 90din)

Medical Services

Emergency Centre (Map p756; ☎ 361 8444; Miloša Porcerca Pasterova 2; ☎ 24hr) Medical clinics.

Prima 1 (Map p756; ☎ 361 0999; Nemanjina 2; ☎ 24hr) Pharmacy opposite train station.

BELGRADE IN TWO DAYS

Roam the mighty **Kalemegdan Citadel** (right), stroll through Knez Mihailova taking in a coffee on Trg Republike and checking out the sparks at the **Nikola Tesla Museum** (opposite). Explore the **Ethnographic Museum** (opposite), and take an aperitif at **Rezime** (p759) before dining out at **Šešir Moj** (p759) in Skadarska.

Have a peek at the mighty **Sveti Sava** (opposite) and **Sveti Marko** (opposite) in central Belgrade, then catch a bus to Zemun for a late lunch at **Reka** (p762). Rest up and then rev up with cocktails at **Ben Akiba** (p759) before clubbing at **Ana 4 Pistolja** (p760).

Saski Venac Hospital (Map p756; ☎ 361 9088; Pasterova 1; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri)

Money

More ATMs than your bank balance can manage. Exchange offices, recognisable by a large blue diamond sign, are widespread.

Komercijalna Bank (Map p756; ☎ 323 5087; Trg Nikole Pašića 2; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun) Busy bank with a useful Sunday opening; location is Terazije rather than Nikole Pašića, despite its address.

Post

Central post office (Map p756; ☎ 363 3492; Zmaj Jovina 17; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat)

Telephone

Telephone centre (Map p756; ☎ 323 4484; Takovska 2; ☎ 7am-midnight Mon-Fri, 7am-10pm Sat & Sun) In the post office by Sveti Marko church.

Tourist Information

Tourist Organisation of Belgrade (Map p756; ☎ 324 8404; www.belgradetourism.org.yu; Terazije underpass; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Friendly and knowledgeable outfit with useful brochures, city maps and a *Welcome to Belgrade* pamphlet. **Yellow Cab** Events magazine (with some English) available at kiosks (90din).

Travel Agencies

Bas Turist (Map p756; ☎ 263 6299, fax 784 859; BAS bus station) International buses. **KSR Beograd Tours** (Map p756; ☎ 264 1258; fax 687 447; Milovana Milovanovića 5; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-3pm Sat) Train tickets and Eurail passes at station prices without the crowds.

Lasta (Map p756; ☎ 264 1251; www.lasta.co.yu; Milovana Milovanovića 1; ☎ 7am-9pm) International buses.

Wasteels (Map p756; ☎ 265 8868; wasteels@eunet.yu; central train station, Savski Trg 2; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat) Multilingual staff sell international train tickets, Eurail and Balkan flexipasses at station prices.

SIGHTS

Kalemegdan Citadel

Capture the hill protected by the junction of the Sava and Danube Rivers and you control the land to the south. This explains why there has been a fortified settlement here since Celtic times, but such prime real estate attracts enemies. Over the last 2300 years some 115 battles have been fought over this site, and parts of it and the outer city have been razed 44 times, as one conqueror removed another.

What remains today dates from the 18th century. The core of the fortifications is the Upper Citadel, accessed by several massive gates and bridges (now wooden) over deep moats.

The main entrance is the Stambol Gate, built by the Turks around 1750. This leads to the **Military Museum** (Map p756; ☎ 334 4408; admission 100din; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun), which presents a complete military history of former Yugoslavia. Proudly displayed are captured Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) weapons and bits of the American stealth fighter that was shot down in 1999. Outside are several bombs and missiles, which have been contributed from the air by NATO, plus a line-up of old guns and tanks, some quite rare. There's a guidebook in English (150din).

Most of the Upper Citadel is now parkland, and the massive walls are a favourite place for Belgraders to snatch an alfresco lunch on work days, or for young couples to find a bit of romantic solitude.

Stari Grad

South of the citadel lies Stari Grad (Old Town), built mostly when the Habsburgs grabbed Belgrade from the declining Ottoman Empire.

The 3rd floor of the **National Museum** (Map p756; ☎ 330 6000; Trg Republike; admission 200din, free Sun; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, Wed & Fri, noon-8pm Thu & Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) is an art gallery displaying just part of a very large collection of national and European art, including works by Picasso and Monet. Nadežeta Petrović (1873–1915), one of

Serbia's first female artists, is well represented. The lower floors (prehistory) have been closed for several years.

Nearby is the outstanding **Ethnographical Museum** (Map p756; ☎ 328 1888; Studentski Trg 13; admission 100din; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue, 10am-10pm Thu, 9am-5pm Sat, 9am-1pm Sun) with a comprehensive collection of Serbian costumes, folk art and items of everyday existence. The costumes show a superb quality of weaving and embroidery using russet browns, wine reds and muted yellows. Some retro-designer just has to discover these patterns. Agrarian tools and equipment take up much of the top floor, with several displays of rooms furnished to reflect various periods of time and different communities. Explanations are in English and a small shop sells examples of the crafts.

You should visit the nearby **Gallery of Frescoes** (Map p756; ☎ 621 491; Cara Uroša 20; admission 50din; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, Tue & Thu-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) just to appreciate the artistic wealth cloistered in this country's monasteries. There are some originals but otherwise they're exact replicas, faithful to the last blotch and scratch. These you can photograph, whereas in most cases you can't photograph the originals in the monasteries.

The **Palace of Princess Ljubice** (Map p756; ☎ 638 264; Kneza Sime Markovića 8; admission 150din; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) is a Balkan-style palace built for the wife of Prince Miloš in 1831. Mostly, it's a collection of period furnishings, carpets and paintings but it desperately needs the addition of personal items to bring out how the princess led her life. To one side is a little *hammam* (Turkish bath), where the princess would have had steam baths and massages, and were she a woman of today, her yoga or Pilates class.

Skadarska

Often hailed as Belgrade's Montmartre, Skadarska was the bohemian hang-out of poets and artists in the early 1900s. Today this cobbled street is famous for its Balkan taverns, strolling musicians, cafés and art galleries. In summer, the restaurants spill out onto the street, and music, theatre and cabaret performers entertain customers and passers-by.

The restaurants rejoice in unusual names, such as Tri Šešira (Three Hats – it was once a millinery), Ima Dana (There Are Days), Dva Jelena (Two Deer) and Dva Bela Goluba (Two White Doves).

Central Belgrade

Behind the post office stands **Sveti Marko** (Map p756; Bulevar Kralja Aleksandra 17), a solid church supported by four massive internal pillars containing the grave of the Emperor Dušan (1308–55). Behind, and dwarfed, is a petite blue-domed **Russian Church** erected by refugees who fled the October Revolution.

Started in 1935 and interrupted by Hitler, communism and lack of cash, **Sveti Sava** (Map p753; Svetog Save) is billed as the biggest Orthodox church in the world. The church lies on the reputed site where the Turks burnt the relics of St Sava, the youngest son of a 12th-century ruler and founder of the independent Serbian Orthodox church.

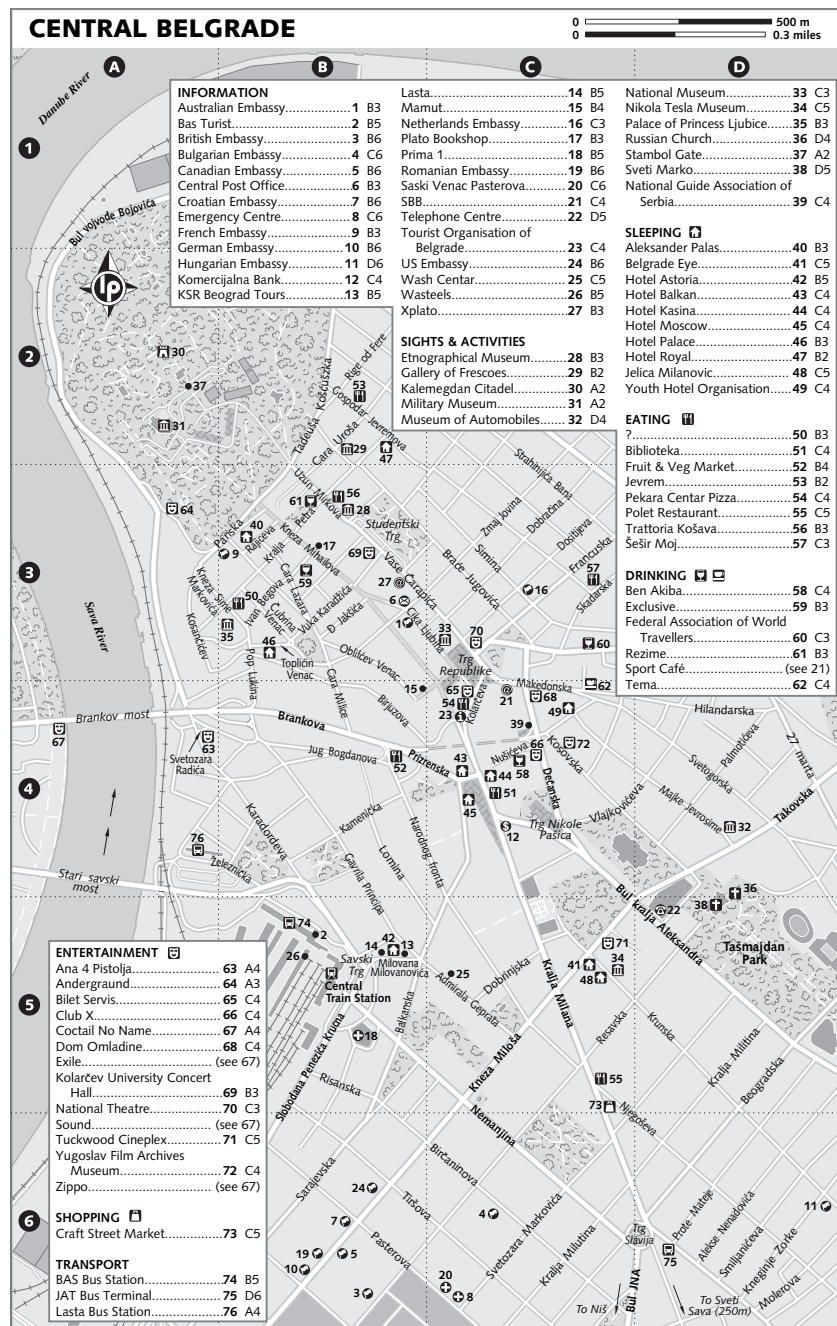
The **Museum of Automobiles** (Map p756; ☎ 303 4265; Majke Jevrociće 30; admission 50din; ☎ 11am-7pm) is a private collection of cars and motorcycles in Belgrade's first garage. First choice for our garage would be the '57 Cadillac convertible, with only 25,000km and one careful owner – President Tito.

One of Belgrade's more interesting museums is the **Nikola Tesla Museum** (Map p756; ☎ 433 886; www.tesla-museum.org; Krunska 51; admission 50din; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun), dedicated to one of Serbia's few heroes, the man who discovered alternating current. Apart from demonstrations of Tesla's fascinating inventions, the big thrill is when the curator turns on a high-frequency oscillator that lights up the (unconnected) fluorescent tube you're gingerly holding in your hand. Shades of *Star Wars*' light sabres!

Outer Belgrade

Don't miss **Maršal Tito's grave** (Map p753; House of Flowers; ☎ 367 1485; Bulevar Mira; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Tue-Sun) with a curious museum of gifts (embroidery, dubious-purpose smoking pipes, saddles and weapons) given by toadying comrades and fellow travellers. Check the adjacent **Historical Museum of Yugoslavia** (Map p753; ☎ 367 1485; exhibitions ☎ 9am-2pm Tue-Sun) for an occasional exhibition. Trolleybus 40 or 41.

The UFO parked near the airport just happens to be a futuristic building housing the exceptional **Yugoslav Aeronautical Museum** (☎ 670 992; admission 300din; ☎ 9am-2pm Tue-Sun Nov-Apr, 9am-7pm Tue-Sun May-Oct), which is sure to engross any aircraft buff. On display are rare planes from WWII, bits of that infamous American stealth fighter and a parking lot of 'make me an offer' MiG21s.



Ada Ciganlija (Map p753), a green and sandy island park in the Sava River, is Belgrade's summer retreat. Gentle choices are swimming in the lake (naturists 1km upstream, please), renting a bicycle or just strolling through the woodland. Adrenaline junkies might fancy the bungee jumping or the water-ski tow. Plenty of places overlooking the lake sell restorative cold beers.

TOURS

Romantika (🚂 Train trips May-Sep) Steam-hauled train to Sremski Karlovci. Contact KSR Beograd Tours (p754).

Tourist Guides Association of Serbia (Map p756; ☎ 323 5910; 5th fl, Dučkanska 8; 🕒 9.30am-3pm Mon-Fri) Independent and licensed guides for city or country tours.

Tourist Organisation of Belgrade (p754) Runs bus, boat (May to October) and guided walking tours.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

FEST film festival (www.fest.org.yu) An international festival of film, held during February and March, with guest appearances from foreign directors and actors.

Belgrade Beer Fest (www.belgradebeerfest.com) A heady mix of rock music, a wide variety of domestic and foreign beers, and thousands of people who just like both. Held in August.

Belgrade International Theatre Festival (Bitef; www.bitef.co.yu) One of Europe's older and most important festivals of theatre. Its programme celebrates the avant-garde with theatre and street performances. Held in September.

BEMUS (www.bemus.co.yu) A classical music festival attracting some of the world's top orchestras, conductors and other music ensembles, and held in October.

SLEEPING

Backpacker hostels are making an appearance in Belgrade, and some scruffy midrange hotels are getting a makeover in style, service and price. Some budget stalwarts are resisting the tide. At the top end of the range the Aleksander Palas has set the new standard for centrally located posh hotels.

Budget

HOSTELS

Belgrade Eye (Map p756; ☎ 334 6423; www.belgradeeye.com; Krunska 6b; dm/d/tr per person with shared bathroom €11.50/17.50/14; 🕒) The Eye has doubles and dorms with luggage lockers. There's a kitchen for DIY catering and free tea and coffee are always on tap. The terrace is for good-weather lazing or for firing up the barbecue. For longer

stays, the helpful owners have apartments for rent.

Tis (Map p753; ☎ /fax 380 6050; terranova@sbb.co.yu; Koste Abraševića 17; bed per person from €15; 🕒) Look for the striking yellow and green building two streets south of Bulevar Kralje Aleksandra, just east of its junction with Stanislava Sremčevića (take tram 2, 5 or 7). Recently opened, the fresh dorms and doubles are still untainted by backpacker socks, which if you have any can be done here for 400din a load. Some doubles have TVs and there's a common room with free internet access. You can buy sandwiches, coffee, tea and beer, and lounge in the secluded garden.

Licej Club (Map p753; ☎ 339 2466; www.licejkon.com; Venizelosa 31; s/d with shared bathroom €20.50/31; 🕒) At the time of research this hostel had yet to open; let us know what you think.

The **Youth Hostel Organisation** (Map p756; Ferijalni Savez Beograd; ☎ 324 8550; www.hostels.org.yu; 2nd fl, Makedonska 22; 🕒 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) has a deal for discounted rooms with the **Hotel Astoria** (Map p756; ☎ 264 5422; Milovana Milovanovića 1a; s/d €22/29). It also books holiday student accommodation at the **Jelica Milanovic** (Map p756; ☎ 323 1268; Krunska 8; per person €11, with shared bathroom €9; 🕒 Jul & Aug).

HOTELS

Hotel Royal (Map p756; ☎ 263 4222; www.hotelroyal.co.yu; Kralja Petra 56; s/d from €25/33.50; 🕒) Very central and cheap, the Royal's about the best budget value hotel and consequently it's often bursting. Sure, it's worn, and the breakfasts are iron rations, but it's kept tidy and the always-open bar means there's somewhere to slip away to if you can't sleep.

Midrange

Hotel Palace (Map p756; ☎ 218 5585; www.palacehotel.co.yu; Topličin Venac 23; s/d/apt €65/92/110; 🕒) From leather armchairs and a tinkling atrium waterfall to the pleasantly revived rooms, this hotel shows how a bit of TLC can resuscitate a state hotel. The rooms are large and have phones, TVs and bidets. We liked the look of rooms 514 and 511. Up on the top floor, the Panorama restaurant reveals a city view. Not that you would know it but the Palace was the Gestapo headquarters in WWII, and the French embassy afterwards.

Hotel Balkan (Map p756; ☎ 363 6000; www.balkanhotel.net; Prizrenska 2; s/d/tr €27/38/45; 🕒) This is new Belgrade. Due to recent renovations by its new owner, an electronics company, the Balkan

now comes in seductive coffee browns and peachy cream with lots of bold artwork on the walls. It's been redesigned with thought. As befits a electronics company, it's plush with TVs and plasma screens around the place. The restaurant, the Orient Express, is named for the time when the hotel accommodated overnight passengers from the original *Orient Express*, which ran to Istanbul.

Hotel Kasina (Map p756; ☎ 323 5574; Terazije 25; s/d from €27/40; ☹ ☒) Opposite the Moscow, the Kasina is almost lost in a bank of similar buildings but stands out in Belgrade's history as its oldest hotel (1856). Inside is a good choice of rooms from cheap shoe-box singles to plush apartments. Breakfast is a buffet, there's a reasonable restaurant, and better still a rollicking beer hall.

Hotel Moscow (Map p756; Moskva; ☎ 268 6255; www.hotelmoskva.co.yu; Balkanska; s/d/tr from €57/122/152; ☹ ☒) A hotel with character, as the 1906 secessionist-period exterior suggests. Indira Gandhi and Orson Welles stayed here (unfortunately for the gossip mags, not in the same room and not at the same time). The downstairs café-bar has huge windows looking out onto Terazije; locals and visitors throng here to drink coffee, gorge on delicious cakes and watch their fellow citizens through the glass.

Top End

Aleksandar Palas (Map p756; ☎ 330 5300; www.aleksandarpalas.com; Kralja Petra 13-15; apt from €260 Mon-Fri, Sat & Sun €200; ☹ ☒) No simple rooms here, just beautiful apartments kitted out with the best furnishings and mod cons: home cinema with six speakers, and CD and DVD players. Bathrooms have space-age shower cabinets that spray and steam, while music plays in the background. Fortunately, the instructions are waterproof. Would you ever want to go outside?

EATING

Belgraders enjoy eating out, and are well rewarded with many fine restaurants offering good affordable food. Many of these are packed around the streets of Knez Mihailova, 29 Novembra, Makedonska and the famous Skadarska.

City Centre

BUDGET

Kiosks and cafés offering *burek*, *čevapčići*, pastries and some inventive pizza are scattered

everywhere and you can fill up at these for under 100din. Many, like those around Trg Republike and the bus and train stations, are open 24 hours.

Pekara Centar Pizza (Map p756; Kolarčeva 10; pizza 60din; ☹ 24hr) With its ever-open doors, Pekara has a bright and cheery interior and trays of freshly made pizzas that beckon. There are stand-up tables if you want to stay and eat. You may need more than one slice.

Belgrade's main fruit and veg **market** (Map p756; cnr Brankova Prizrenska & Narodnog Fronta; ☹ 6am-1pm) is a fertile ground for self-catering. Belgrade has many supermarkets.

MIDRANGE

Biblioteka (Map p756; Terazije 27; meals 240-300din) We've always felt that a library and a drinking den were a natural combination of pleasures. Biblioteka provides both. Books and magazines are racked up for reading, while waiters in cheeky red-banded bowlers, green checked shirts and large skirt aprons flit around to help with your drink and food requests. Many come here to meet friends, and the unobtrusive background music allows for quiet conversation or reading. Breakfasts are served until 1pm.

Polet Restaurant (Map p756; ☎ 323 2454; Kralja Milana 31; dishes 200-500din) Fat shiny brass ship-railings around the mezzanine floor, slatted shutters over portholes and a Mediterranean décor of blues and whites provide the ambience for this hideaway seafood restaurant. Enter from the street through the blue frontage; don't linger at the bar but descend 'below decks'. The menu ranges from the tasty fish soup (100din) to *scampi à la Parisienne* (1300din). The calamari is chargrilled to perfection, misted with lemon, and succulent (550din).

Trattoria Košava (Map p756; ☎ 627 344; Kralja Petra 6; dishes 400-600din; ☹ 9am-1am Mon-Fri, noon-1am Sat & Sun) This Mediterranean-style Italian restaurant is light and airy with a 'cheer you up on a bad day' pastel décor. Options include the downstairs café for a blow-in pizza snack, coffee and a give-me-more cherry strudel, or the restaurant upstairs for some serious eating.

Jevrem (Map p756; ☎ 328 4746; Gospodar Jevremova 36; meals 400-850din; ☹ 11am-1am Mon-Sat) Set in a restored old Dorčol house, Jevrem is furnished as if time stopped in the 1920s, confirmed by the old photographs of Belgrade on the sunflower yellow walls. The food is traditional and simple; for afters try the spiced hot brandy with baklava and Serbian coffee.

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

? (Map p756; ☎ 635 421; Kralja Petra 6; dishes 200-350din) The shortest restaurant name in town came about because of a dispute between a long-past owner and the abstemious clergy of the Orthodox cathedral opposite, who objected to its then name, Cathedral Tavern. The clergy threatened action so the landlord changed the signboard to a '?' signalling his perplexity as to what the fuss was about. Inside is an original Balkans tavern that could be a set for a noir film. Chiaroscuro light from panelled windows creeps in to pick up cigarette smoke and dust specks dancing through the sunbeams. Furniture and foot-polished floorboards glow with a patina of antiquity, diners sit at low wooden tables on equally low half-moon chairs while old men in window seats sip coffee and *rakija*, and put the day to rights. Caravaggio could have painted this scene. The cuisine is Serbian, with a robust selection of grilled meats.

Šešir Moj (My Hat; Map p756; ☎ 322 8750; Skadarska 21; dishes 480-800din) An intimate little restaurant that has alcoves decorated with an art gallery of oils and pastels. A place for romantics, especially when members of a Roma band swirl in, playing their hauntingly passionate music. Go for the *punjena belavešanica*, which is a pork fillet stuffed with *kajmak*. Finish with Serbian coffee and a piece of *orasnica* (walnut cake) if you've any room left.

Outer Belgrade

Priroda (Map p753; ☎ 241 1890; Batutova 11; dishes 540-890din; ☹ 11am-8pm Nov-Apr, 8am-11pm May-Oct) Give this restaurant owner a medal for battling against adversity. Why? Priroda perseveres as a superb vegetarian restaurant in a land of carnivores. Discover the delicate flavours, oozing from vegetables and pulses, that are absent in traditional Serbian cuisine. Try the Vivaldi Plate for its smoked tofu, sea vegetables and cereals, and finish with the macrobiotic cake – a stunner.

DRINKING Cafés

Belgrade has some top-class café-bars offering damn good coffee straight from the bean; many places also serve beer, wines and spirits. Nearly all are open daily from early morning to midnight, with a later start on Sunday. Most don't offer food. As the weather warms up and the trees start to bud, many pavement and pedestrian areas around Trg Republike blossom into café terraces.

Rezime (Map p756; ☎ 328 4276; Kralja Petra 41) When you're hangover-hobbled, slink up here and collapse in the leather armchairs. Try to wrangle your body back to some normality with the buck-you-up coffee or vast range of teas (cherry is our favourite), maybe the

supersmooth chilled chocolate mousse as well. But you don't have to abuse yourself to qualify for the Rezime treatment.

Tema (Map p756; ☎ 337 3859; Makedonska 11-13) A subtly lit modern bar that both young and old are welcome to linger in. Chilly days become more bearable after one of the coffees with a spirit kick.

Sport Café (Map p756; ☎ 324 3177; Makedonska 4) Punters come here for the 20-plus TV screens showing all manner of sports, rather than for the coffee.

Bars

Many of Belgrade's clubs and bars are hidden away, below ground in basements or in seemingly innocent apartment blocks.

Federal Association of World Travellers (Map p756; ☎ 324 2303; 29 Novembra 7; ☹ 1pm-midnight Mon-Fri, 3pm-late Sat & Sun) A wonderfully eclectic basement bar in which you feel you've gate-crashed a surrealists' house party, and been welcomed in. It's decorated as though various members have returned from the four corners of the earth bearing one object as a contribution to

AUTHOR'S CHOICE

Ben Akiba (Map p756; ☎ 323 7775; Nušičeva 8; ☹ 9am-very late) We liked this place, its bubbly atmosphere and those cocktails – so smooth, so seductive and so moreish. You could easily leave here early in the morning brain- and wallet-drained. Another one of Belgrade's hidden bars, Ben Akiba started out as a secret drinking den for liberals opposed to Milošević. Slip round the back of the main building, go up to the 1st floor and knock. Then be prepared to heave yourself into the happy mass.

the furnishings. Just open the big black gate, follow the lights that come on, and listen for the music, which is live every night.

Exclusive (Map p756; ☎ 328 2288; Knez Mihailova 41-45; ☎ 9am-2am Mon-Sat, noon-1am Sun) A basement beer joint, Exclusive is Belgrade's answer to a Munich beer hall. There's plenty of knees-up music in this lads' bar, with big snacks – sausage, bread and chips (85din) – as a sound bedrock for serious drinking.

ENTERTAINMENT Cinemas

Yugoslav Film Archives Museum (Map p756; ☎ 324 8250; www.kinoteka.org.yu; Kosovska 11; ☎ 11am-7pm Tue-Sun) This is the home of the Yugoslav film archives and screens classic Balkan and European films.

Tuckwood Cineplex (Map p756; ☎ 323 6517; Kneza Miloša 7; tickets 200-280din) This place shows the latest releases in English or with English subtitles.

Live Music & Theatre

More big acts, such as Sting, Deep Purple, Lou Reed, Simple Minds and Boy George, are appearing in Belgrade. The ticketing agency **Bilet Servis** (Map p756; ☎ 628 342; www.bilet servis.co.yu; Trg Republike 5; ☎ 9am-8pm) sells tickets for concerts and theatre.

The **Sava Centar** (Map p753; ☎ 213 9840; www.savacentar.com; Milentija Popovića 9, New Belgrade) and **Dom Omladine** (Map p756; ☎ 324 8202; Makedonska 22) host major concerts, film festivals and multimedia events.

The Belgrade Philharmonia often performs at **Kolarčev University Concert Hall** (Map p756; ☎ 630 550; Studentski Trg 5; box office ☎ 10am-noon & 6-8pm).

In winter there's opera staged at the elegant **National Theatre** (Map p756; ☎ 328 1333; Francuska 3; box office ☎ 10am-2pm Tue-Sun).

For some free Sunday entertainment wander along to the Kalemegdan, where folk come to dance hand in hand the traditional way to pipe, accordion and drum.

Nightclubs

Clubs come and go out of fashion quickly – check *Yellow Cab* or ask a young Belgrader for the latest hot spot. Many clubs have regular bands at weekends or import the best DJs Europe has to offer. Summer party life also revolves around the many barges and boats moored on the Sava and Danube Rivers.

Plastic (Map p756; ☎ 328 5437; cnr Dalmatinska & Takovska; ☎ 10pm-5pm) The sizable dance floor

with a seamless mix of house, techno and drum'n'bass keeps Belgrade's clubbers up to all hours. Plastic is very popular; you may have to queue a while.

Ana 4 Pistolja (Map p756; ☎ 065 223 8474; Svetozara Radića 4; ☎ 10pm-4am Thu-Sun) Descend the spiralling path through the rock garden into the depths, where, in caverns beneath the streets, DJs spin everything from techno to trance for a heaving mixed-ages throng. Sometimes there's an entrance fee of 100din for males.

Underground (Map p756; ☎ 625 681; Pariska 1a; ☎ noon-midnight Sun-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat; ☎) Once an air-raid shelter and then a mushroom farm, (still smells a bit that way), Underground is a warren of caverns where the big-name DJs play. Live music is usually on Saturday, and whenever there's a big sports event the large TV on the outside terrace is fired up. This is about the only nightclub in Belgrade with wheelchair access.

Club X (Map p756; ☎ 064 434 5827; Nušićeva 27; ☎ 11pm-4am Wed-Sun) Another cruisy basement joint that's Belgrade's only gay and lesbian club. The place throbs to DJ beats, and Saturday is reputedly the best night.

DANUBE RIVER BARGES

Adjacent to Hotel Jugoslavija in Novi Beograd (New Belgrade) is a kilometre-long strip of some 20 barges. Buses 15, 68, 603 and 701 from Trg Republike go to Hotel Jugoslavija.

Brave Heart (Map p753; Hrabo Sre; ☎ 851 1480; ☎ 10pm-4am) Heaves till late and appeals to Belgrade's young 'businessmen' and their trophy girls. It's a place to chill out with DJ music until midnight and then kick in when the live music starts up.

Bibis (Map p753; ☎ 319 2150; ☎ 10am-2am) A quiet place that's a useful starter to a night out; sit over a drink and decide where to rock on to next. It's popular in winter when other barges are closed.

Acapulco (Map p753; ☎ 784 760; ☎ noon-3am) Where young businessmen come to flaunt their money and female attachments. Mockingly referred to as 'sponsorship girls', these women work on the basis of 'look after me (plenty of gifts), and I'll look gorgeous beside you'. Music is fast and furious turbofolk.

SAVA RIVER BARGES

On the western bank of the Sava River is another 1.5km strip of floating bars, restaurants and discos that open in summer. Here you'll

find Cocktail No Name (Map p756) playing pop and '80s music, Zippo (Map p756) for Serbian folk music, Exile (Map p756) pounding out techno and nearby Sound (Map p756) playing house and disco. Get there by walking over the Brankov Most or by catching trams 7, 9 or 11.

SHOPPING

Belgrade's not a place for tacky souvenirs – yet. Instead there's a variety of homemade craftwork available, such as the lace and knitted woollens you'll find on sale in Kalemegdan Park. Knez Mihailova and the Terazije underpass are also good places to look for things to take home.

A **craft street market** (Map p756; cnr Kralja Milana & Njegoševa; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) sells handcrafted jewellery items and original oil paintings.

Street sellers may offer you a set of 1990s currency from when unimaginable hyperinflation ruined Serbia; included should be a 500-billion-dinar note.

GETTING THERE & AWAY Bus

Belgrade has two adjacent bus stations: **BAS** (Bus; Map p756; ☎ 636 299; Železnička 4) serves regional Serbia and some Montenegro destinations, while **Lasta** (Map p756; ☎ 625 740; Železnička bb) serves destinations around Belgrade.

There are services to Subotica (700din, three hours), Niš (800din, three hours), Podgorica (1500din, nine hours), Budva (1800din, 12 hours), Novi Pazar (800din, five hours) and Prishtina (1335din, seven hours).

International services are good with daily buses to destinations in Western Europe; see p779.

Train

The **central train station** (Map p756; ☎ 629 400; Savski Trg 2) has a very helpful **information office** (☎ 361 8487; platform 1; ☎ 7am-7pm). There's also a **tourist office** (☎ 361 2732; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat) for basic city information, an **exchange bureau** (☎ 6am-10pm) and **Wasteels** (Map p756; ☎ 265 8868; wasteels@eunet.yu; central train station, Savski Trg 2; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat) for rail passes and international tickets.

Overnight trains run from Belgrade to Bar (1280din plus 890/445din per three-/six-berth couchette, 11½ hours). Frequent trains go to Novi Sad (from 185din, 1½ hours) and Subotica (from 400din, three hours).

For international trains see p779.

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Nikola Tesla airport (☎ 601 555, 605 555; www.airport-belgrade.co.yu) is 18km west of Belgrade. The **JAT bus** (☎ 675 583; 160din; ☎ from airport hourly 5am-9pm, from town hourly 7am-10pm) connects the airport with Trg Slavija and the central train station. Ignore the taxi sharks prowling inside the airport; go outside and catch a cab to town for about 600din.

Public Transport

Belgrade has trams, trolleybuses and buses. Tickets cost 25din from a street kiosk or 40din from the driver; make sure you validate the ticket in the machine on board.

Tram 2 is useful for connecting Kalemegdan citadel with Trg Slavija, bus stations and the central train station.

Taxi

Belgrade's taxis are plentiful and most use meters; flag fall is 45din plus 38din per kilometre. Taxi sharks, usually in flash cars, prey around the airport, train and bus stations looking for a rich fare. At the stations move away from the entrance and pick up a cruising cab.

Have your hotel call you a taxi or phone **Maxis** (☎ 9804) or **Pink** (☎ 9803).

AROUND BELGRADE Zemun ЗЕМУН

On the southern bank of the Danube, some 8km northwest of central Belgrade, lies the small town of Zemun. Visitors come for lazy meals at the river-edge restaurants, boating or just ambling alongside the river.

Catch bus 83 from outside Belgrade's train station and get off in Zemun's main street, Glavna. From here the pedestrian-only Lenjionova street leads through a **market** down to the Danube. This older area of town has some once-resplendent 19th-century mansions proudly standing out from the post-WWII concrete.

From the market area, narrow cobbled streets lead uphill towards the **Gardoš**, a fortress with 9th-century origins. All that remains now are some 15th-century walls and the **Tower of Sibinjanin Janko**, built in 1896 to celebrate the millennial anniversary of the Hungarian state. Zemun was the most southerly point of the Austro-Hungarian empire and the tower was a useful vantage point to spy on the Turks, who were in control of Belgrade on the other side of the Sava.

Below the hill is the 1731 Orthodox **Nikola-jevska Church** (Njegoševa 43). Inside, gleaming out of the shadows, is an astoundingly beautiful iconostasis, carved from wood in the baroque style, gold-plated and bearing rows of saints painted onto golden backgrounds.

Zemun Museum (☎ 617 766; Glavna 9; admission 100din; ☞ 9am-4pm Tue-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun) has a huge collection demonstrating the development of Serbian applied arts. At the time of research it was closed for renovation.

There are a host of restaurants to choose from. In summer, patrons sit out on the terraces to drink the sunset down, listen to music and belt out old Serbian favourites once the *slivovitz* (plum brandy) has lubricated their throats.

Reka (☎ 611 625; dishes 500-800din; ☞ noon-3.30am, doors close 9pm) overlooks the Danube and has an abundance of character. To start, the menu has a list of the waiting staff and their foibles. Choose 'Grandma if you're not hungry and are very patient', 'Kacia will give you the stars from the sky if you ask' or 'Vesna, elegant, reserved and polite, she needs a special customer to inspire her dancing'. We suggest a table on the terrace, plenty of entrées, a fish platter and a bottle of wine or more. The restaurant has that special 'stay all day' atmosphere, but if you come here in the evening you'll have to book and arrive before 9pm. Most evenings there's live music.

Smederevo Смедерево

The largest 'built on flat land' fortress in Europe dominates the Danube in the small town of Smederevo, some 46km southeast from Belgrade. A frequent bus service (245din, 1½ hours) from Belgrade's Lasta bus station makes this a pleasant day trip.

Smederevo Fortress (☎ 026-612 840; admission 20din; ☞ daylight hr) is a massive triangular fort with 25 towers built on early Roman fortifications; look for the odd bits of Roman-era sculpture used as masonry in the more modern walls. Built by despot Đurađ Branković, it served as his capital from 1428 to 1430 but was never really tested in battle. The greatest damage was caused by the detonation of a German ammunition train in the adjacent railway sidings in WWII.

Smederevo Museum (☎ 026-612 840; admission 20din; ☞ 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) is a 'history of the town' museum with artefacts dating from Roman times, plus some interesting frescoes.

VOJVODINA ВОЈВОДИНА

This is big-sky country, where an extensive, almost featureless plain sweeps down from Hungary to the banks of the Danube. Incredibly fertile, it provides much of the food that fills the nation's larders. A hilly exception is the Fruška Gora National Park, an 80km-long upland island of rolling hills dotted with vineyards and some 14 monasteries.

NOVI SAD НОВИ САД

☎ 021 / pop 299,000

For much of the year Novi Sad is 'Belgrade on Valium', having much of what the capital has to offer but at a far more sedate pace. A variety of interesting cafés, bars, museums, pedestrian streets and the mighty Petrovaradin Citadel merit a day jaunt from Belgrade, or a longer period to explore the monasteries and vineyards of Fruška Gora.

Come July the town explodes with a flood of festival-goers, who troop in for the annual Exit Festival (see opposite).

Orientation

The adjacent train and intercity bus stations lie at the northern end of Bulevar Oslobođenja. It's a 2.5km walk to the city centre or a bus ride (No 4) to the city bus station. One block south is Zmaj Jovina leading into Trg Slobode, which is the heart of Novi Sad, and dominated by the Catholic cathedral and its chequered-tile roof. Leading off Zmaj Jovina is Dunavska. This small cobbled street is the entertainment hub of Novi Sad, with a mix of brand-name clothing shops, cafés, restaurants and antique shops. A road bridge leads over the Danube to the eastern bank and the old town, where stairs beside the large church lead up to Petrovaradin citadel.

Information

Delta Bank (☎ 487 000; Mihajla Pupina 4) Cashes travellers cheques; ATM.

KYM (☎ 423 161; Mitoruzic 4; per hr 60din) Internet access.

Main post office & telephone centre (☎ 614 708; Narodnih Heroja 2; ☞ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 8am-3pm Sun)

Tourist Information Centre (☎ 421 811; www.novisadtourism.com; Mihajla Pupina 9; ☞ 8.30am-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1.30pm Sat) On-the-button office with plenty of info including a walking-tour leaflet.

EXIT FESTIVAL

If the Exit Festival (www.exitfest.org) is not Europe's biggest music event then at least it's the most talked about. Using the fortifications of the Petrovaradin Citadel as natural amphitheatres, organisers put up at least 19 stages to present the best in rock, blues, latino, roots, heavy metal, hip-hop and techno by world-class acts. Festival-goers say it's the atmosphere here that makes it special. There's not a huge crowd in one place, but the event is like several different festivals going on at the same time.

Performers in 2006 included Morrissey, Franz Ferdinand, The Cardigans and Pet Shop Boys, plus DJs Steve Lawler, Junkie XL, Jeff Mills and local Marko Nastic. The website has a ticket-booking service and reservations for the Danube-side camping ground.

Sights

Built on a plug of volcanic rock and dominating the town and the Danube, the mighty **Petrovaradin Citadel** is a massive piece of work often referred to as the 'Gibraltar of the Danube'. It was built by slave labour between 1699 and 1780, and had been designed by the French architect Vauban to protect the town from Turkish invasions. It was mainly populated by Austro-Hungarian soldiers, and the village below grew up around the taverns that entertained them with 'ladies of the night' and the best Hungarian Roma musicians. Famous prisoners at Petrovaradin were Karageorge Petrović, leader of the Serbian uprising in 1804, and Tito.

The citadel contains a **City Museum** (☎ 433 155; admission 200din; ☞ 9am-5pm) and a **planetarium** (☎ 350 122; admission 40din; shows at 7pm Thu, 5pm Sat & Sun). The stables are now charming artist **studios** (☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat); visitors are welcome, and maybe over a coffee you'll find just the piece for that bare wall back home. Walking the walls gives a fine view of the Danube and Novi Sad on the opposite bank. Have a close look at the clock tower and you'll see that the hour hand is the longer one; this makes the clock more readable from the river.

Novi Sad's main museum is **Muzej Vojvodine** (☎ 420 566; Dunavska 35-37; admission 70din; ☞ 9am-7pm Tue-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat & Sun), housed in two buildings: No 35 covers the history of Vojvodina, from Palaeolithic times to the late 19th century; No 37 takes the story to 1945 with an emphasis on WWI and WWII. The collection is impressive in its thoroughness; the main explanatory panels are in English.

Sleeping

Bela Lađa (☎ 661 6594; www.belaladja.com; Kisačka 21; s/d/tr per person with shared bathroom from €10; Ⓟ) Several rooms above this intriguing old restau-

rant can provide homely comfort to 22 guests. Prices rise by 50% during the Exit Festival but this still makes it Novi Sad's cheapest option. Breakfast is available for €2.

Brankovo Kolo (☎ /fax 528 263; www.hostelns.com; Episkopa Visariona 3; d/tr/q per person with shared bathroom €12/13/14; ☞ 1 Jul-25 Aug; Ⓟ Ⓞ) Novi Sad's cheapest is student accommodation only available in summer but fortunately that includes the Exit Festival.

Boarding House Fontana (☎ 662 1779; fax 621 779; Nikole Pašičeva 27; s/d/tr 2500/3000/3500din; Ⓟ) There's a pleasant feel to these comfortable wood-pannelled rooms, which are above the Restaurant Fontana in a quiet street near the local bus station. They're also a good find in a town stretched for cheap accommodation.

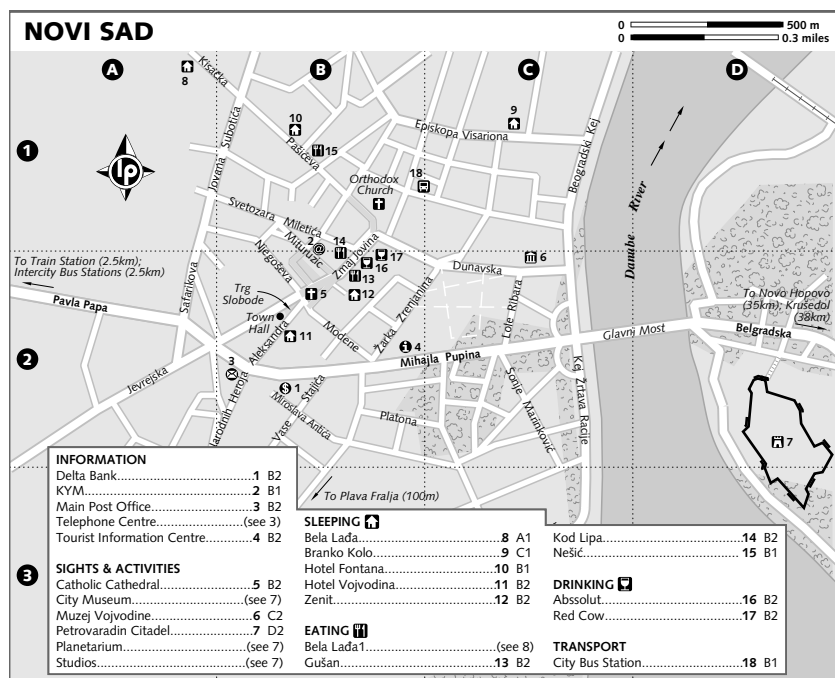
Hotel Vojvodina (☎ 662 2122 vojvodina@visitnovisad.com; Trg Slobode 2; s/d/tr/apt from 2500/3800/4800/4200din) An atmospheric old hotel (1854) caught in a time warp of dark wood, glass panelling, brass handrails and stained-glass windows. The rooms show their age.

Zenit (☎ 662 1444; www.hotelzenit.co.yu; Zmaj Jovina 8; s/d €45/55-65; Ⓟ Ⓞ) This boutique hotel features a big glass frontage. Zenit is popular with foreign visitors, who appreciate the luxurious, comfortable and homely feel of the place.

Eating & Drinking

Nešić (Pašičeva 23; ☞ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat) Worth a visit as much to buy a squidgy cake and coffee as to appreciate this 1950s cake shop that's still authentic with its red leatherette bench seats.

Gušan (Zmaj Jovina 4; dishes 110-400din; ☞ 9am-11pm Mon-Thu, 9am-1am Fri & Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun) A basic eatery and beer bar downstairs from an alley off Zmaj Jovina. Monday to Friday there's a set meal, which you might want to avoid on Wednesday, when it's essentially pig guts. The stylised countryside murals on the wall add a rural touch.



Bela Lađa (☎ 661 6594; dishes 200-600din; Kisačka 21) Mileva and Albert might have dined here before they became Mr and Mrs Einstein – she once lived over the road. There's been a restaurant here since 1852 – time enough to start the collection of hundreds of bottles of wine that line the walls. Time also to perfect the 150 dishes on the traditional Vojvodinan menu.

Plava Frajla (☎ 661 3675; Sutjeska 2; dishes 300-400din) A popular knees-up restaurant just southwest of the centre. On Thursday and weekends traditional musicians play their hearts out, the clientele joins in with gusto and the party rips on until dawn. A good taster of local food is the *paprika u pavlaci* (an appetiser of yellow peppers fermented in cream cheese). We never understood why there were chairs fixed to the ceiling.

Kod Lipa (☎ 615 259; Svetozara Miletića 7; dishes 450-650din) This is an 1880s restaurant, where little has changed, as the old photographs on the wall testify. Age and atmosphere, plus traditional Vojvodinan food, come together to make this a must-visit restaurant. Downstairs in the converted cellars vast wine barrels on their sides form secluded alcoves with seating

within. The appetising aroma of mellow wine still lingers.

Absolut (☎ 422 469; Zmaj Jovina 12; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, 5pm-midnight Sun) The quasi-Palladian interior and cool Regency colours and furniture suggest a gentleman's club, where you feel you should be taking afternoon tea with Aunt Maud rather than guzzling the *slivovitz*.

Red Cow (nr Dunavska & Zmaj Jovina) More Green Cow than Red, given the paint job, the Cow is an Irish-lookalike pub with a warm, woody and beery atmosphere. Halt here for a refreshing Guinness, draught Nikšić or an evening out.

Getting There & Away

Frequent trains link the **train station** (☎ 443 200; Bulevar Jaše Tomića 4) with Belgrade (180din, two hours) and Subotica (240din, 1½ hours).

Frequent buses leave the **bus station** (☎ 444 021; Bulevar Jaše Tomića 6) for Belgrade (250din, 1½ hours).

AROUND NOVI SAD

FRUŠKA GORA ФРУШКА ГОРА

As a small island of rolling hills rising from the Vojvodina plain, Fruška Gora is known

for its vineyards, orchards and monasteries. Thirty-five monasteries were built here between the 15th and 18th centuries to protect Serbian culture and religion from the Turks rampaging up from the south. Fifteen are preserved today and Krušedol and Novo Hopovo are the best known and most accessible.

Krušedol Monastery (near Krušedol Selo) was built by Serbian ruler Đorđe Branković in the early 1500s. Like many monasteries in this area, the church was severely damaged during a Turkish invasion and later rebuilt. Vivid frescoes, some original, leap out from the walls as a storyboard of biblical events.

Novo Hopovo (near Irig) is one of the oldest monasteries (1576) in the region and influenced the design of later churches, but suffered severe damage during WWII. Restoration of the frescoes has revealed earlier work painted under the influence of Cretan masters, who worked at Mt Athos Monastery in Greece. Many of the frescoes are incomplete but still present powerful images.

SUBOTICA СУБОТИЦА

☎ 024 / pop 148,400

The attraction for visitors is the town's Hungarian-style Art Nouveau architecture (1908-12), which adds magic to the relaxed atmosphere. There's also the lakeside resort at Palić. At 10km from the border, the town is a useful transit point to/from Szeged (Hungary); it's worth a day trip from Belgrade.

Orientation

Walk out of the train station and through the park to Đure Đrakovica. Left, (southeast), leads to the bus station and on to Palić. Staring at you on the right is the amazing Art Nouveau Modern Art Gallery. Also to the left is Korzo, a pedestrian street leading down to the old heart of Subotica, Trg Republike and the town hall.

Information

Exchange office (train station; ☎ 7am-7pm Mon-Sat, 7am-noon & 3-7pm Sun)

Fiesta Internet Café (☎ 559 490; Korzo 9; per hr 70din; ☎ 10am-2pm & 4pm-midnight) Through an alley behind Korzo.

Komercijalna Bank (☎ 524 010; Korzo 10) ATM; cashes travellers cheques.

Left-luggage (train station; per item 90din; ☎ 24hr)

Tourist Information Office (☎ 670 350; ticsu@yunord.net; Korzo 15; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat,

8am-noon Sun) Very helpful folk with maps, pamphlets and advice.

Sights

The imposing secessionist or Art Nouveau **town hall** (Trg Republike), built in 1910, contains an engaging **historical museum** (☎ 555 128; admission 50din; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue, Wed & Fri, 11am-6pm Thu, 10am-2pm Sat) displaying regional life and the skull of a mammoth. You might also enjoy a look at the flogging trolley and the giant's broadsword. If you can visit the exquisitely decorated council chambers, the dark varnished wood, green baize cloth and high-back chairs give an air of petty municipal power.

An equally exquisite piece of Art Nouveau architecture is the sinuously decorated **Modern Art Gallery** (☎ 553 725; Trg Lenina 5; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon, Wed & Fri, 8am-6pm Tue & Thu, 8am-noon Sat). One of the most beautiful buildings in Serbia, it's all swirling lines employing ceramic tiles, mosaics, stained-glass windows and finished off with a blue-tile roof.

Another wonderful piece of similar architecture is the disused **Synagogue** (nr Trg Sinagoge) that's listed as an endangered monument by the **World Monuments Fund** (www.wmf.org). A casual passer-by might think it another Orthodox church but for the Star of David.

Sleeping & Eating

Subotica isn't big on eating-places, apart from those below there's a slew of pizza joints around the Korzo.

Dom Učenika Srednjih Skola (☎ 555 510; Harambašićeva 22; dm/s/d 540/1080/1728din; ☎) Student accommodation with rooms available throughout the year. While it's mostly for weekend and school holidays, weekday accommodation is possible, but it's best to phone and check; staff speak good English. Breakfast/lunch/dinner cost 1062/2242/2006din.

PBG Hotel (☎ /fax 556 542; Harambašićeva 21; s/d 3380/5060din; ☎) A pleasant hotel in backstreets that ensure a quiet night and good parking. While unexciting, the rooms are well furnished, the management pleasant and large get-you-started breakfasts are served.

Lipa (Đure Đrakovića 13; bureks 70din; ☎ 24hr) A famous bakery and *burek* shop that's a brek-kie or late-night snack stop. A cheese-and-mushroom *burek* and yogurt is a cure-all for hunger or hangover.

Ravel (☎ 554 670; Nušićeva 2; cakes 50-100din) Think Paris – the best in luscious cakes and superb

coffee, served with elegance in a beautifully decorated Art Nouveau interior with pastel green walls, stained-glass partitions and golden lamps.

Népkör (☎ 555 480; Žarka Zrenjanina 11; mains 400-1100din, set lunches 250din; ☎ 10am-midnight Mon-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) A chance to sample Hungarian cuisine; spoon into the steaming goulash or *gombásztál* (mushroom-and-cheese dish). The best feed is the three-course business lunch.

Getting There & Away

From the **train station** (☎ 555 606) one international and two local trains go to Szeged in Hungary (155din, 1½ hours). Trains travelling to Belgrade (480din, 3½ hours) also stop at Novi Sad.

For day trips there's a handy train leaving Belgrade at 8.20am, arriving at Novi Sad at 11.28am and leaving at 5.14pm to arrive back in Belgrade at 8.15pm.

The **bus station** (☎ 555 566; Marksov Put) has regular services to Szeged (210din, 1½ hours), hourly buses to Novi Sad (400din, two hours) and Belgrade (525din, 3½ hours).

PALIC ПАЛИЋ

The park resort of Palić, 8km west of Subotica, edges onto a 5.5-sq-km lake that provides for boating, swimming, fishing and sailing. Outside the park on the Subotica road is a string of shops, pizza joints and a supermarket. In mid-July Palić hosts an international film festival (www.palicfilmfestival.com).

Bus 6 from outside the Hotel Patria in Subotica goes to Palić (35din, 20 minutes).

SOUTHERN SERBIA

DESPOTOVAČ ДЕСПОТОВАЦ

☎ 035 / pop 25,500

The redoubtable Manasija Monastery and famous Resava Cave make Despotovac a worthwhile stopover on a casual wander south. The adventurous might also like to check out the coal-mining museum on the Cuprija-Despotovac road, and the Veliki Buk waterfall in the area.

Sleeping & Eating

Kruna Motel (☎ 611 659; Rudnička bb; s/d 1050/1900din; ☐), on the western edge of town, is a welcome surprise. The bedroom slippers are a fine extra

touch. The hotel will organise transport to the cave and monastery for 1500din.

Grand Restaurant (☎ 614 235; opposite bus station; dishes 280-400din; ☎ 6am-midnight Mon-Sat, 3pm-midnight Sun) is a surprisingly good restaurant that at first glance seems no more than a bus station café; the grilled local trout is a good choice.

Sights

MANASIJA MONASTERY МАНАСТИР МАНАСИЈА This famous monastery defies the concept of a monastery as a haven of peace and spirituality, for confronting the visitor from the outside is a massive fortress sheltering a small church.

Dating from the early 1400s, the church was built to protect a community that had escaped the Turkish takeover of Kosovo. Despite seeming an impenetrable bulwark, the monastery was occupied several times by the Turks and consequently the remaining frescoes are only patchy. However, what's left is enough to startle the viewer with its vitality, colour and realism; it's as if the yet-to-come Italian Renaissance visited here first. Manasija is 2km north of the town.

Resavska Pećina Ресавска Пећина

Resava Cave (☎ 611 110; respec@milnet.co.yu; 200din; ☎ 9am-5pm Apr-Oct, arrange by phone Nov-Mar) is an exhibition or show cave up in the hills 20km beyond Despotovac. It was only discovered in 1962; some 4km have been explored although less than 1km is open to the public. Tours taking about 40 minutes lead through a series of winding passages to halls adorned with ancient stalactites and stalagmites. It's always cool down below so bring a jacket.

There's no public transport from Despotovac so take a taxi (1500din). Belgrade buses leave six times a day from Despotovac (380din, three hours).

ТОПОЛА ТОПОЛА

☎ 034 / pop 25,000

Many Serbs regard this small rural town as sacred because it was from here that Karageorge Petrović pitched the Serbian insurrection against the Turks in 1804.

The **Tourist Organisation** (☎ 811 172; Kneginje Zorke 13; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat) has some pieces in English on Karageorge plus a town map. Alternatively, there's an information desk at the Hotel Oplenac.

There are no ATMs in town.

Sights

The **museum** (☎ 811 781; Kraljice Marije; admission 150din; ☎ 9am-4pm) is a remnant of the fortified town built by Karageorge and his followers, and houses period artefacts and personal effects. Karageorge's personal canon, with one handle missing, dominates the entrance. This was removed by his grandson, King Petar I, and forged into his crown for when he succeeded to the Serbian throne in 1904.

The museum ticket also gives entry to the Church of St George and Petar House. Set in wooded parkland atop a hill, the **Church of St George** (Avenija Kralja Petra I; ☎ 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-4pm Nov-Mar) was erected between 1904 and 1912 by King Petar I as a memorial to his grandfather, Karageorge. The marble interior is decorated with copies of the best Serbian medieval frescoes and executed in millions of glistening mosaic pieces. Further mosaics depict the medieval kings of Serbia holding the monasteries they founded. The southern tomb here is Karageorge's while the other houses King Petar's remains.

Just downhill from the church is **Petar House** (☎ 8am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8am-4pm Nov-Mar), used by workmen who built the church and King Petar when he came to inspect the building progress. Today it houses temporary historical and art exhibitions.

Sleeping

Hotel Oplenac (☎ 811 430; Avenija Kralja Petra I; s/d 1280/2160din; ☐) The only joint in town, it has comfortable but timeworn rooms.

Getting There & Away

The bus station has frequent services to Belgrade (400din, three hours).

НИШ НИШ

☎ 018 / pop 250,000

Niš is mostly used as a stopover on the way to Sofia, Skopje or Thessaloniki. It hasn't much to lure the visitor, except for the infamous tourist attraction, the Ottoman skull-tower known as Čele Kula.

Niš was first settled in pre-Roman times and flourished during the time of local boy made good, Emperor Constantine (AD 280-337). His extensive palace ruins lie 4km east of the town.

Turkish rule lasted from 1386 until 1877 despite several Serb revolts; the Čele Kula is a grim pointer to their failure. The massive

Tvrđava citadel is a reminder of the Ottoman supremacy.

Orientation

The mighty Tvrđava Citadel dominates the north side of the Nišava River. Nearby is the market and the bus station, while the train station is to the west on Dimitrija Tucovića. The city centre is south of the river.

The citadel hosts a **blues, rock and pop festival** in July, and a **jazz festival** in October.

Information

KSR Beograd (☎ 523 808, fax 523 840; Trg Oslobođenja 9; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) Sells train tickets and rail passes.

Post Office (Voždova Karađorđa 13a; internet access per hr 50din; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat)

Tourist Office (☎ 523 118; torg@bankerinter.net; Voždova Karađorđa 7; ☎ 7.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Basic tourist literature; books domestic buses.

Sights

The Turks built the **Tvrđava** (Jadranska) on the site of a Roman fortress in 1396 to consolidate their hold on the region. The entrance through the redoubtable Stamboul Gate leads to a courtyard with souvenir shops and cafés.

The macabre **Čele Kula** (Tower of Skulls; ☎ 222 228; Braće Tankosić bb; admission 100din; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun Nov-Apr, 8am-8pm May-Oct; ☐) was erected by the Turks in 1809 as a ghoulish warning to would-be Serbian rebels. Commanded by the duke of Resava, the rebels were fighting to liberate Niš from a much larger force of Turks. The Serbs had suffered heavily and the duke desperately rushed the Turkish defences and fired his pistol into their powder magazine. The resulting explosion reportedly wiped out 4000 Serbs and 10,000 Turks, but not enough to deny the Turks victory. The dead Serbs were beheaded, scalped and their skulls embedded in this squat tower, but only 58 remain today. The admission ticket also includes a visit to Mediana.

Mediana (☎ 550 433; Bulevar Cara Konstantina bb; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) is the remains of a 4th-century Roman palace complex, possibly that of Constantine. Archaeological digging has revealed a palace, forum and an extensive grain-storage area with some sizable, almost intact, pottery vessels. The museum shelters some important mosaics and a collection of artefacts.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation in Niš has been pathetic for some time. At the time of research there was only one city hotel open and the others were closed or on strike.

Centrotourist Hotel (☎ 527 267; 9 Brigada 10; s/d 1600/3200din; P) The Centrotourist would not appear here but for being the only hotel in town. Indifferent reception staff, lack of maintenance and an unreasonable tariff count against it; on the plus side it's centrally located by the sports stadium and the rooms are clean.

Mama Pizza (☎ 245 044; Nade Tomić 10; dishes from 350din) A two-storey restaurant where the downstairs has a very much crisp-white-tablecloth, behave-yourself atmosphere while upstairs has more of a bistro feel. The pizzas, the best in town, are very large; consider sharing unless you haven't eaten for a week.

Tramvaj (Tramway; ☎ 547 909; Pobode 20) Take two trams and slice, build a servery out of one and surround it with seats from the other. A rattling good cup of coffee is just the ticket after a slog around town.

Broz (☎ 064 979 9909; Pobode 20; ☎ 10am-late) The basement is a cool retro homage to Josip Broz Tito and comes kitted out in shiny metal and red leatherette. A silver head of the big fella, hanging outside the 'girls', greets you as you slip down the stairs, and throughout the club are photos of Broz sucking on a big Havana with fellow socialist, Fidel Castro. Music is cool drum'n'bass and drinks include a fine range of malt whiskies.

Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (☎ 255 117; Kneginje Ljubice) has services to Belgrade (640din, three hours, 10 buses), Brus for Kopaonik (380din, 1½ hours, at 10am and 3pm), Novi Pazar (700din, four hours, at 10am, 3.15pm and 7pm), Užice for Zlatibor (700din, five hours, at 7.25am, 12.05pm and 6.05pm) and Sarajevo (1380din, 10 hours, at 6.10am and 9pm).

Eight trains go to Belgrade (640din, 4½ hours) and two to Bar (seat/berth €17/26, 11½ hours).

Montenegro Airlines and JAT Airlines fly to Zurich from **Niš airport** (☎ 580 023; www.airportnis.co.yu).

КОПАОНИК КОПАОНИК

Kopaonik, Serbia's prime ski resort, is great for those looking for snow fun without the

glamour. It has prices to match and a rather long season. It's based around Pančičev Vrh peak (2017m) overlooking Kosovo. Ski runs, served by 22 lifts, total 44km in length and range from nursery slopes to difficult; they're also linked to 20km of cross-country runs. The ski season runs from the end of November to the end of March, or even early April.

Orientation & Information

Commercial and Delta banks cash travellers cheques and have ATMs around the resort. The website www.kopaonik.net has basic information and an area map.

There are several ski schools and equipment rental places, and daily and weekly lift passes are available.

Activities

There are all the usual winter activities you'd expect: skiing, snowboarding and snowmobiles. In summer there's hiking, horse riding and mountain biking.

Sleeping & Eating

There are several large-scale hotels with restaurants, gym facilities, pizzerias, discos and shops. Expect to pay €50 for a single and €84 per double (with half-board) in high season.

Possible accommodation options are the two-star **Hotel Jugobank** (☎ 036-71 040; Kopaonik) and **Hotel Junior** (☎ 037-825 051, fax 823 033; Brzeće), which is part of the Youth Hostel organisation. Inquiries can be made through the Youth Hostel organisation (see p757).

Balkan Holidays (www.balkanholidays.co.uk) is a British outfit that books ski holidays in Kopaonik. Its website has a topographical map showing the ski runs.

Getting There & Away

From November to March and June to August there are three daily buses from Belgrade, and two from Niš.

ZLATIBOR ЗЛАТИБОР

☎ 031 / pop 156,000

This large upland area in southwest Serbia is another ski resort but the season (January and February) is shorter than Kopaonik's due to its lower altitude. The summer season (June to August) draws more visitors for its mountain scenery and walking on marked routes.

Orientation & Information

Zlatibor is a patchwork of small settlements centred on Tržni centar, a village of shops, eating and drinking places, a market and a bus stop.

Anitours (☎ /fax 841 855; www.anitours.co.yu; Tržni centar; ☎ 8am-7pm) Books tours and accommodation.

Caffe Green (Tržni centar; per hr 120din; ☎ 9am-2am) Internet access.

Era Ski Service (Tržni centar; ski lessons per hr 500din, equipment rental per day 500din)

Komercijalna Bank (☎ 845 182; Tržni centar) Cashes travellers cheques; ATM.

Miros (☎ 845 000; Tržni centar; ☎ 7am-9pm) Books accommodation and organises tours.

Tourist organisation (☎ 841 230; www.zlatibor.co.yu; ☎ 8am-8pm Jan-Feb, 8am-4pm Jun-Aug) By the bus stop; provides information, arranges private accommodation, organises day trips and sells bus tickets.

Sights & Activities

Zlatibor skiing is easy stuff as there's a ski pull, although harder runs are in preparation. Ski schools and equipment-rental places can be found around Tržni centar.

Summer activities can include visits to the **museum village** at Sirogojno, the **Stopića cave** at Rožanstvo, **Uvac Monastery** at Stublo, and **old wooden churches** at Dobroselica, Jablanica and Kucani. **Mileševa Monastery**, with the famous white-angel fresco, is not too far away. More energetic pursuits include **rafting, walking, horse riding and mountain biking**; check with any travel agency.

The museum village of **Sirogojno** (☎ 802 291; www.sirogojno.org.yu; admission incl English-speaking guide 100din; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Apr-Oct, 8.30am-4pm Nov-Mar), 25km from Tržni centar, is set on a picturesque hillside. The museum is a collection of typical mountain-region buildings dating from the late 19th century, although the architectural styles belong to the 13th and 14th centuries. The buildings have been kitted out with furnishings and tools of trade to bring the place to life.

A day trip can also incorporate the **Šargan 8 narrow-gauge steam railway** (Kremna to Mokra Gora; 2½hr trip 400din; ☎ May-Sep), famous for its tortuous ascent over the mountains. This very scenic section is just one small part of the line that once connected Belgrade with Sarajevo via Užice and Višegrad. Work is going on to rebuild the line onto Višegrad in Bosnia and Hercegovina so when it's completed you'll need your passport for a ride.

This region of Serbia is famed for its wooden buildings. Some you'll have seen at Sirogojno but while you're in Mokra Gora have a look at the pretty wooden **Church of St Ilija**, down on the main road. Two kilometres outside on a bluff above the town is **Mečavnik** (☎ 800 686; admission 160din; ☎ 9am-9pm), a wooden town, built as a setting for Emir Kusturica's film *Zivot Je Cudo* (Life Is a Miracle).

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation prices quoted are for the January to February and June to August seasons; expect to pay 10% to 20% less out of season. Most visitors choose to stay in private rooms and apartments, which are modern, well furnished and usually have light cooking facilities. Typically, apartments cost €20 to €80 for two to six people, and €15 for singles; private rooms with shared bathrooms cost €8 to €12. The hotels reviewed are open all year.

Olimp (☎ 842 555; hotelolimp@ptt.yu; Naselje Sloboda bb; s/d B&B from 3740/6160din; P) A modern hotel that's well decorated throughout, with some striking works of art; prices remain the same all year but reduce after three days' stay. The penthouse apartment is suitable for six with three double bedrooms and a large living area. A big outdoor pool keeps everyone cool in summer.

Hotel Jugopetrol (☎ 841 467; s/d/tr B&B from 3300/3600/4800din, s/d/tr half-board 2100/3600/5700din; P) This big hotel sits on a hill about 300m southwest of Tržni centar, making our choice a top-floor room because of the view. All rooms are large with TV, phone and small balconies. The enormous lobby houses many services such as moneychanging, and there's a pool, table tennis, ski-equipment hire and shops. There's even figure-enhancing treatment, which will surely be needed after visiting the pastry shop in the conservatory.

Zlatni Bor Restaurant (☎ 841 077; dishes from 250din) A good place for a hunger-stopping breakfast. Try the *kajmak* and *lepinja* (traditional bread). It overlooks the lake, about 50m northeast of Tržni centar.

Zlatiborska Koliba (☎ 841 638; dishes 300-650din) Wooden ceilings, a big brick-arched bar, an open fireplace and good Serbian food chased by slugs of *rakija* make this a suitable place to recover from the exhaustion of skiing or hiking. In season there's live traditional music. The house speciality is *teleće grudi* – a stew of

veal, potatoes, *kajmak* and vegetables cooked in an earthenware pot over an open fire.

There are more pizza and *ćevapčići* joints, cafés and bars than you could visit in a month.

Shopping

Apart from fruit and veg, the market sells all manner of interesting things. For the nippy weather there's a range of brightly coloured chunky pullovers and gloves; consider buying intricate lacework, a pair of *opanak* (traditional Serbian leather shoes) with curly toes or *čutura* (wooden bottles) for holding your *rakija* stash.

On the food and drink front there's plenty of domestic *rakija*, honey, pickles, several varieties of *kajmak*, *pršuta* (smoked meats) and dried herbs for tea.

Getting There & Around

Buses leave the **busstand** (☎ 841 587) for Belgrade (520din, four hours, six buses), Niš (500din, four hours, at 7am) and the nearest railhead at Užice (80din, 45 minutes, hourly).

Minibuses ply the villages in season.

NOVI PAZAR НОВИ ПАЗАР

☎ 020 / pop 86,000

The Turks were not ousted until 1912 and Novi Pazar is perhaps the best visible example of their culture in Serbia, outside of Kosovo. It's also an Orthodox heartland with significant monasteries well worth visiting. This is also a gateway town for Kosovo.

Orientation & Information

The piddly Raška River runs through the town, placing the old Turkish fortress, Turkish quarter and the mosque of Altun Alem on the southern side. Spanning the river is the strange Hotel Vrbak. Also crossing the river is 28 Novembar, which on the northern side has numerous cafés, bars and restaurants.

Sights

Wandering around the old town, with its curious shops, can be an absorbing half-day. Here workshops with old crafts like cobbling and tinsmithing sit alongside small cafés, where old men sip strong coffee, play cards and talk. Spare a glance for the unusual apartment blocks and the circular spaceship, Hotel Vrbak – a freak show of Yugoslav central planning or an architect on acid?

SOPOČANI MONASTERY

King Uroš erected this **monastery**, 16km southwest of Novi Pazar, in line with the usual practice of medieval kings endowing monasteries to a saint, who would then intercede for them at the Day of Judgment – a sort of afterlife insurance. The 13th-century monastery is a remarkable story of survival, having been destroyed by the Turks at the end of the 17th century and abandoned until restored in the 1920s. The remaining frescoes show the definite influence of Romanesque art by giving the figures a rhythm, plasticity and vibrancy.

PETROVA CRKVA

Surrounded by an ancient cemetery, the small **Church of St Peter** stands on a bluff above the Kraljevo road on the edge of town. It's Serbia's oldest church, with sections dating from the 8th century. Inside, the coarse masonry, the step-into baptismal well and the feet-polished flagstones provide a tangible sense of the ancient. The 13th-century frescoes are incomplete due to damage. If the church is locked, ask at the nearest house for the keeper of the huge iron key.

ĐURĐEVI STUPOVI MONASTERY

Rising out of a copse, 3km uphill from Petrova Crkva, is the still-damaged monastery of **Đurđevi Stupovi** (Columns of St George), the oldest in Serbia and dating from 1170. The story goes that St Simeon, then Stefan Nemanja and ruler of much of what is now southern Serbia, was captured by the Turks in 1172. He promised God that if he regained his freedom he would endow a monastery to St George. Eventually he was released and abdicated later in life to become the monk Simeon, who endowed this monastery as promised. He was later buried here.

The church was extensively damaged by the Turks in the same bout of destruction that befell Sopoćani. Repairs were done in the 1900s but undone in WWII, when German troops removed stonework for their defences. Consequently only the western and northern sides of the church remain today.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Vrbak (☎ 315 300; Maršala Tita bb; s/d from 1200/2200din; 📍) This architectural spaceship, resting on cotton reel-shaped legs, and berthed in the main square, is the town's major hotel. The rooms have seen too many guests

and the whole place needs a makeover, but you don't get many chances to stay in a strange place like this. As you check in, consider how they clean the huge translucent windows of the dome many metres above.

Hotel Kan (Cannes; ☎ /fax 315 300; Rifata Burdževića 10; s/d 1740/2690din) This modern hotel, built in an Oriental style, has rather smallish rooms with half-carpeted walls compensated for by cable TV and minibar; it's clean and in reasonable condition.

Kafana Centar (☎ 27 799; 28 Novembar 21; dishes 150-170din) In contrast to this street's open-front eateries, this traditional café, a favourite hang-out of the town's older folk, hides behind lace curtains. The smiling matron welcomes foreigners, excuses their poor Serbian, and dishes up a mighty helping of *ćevapčići* and salad.

Hotel Tadz (☎ 311 904; Rifata Burdževića 79; dishes 350-600din) Sometimes hotel kitchens surprise with the quality of their food, a fact the well-heeled clientele of the town have discovered with the Tadz. We enjoyed their *pičće de résistance*, the *pstrmka* (trout), served with a luscious garlic sauce.

Getting There & Away

The **bus station** (☎ 318 354; Omladinska bb) has services to Belgrade (720din, five to six hours, half-hourly), Sarajevo (1131din, seven hours, at 7am, 10am, 11am and 10pm), Prishtina in Kosovo (450din, three hours, at 5.30am, 5.45am, 6am, 9am and 12.40pm) and Podgorica in Montenegro (650din, five hours, at 9.30am, 1pm, 1.30pm and 10.15pm).

KOSOVO KOCOBO

The ebb and flow of Islam and Orthodox Christianity has left Kosovo a legacy of several artistically beautiful buildings, such as Gračanica Monastery near Prishtina, Decani Monastery near Peja, and the Sinan Pasha Mosque in Prizren. These all escaped the violence of 1999 and 2004.

The countryside is visually attractive – wide-open plains in some places and rolling hills patchworked with fields in others. Rearing up behind Peja in the southwest are tall mountains, often snow-clad, and including Djeravica (2656m), the tallest mountain in pre-1999 Serbia. Further east, nearer Macedonia, the mountains provide the ski slopes of Brezovica.

SHOULD I GO?

Surrounded by the mountains of Serbia, Montenegro and Albania, Kosovo has a hidden-vale quality both geographically and in terms of safety. Your government's travel advisories may warn against visiting Kosovo, and these are of necessity cautious. March 2004's events (p772) showed that civil insurrection is but an incident away in which a foreign visitor might unwittingly get caught. If you visit then it's safer to avoid areas of potential Serb/Kosovo Albanian tension such as Mitrovica. Fortunately for visitors, the sites of interest are outside these zones. Also, if you speak Serbian or Albanian it's best to use English until you've identified the ethnicity of the person you're talking to. You'll find the people here warm and friendly.

Serb influence in the province has ended, and been replaced by an Albanian one. In Prishtina new monuments celebrate Albanian heroes while the displays in the museums of Prishtina and Prizren are exploring the province's Illyrian and Albanian past.

HISTORY

Following their defeat in 1389 by the Turks, the Serbs abandoned the region to the Albanians, descendants of the Illyrians who were the original inhabitants. Serbia regained control after the Turks departed in 1913 and in the ensuing years 500,000 Albanians emigrated, and Serbs were brought in to settle the vacated land. During WWII the territory was incorporated into Italian-controlled Albania and then liberated in October 1944 by Albanian partisans.

Three postwar decades of pernicious neglect followed until an autonomous province was created in 1974 and economic aid increased. Little changed and the standard of living in Kosovo stagnated at a quarter of the Yugoslav average. There was agitation for full republic status and in 1981 demonstrations were violently put down by the Serbian military. 300 people died and 700 were imprisoned.

Trouble reignited in November 1988 with demonstrations against the sacking of local officials and President Vllasi. Further unrest and strikes in February 1989 produced a Serbian-declared state of emergency; in serious rioting, 24 Albanian Kosovars were shot dead. In July 1990 Kosovo's autonomy was

VISITING KOSOVO FIRST?

Legally Kosovo is still part of Serbia so there are no border posts or immigration controls between the two. So if you arrive in Kosovo first you can only enter Serbia via another country giving you a legitimate Serbian entry stamp.

cancelled, broadcasts in Albanian ceased, the only Albanian-language newspaper was banned, and 115,000 Albanians had their jobs taken by loyalist Serbs. A referendum held against Serbian opposition produced a 90% turnout with 98% voting for independence.

Frustrated attempts to negotiate autonomy encouraged the formation of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in 1996, and using guerrilla tactics they began to harass the Serbs.

In March 1999 a US-backed plan to return Kosovo's autonomy was rejected by Serbia. Stepping up attacks on the KLA, Serbia moved to empty the province of its non-Serbian population. Nearly 850,000 Kosovo Albanians fled to Albania and Macedonia; Serbia ignored demands to desist and NATO unleashed a bombing campaign on 24 March 1999. On 2 June Milošević acquiesced to a UN settlement, Serbian forces withdrew and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) took over. Since June 1999 Kosovo has been administered as a UN-NATO protectorate.

Kosovo slipped from the world's eye until March 2004, when two Albanian children, allegedly chased by Serbs, drowned in a river. Investigations disproved this allegation but at the time it sparked off a simmering discontent, mostly among youths. Nineteen Serbs were killed, 600 homes burnt and 29 Orthodox monasteries and churches, many medieval, were destroyed. KFOR, which could have controlled much of the outrage, was disastrously slow to act.

Independence negotiations commenced in February 2006. The Kosovo Albanians demand independence, whereas the Serbian

MOBILE PHONING

Kosovo doesn't have its own mobile-phone network so it's latched onto Monaco's. When dialling a mobile number from outside Kosovo just add a 0377 prefix.

stance hovers between rejection and accepting some form of Kosovar-Serb autonomy in an independent Kosovo.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

The province is thought to have been cleared of landmines but there is still unexploded ordnance about. If you intend to go off the beaten track then check with KFOR or the police.

PRISHTINA

☎ 038 / pop 165,000

Prishtina is a bustling capital inflated with the activity and personnel of foreign agencies, plus all the bars, restaurants and internet cafés to service them. There's a day's sightseeing within the city but a reliable bus service makes Prishtina a good base for forays into the countryside, Peja and Prizren.

Orientation

Bulevardi Nëna Terezë (Mother Teresa), the main street, houses the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (Unmik) headquarters. West of this is the Sports Complex shopping mall with restaurants and a supermarket. Bulevardi Bil Klinton (yes, him) runs southwest from Bulevardi Nëna Terezë passing the bus station, the airport (17km) and onto Peja.

Information

Airprishtina (☎ 243 557; Bulevardi Nëna Terezë 25a; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon Sun) Flight bookings.

Barnatorja Pharmacy (☎ 224 245; Bulevardi Nëna Terezë; ☎ 7.30am-8pm)

Dukagjini (☎ 248 143; Bulevardi Nëna Terezë 20; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat) Novels and art books in English, and city maps.

Internet (☎ 044 608 549; per hr €1; ☎ 9am-midnight) Internet and cheap international calls; downtown opposite Unmik.

Newsstand (Luan Haradinaj; ☎ 9am-late) Foreign newspapers and magazines; latest papers arrive at 6pm; outside Monaco restaurant.

Post Telephone Kosova (PTK; ☎ 245 339; Bulevardi Nëna Terezë; ☎ 8am-10pm) Post and telephone.

Pro Credit Bank (☎ 240 248; UCK; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri) Cashes travellers cheques; ATM.

Sights

Kosovo Museum (☎ 249 964; Marte e Driete; admission €1.50; ☎ 10.30am-7pm Tue-Sun) has a thoughtful and well-captioned exhibition on premedieval Kosovo. As they point out, most of the collection was looted and taken to Belgrade.

VOX POP

Who are you? Naim Shala, photographer living in Prishtina.

What do you like best about Kosovo? I love my country. As a photographer, it still has unspoiled countryside and mountains. Yes, it's a beautiful country; people are friendly, especially to foreigners.

What would you like to change? We have to start thinking about this as our home, no longer as a communist property.

Will you give up smoking? When it will kill me. Ah, seriously, I am thinking of giving up.

Behind the museum is the **Jashar Pasha mosque** with notable floral designs, a huge chandelier and a finely decorated mihrab. Around the corner is a well-restored Balkan-style house, the home of the **Academy of Science and Arts**.

Nearby, a second mosque, the **Sultan Fatih Mehemit**, dates from the mid-15th century. Again there's exquisite decorative work and, interestingly, some carved marble stones from

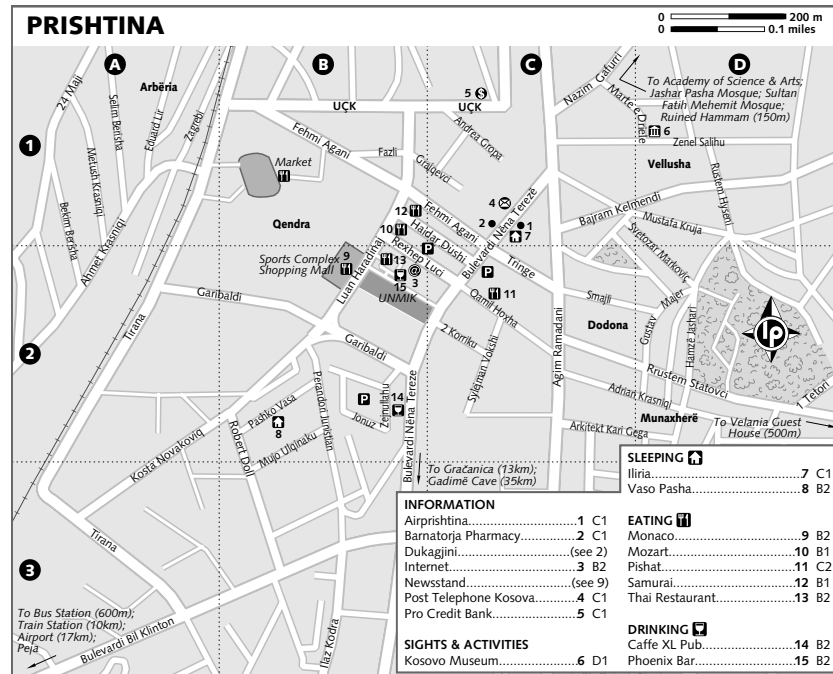
some earlier use can be found among the courtyard flagstones.

Much of the old Turkish quarter was destroyed by WWII bombing but odd bits remain. Almost opposite Jashar Pasha is a **ruined hammam** (Turkish bath; Vasil Andori), and if you walk down this street to Xhemajl Prishtina and the market, you'll come across several old houses.

Sleeping

Velania Guest House (Pansion Profesor; ☎ 531 742, 044 167 455; Velania 4, 34; s/d €13/18, with shared bathroom €10/15) A noble professor has opened his house to budget travellers and provides 17 rooms on three floors, and a small kitchen on each floor. Tea and coffee ingredients are free, as is the laundry service. The professor intends to open another house with dormitory accommodation.

Iliria (☎ 224 275, fax 548 117; Bulevardi Nëna Terezë; s with shared toilet €30, d €40; ☎ P) The old rambling Iliria is holding its own against private competition with reduced prices. Doubles bathrooms are large with hot waterfall-style showers. It's a central safe haven for the party animal, and comes with very helpful staff.



Hotel Prishtina (☎ 223 284; www.hotelprishtina.com; Vaso Pasha 20; s/d/apt €69/92/135; 🏠) One of Prishtina's new postwar hotels that's well equipped, but as it's spread over four floors you'd think there'd be a lift. The doubles are better value than the apartments. The hotel claims a high occupancy rate, so it's wise to book ahead. Breakfast is a very decent buffet.

Eating & Drinking

There are plenty of small cafés selling *burek* and burgers.

Monaco (☎ 227 490; Luan Haradinaj; pizzas €3-6) Eat here or maybe buy your newspaper from the vendor outside and stretch your reading time inside with drinks and cakes. A big expat crowd always means there's something sporty on the box. The owner is the director of Prishtina's basketball team and that explains the slew of shiny cups on top of the TV, and the beer fridges.

Pishat (☎ 245 333; Qamil Hoxha 11; dishes €3-6) This place is decorated in strong earth, blue and yellow colours, giving a bright interior that's like a blast of sunshine on a dull day. A big stomach-filling breakfast costs €2. Feeling midday-snackish? Then go for *tavë e kuge*, a veggie hotpot with a large hunk of newly baked bread. To finish, a macchiato coffee – the best in town.

Thai Restaurant (☎ 044 163 598; dishes €7-11; 🕒 11am-3pm & 6-11pm Mon-Sat) Just the place for when you're tired of grills and pizza, and fancy something spicy. Thai restaurants out of their natural habitat don't usually work, but this one's good. It's between Unmik and Luan Haradinaj.

Samurai (☎ 044 393 111; Fehmi Agani; €5-14; 🕒 11.30am-2.30pm & 6-10pm Mon-Fri, 6-10.30pm Sat & Sun) Another refuge from local food with lots of snacky things – fried eggplant, yogurt garlic dips and marinated octopus that can be assembled into a meal. In addition there's tempura and sushi plus a special mussel soup. The bill comes in a woven palm box accompanied by a complimentary 'secret recipe' liqueur.

Mozart (☎ 044 425 555; Luan Haradinaj) A place for afters with ice-cream delights, waffles, fruit-and-cream concoctions and other deadly delights.

Phoenix Bar (snacks €2.50-4) A lads-away-from-home bar decorated with football team colours and scarves. Phoenix serves cholesterol-damaging breakfasts, coffee and snacks all day plus a traditional English roast on Sunday.

There's live music some weekends. It's opposite Unmik.

Caffe XL Pub (Bulevardi Nëna Terezë) One block south of the Grand Hotel, this British-style pub serves just drinks. Try the very palatable local beer, *Birrë e Pejës*.

Getting There & Away

International and domestic services leave from the **bus station** (☎ 550 011; Mitrovicë-Prishtinë).

Kosovo's **airport** (☎ 038 5958; www.airportpristina.com) is 17km west of Prishtina on the Peja road. The only transport there is taxi. Try **Taxi Velana** (☎ 044 225 325); the fare should be about €20.

AROUND PRISHTINA GRACANICA

The superbly decorated Gračanica Monastery, built by the Serbian King Milutin in the early 14th century, is some 13km southeast of Prishtina. It's in the shape of a five-dome building on a cross-in-a-square plan, typical of the best Byzantine architecture of the period. Most of the frescoes date from then and cover all the walls.

Entry is no problem once you've identified yourself to KFOR at the entrance. Catch one of the frequent buses to Gjilan that pass outside.

GADIMË CAVE

Worth a plunge underground, **Gadimë Cave** (Marble Cave; ☎ 044 285 941; adult/child €2.50/1; 🕒 9am-6pm) is Kosovo's only exhibition or 'show' cave. It's famous for its helictites, thin stalactites growing at impossible angles. Several daily buses run here from Prishtina, 35km to the north; an alternative is a taxi (return €30 to €40).

MEMORIAL PREKAZ

This **memorial** (🕒 8am-8pm) to the 1998 slaughter of the Jeshari clan by the Serbs consists of the shelled remains of their two houses and the cemetery where all 53 are buried. Catch a bus to Skënderaj (€4, two hours), get off at the lurid green mosque and walk 500m uphill, or take a taxi from Prishtina (€50).

OUTER KOSOVO Peja

☎ 039 / pop 69,000

Peja (Peć) is a mix of modern Yugoslav development in the town centre and Turkish-era buildings around the bazaar. The major attractions of the Patrijaršija Monastery, the Rugova Gorge and the Decani Monastery lie

outside town. Rearing up behind the town, several 2000m-plus mountains form a picture-postcard backdrop.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The Prishtina road runs into the northern part of town to meet the main street, which then strikes south into the town centre. The bus station is at the intersection of these two routes. Many streets have yet to be labelled with their new names.

SIGHTS

Peja's colourful **bazaar** is the place to acquire a carpet, a horse collar, bulk tobacco, daggy tracksuits, wedding outfits or a *plis* (white-felt domed Albanian hat).

Patrijaršija Monastery, seat of the Peć patriarchy, is 2km west of Peja, and visiting may take a little organising with the Italian KFOR troops at the gate. Inside the walls, in a garden of ruins and ancient trees, is the monastery, which consists of three ancient churches sharing a common narthex or entrance hall. The stone floors polished by centuries of shuffling monastic feet, the gloomy interiors and the smell of incense immediately stun you and draw you back centuries. The frescoes are incredible; no doubt about it, this is the Sistine Chapel of the Serbian Orthodox world.

The monastery is at the mouth of the **Rugova Gorge**, which slices into the mountains. It's worthwhile driving to one of the restaurants up the gorge. One day these mountains may achieve their potential for hiking and climbing.

Decani Monastery (1335) is 15km south and accessible by bus and a 2km walk. The monastery was the endowment of King Stefan (later a saint) whose body is buried within the church. According to the monks it is still uncorrupted (not yet decayed), which is the hallmark of a saint.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The **bus station** (☎ 32 527) has hourly services to Prishtina and Prizren. Fares are €2 to €3.

Prizren

☎ 029 / pop 108,000

Although Prizren was the medieval capital of 'Old Serbia', the architectural influence is Turkish. Of all the towns mentioned in this chapter, Prizren has the largest remaining treasury of Turkish-era buildings, including

the remarkable mosque and baths. Wander through the narrow streets and soak up the history and atmosphere from every cobble, over-hanging building and part-open wooden doorway, and then mull over it all at an outdoor café in the Shadrvan.

Unfortunately, Albanian Kosovar firing of Serb houses in 1999, and again in 2004, has left an ugly scar of burnt-out houses up the hillside. Moreover, the Orthodox churches have been gutted.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The town is built around the river and Shadrvan, a cobblestone plaza with a fountain in the middle. The bus station is on the Peja road about 2km northwest from the centre.

The Prishtina road arrives from the north-east and ends at the main bridge over the river. Crossing the river just west of here is a 'new' medieval bridge, built to replace the old one destroyed by floods in 1979.

An increasingly important documentary film and photographic exhibition, **Dokufest** (www.dokufest.com) happens in the first week of September.

SIGHTS

A slow plod up from behind the Shadrvan brings you to the ruins of a castle that has passed through Roman, Turkish, Serbian and KFOR hands. The views are quite stupendous and if you're there when the imams call for prayers from their mosques, you'll hear a wave of chanting sweep across the town.

The 1561 **Sinan Pasha Mosque** on the riverside dominates the centre and can be visited for its fine, decorated high-domed ceiling.

Near the Theranda Hotel, the restored **Gazi Mehmed Pasha Baths** (1563) have become an occasional exhibition space. The internal upper floor was destroyed during WWII; maybe it couldn't cope with being an Italian bordello.

Opposite the post office is a solitary **minaret-like tower** with the Star of David; it's believed to be the remnants of a synagogue.

Some 200m upriver from the Theranda Hotel is a small **museum complex** (☎ 31 487; Seshii Lidhise bb; adult/child €1/0.20; 🕒 10am-10pm Sun-Tue) celebrating the Albanian League of Prizren. This was an independence movement in Turkish times and the museum celebrates the league and historical Prizren.

A 2km walk up by the river brings you into a ravine and the ruins of a 14th-century **castle**,

the seat of the Serbian King Dušan. At present the interior is occupied by KFOR and isn't open to the public.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The bus station (☎ 631 152; Geromin de Rada) has hourly services to Prishtina and Peja. Fares are €2 to €3.

Brezovica

This ski resort, 60km south of Prishtina, is seen as a bright spot in Kosovo's tourism future. The snow season is exceptionally long and runs from December up until May in some years.

Nine ski runs, served by seven chairlifts (day pass €10), lead down from 2500m; ski equipment and snowboards can be hired (€5 to €10 per day) and lessons (€15 per hour) are available. Even if you're not a skier, a trip up the ski lift is worth it to view the snowy mountains.

The **Molika Hotel** (☎ 290-70 452; per person B&B/half-board/full-board €35/35/40), with a restaurant, bars and cafés, is the only hotel on the slopes and is open only from 25 December to early May.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

For airlines operating from **Prishtina airport** (☎ 548 430) see p779. Departure tax is €15 unless included in the ticket price.

Bus

INTERNATIONAL

International buses serve much of Europe, including Skopje, Macedonia (€5, 1½ hours), Tirana, Albania (€35, 10 hours), Istanbul, Turkey (€40, 20 hours), and Sarajevo, Bosnia and Hercegovina (€30, 10 hours).

MONTENEGRO

From Peja there's an overnight bus to Podgorica (€15, seven hours). Alternatively minibuses (€5) and taxis (€25) go to Rožaje from outside the Peja bus station.

SERBIA

Buses connect Prishtina and Novi Pazar (€5.50, 3½ hours, at 10am, at 12.20pm, 5.30pm and 6.30pm) and Belgrade (€14, seven hours, at 10.30pm and 11pm).

Train

There's now a service to Skopje (€10, 2½ hours, 6.24am and 1.04pm) from the **Fushë Kosovë station** (☎ 536 355) outside Prishtina.

GETTING AROUND

A reliable bus service links all the main towns and villages with buses operating between Prishtina, Prizren and Peja (€3 to €4, two hours) on a half-hourly basis.

SERBIA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Belgrade's new hostels are providing much-needed budget accommodation for travellers. While several state hotels have been privatised, tarted up and yanked up their prices, there are still a few reasonably priced midrange hotels. In Kosovo accommodation prices have stabilised as more hotels are built and expense-account customers (UN and nongovernmental organisations) go on to the next hot spot.

The cheapest option in the ski resorts is a private room. These can be as good as hotel rooms and certainly more personable; they range from a room sharing a bathroom up to an apartment with several rooms including kitchen and private bathroom. Look out for signs saying 'rooms', 'sobe' or 'zimmer'.

Where there are seasonal differences we quote the high-season price. Unless otherwise mentioned the tariff includes breakfast and the rooms have private bathrooms. Don't forget to bargain for a discount for several days' stay.

ACTIVITIES

Serbia's main ski resorts are Zlatibor (p768) and Kopaonik (p768), while Kosovo's resort is at Brezovica (left). The ski season is from December to March; the resorts are also popular for summer activities.

BOOKS

Tim Judah has a good eye for the regional scene, so try one of his books, *The Serbs: History, Myth and the Destruction of Yugoslavia and Kosovo: War and Revenge*. Also for Kosovo consider *Kosovo: A Short History*, by Noel Malcolm. Sabrina Ramet's *Balkan Babel* is an engaging look at Yugoslavia from Tito to Milošević.

Get your hands on *Guerrilla Radio* (alternative title – *Guerrilla Radio: Rock'n'Roll Radio and Belgrade's Underground Resistance*), a riveting account by Matthew Collin of the role of the B92 radio station in

undermining the Milošević regime. *With Their Backs to the World*, by Lsne Seierstad, is a compelling read of a cross section of Serbian lives during and after the Milošević years; she dispassionately lets the people tell their own stories.

BUSINESS HOURS

Banks keep long hours, often 8am to 7pm weekdays and 7am to noon Saturday. On weekdays many shops open at 7am, close from noon to 4pm but reopen until 8pm. Department stores, some major shops and supermarkets are open all day. Cafés, restaurants and bars usually open around 8am and work to midnight. Most government offices close on Saturday but shops stay open until around 4pm.

CUSTOMS

If you're bringing in more than €2000 in cash then you have to complete a currency declaration form on arrival and show it on departure. In practice it's ignored but if customs officials wanted to play by the rules, they could confiscate your money. Play safe and declare.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Travel nearly everywhere is safe but government travel advisories will warn against travel to Kosovo, see the boxed text on p771.

The major downer is the incessant smoking in public places. The majority of people are smokers, and the rest want to be when they are old enough. 'No smoking' signs are regularly ignored.

It's fine to discuss politics if you're also willing to listen.

Check with the police before photographing any official building they're guarding.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Serbian Embassies & Consulates

Albania (☎ 042-23 042, 042-232 091; ambatira@icc-al.org; Skender Beg Bldg 8/3-II, Tirana)

Australia (☎ 02-6290 2630; scgembau@iprimus.com.au, O'Malley, ACT 2606)

Bosnia and Hercegovina (☎ 033-260 090; yugoamba@bih.net.ba; Obala Marka Dizdara 3a, Sarajevo 71000)

Bulgaria (☎ 02-946 1635, 946 1059; ambasada-scg-sofija@infotel.bg; Veliko Tmovo 3, Sofia 1504)

Canada (☎ 613-233 6289; www.embscg.ca/consular.html; 17 Blackburn Ave, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N8A2)

Croatia (☎ 01-457 9067/ambasada@ambasada-srj.hr; Pantovcak 245, Zagreb)

France (☎ 01 40 72 24 24; ambasadaparis@wanadoo.fr; 5 rue Leonard da Vinci, 75016 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-895 77 00; info@botschaft-smg.de; Taubert Strasse 18, Berlin D-14193)

Hungary (☎ 1-322 9838; ambjubb@mail.datanet.hu; Dozsa Gyorgy ut 92/b, Budapest H-1068)

Netherlands (☎ 0703 63 23 97; yuamban@bart.nl; Groot Hertoginnelaan 30, The Hague 2517 EG)

Romania (☎ 021-211 98 71; ambiug@ines.ro; Calea Dorobantilor 34, Bucharest)

UK (☎ 0207-235 9049; www.yugoslavembassy.org.uk; 28 Belgrave Sq, London, SW1X 8QB)

USA (☎ 202-332 0333; www.yuembusa.org; 2134 Kalorama Rd NW, Washington, DC, 20008)

Embassies & Consulates in Serbia

The following are represented in Belgrade:

Albania (Map p753; ☎ 011-306 6642; Bulevar Mira 25A)

Australia (Map p756; ☎ 011-330 3400; Čika Ljubina 13)

Bosnia and Hercegovina (Map p753; ☎ 011-329 1277; Milana Tankosića 8)

Bulgaria (Map p756; ☎ 011-361 3980; Birčaninova 26)

Canada (Map p756; ☎ 011-306 3000; Kneza Miloša 75)

Croatia (Map p756; ☎ 011-361 0535; Kneza Miloša 62)

France (Map p756; ☎ 011-302 3500; Pariska 11)

Germany (Map p756; ☎ 011-306 4300; Kneza Miloša 74-6)

Hungary (Map p756; ☎ 011-244 0472; Krunska 72)

Netherlands (Map p756; ☎ 011-361 8327; Simina 29)

Romania (Map p756; ☎ 011-361 8327; Kneza Miloša 70)

UK (Map p756; ☎ 011-264 5055; Resavska 46)

USA (Map p756; ☎ 011-361 9344; Kneza Miloša 50)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

See p757 for details on Belgrade's major festivals, and p763 for details on Novi Sad's Exit Festival.

On a different note there's the famous festival of brass band music at Guča near Čačak that takes place in the last week of August each year. For those who want to hear something different and tap into an exhibition of Serbian pride and culture, this is the festival to attend.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

The general attitude in Serbia is very homophobic and hostile although less so in the more liberal Belgrade. Even so, gay and lesbian marches in Belgrade have been met by thuggish violence. Consequently gay and lesbian society keeps itself well hidden, although Belgrade now has one openly gay nightclub, Club X, p760.

HOLIDAYS

Public holidays in Serbia:

New Year 1 and 2 January

Orthodox Christmas 7 January

Constitution Day 15 February

International Labour Days 1 and 2 May

Orthodox churches celebrate Easter between one and five weeks later than other churches.

In Kosovo, 28 November is Flag Day and Easter Monday is a public holiday.

INTERNET RESOURCES

B92 (www.b92.net) A good independent source of Serbian news.

Fruška Gora National Park (www.fruskagora-natl-park.co.yu)

Serbia and Montenegro Government (www.gov.yu)

Serbian Government (www.srbija.sr.gov.yu)

Serbian Tourist Organisation (www.serbia-tourism.org)

LANGUAGE

Serbian is the common language in Serbia but Albanian is the required language for Kosovo. Many people know some English and German.

Hungarians in Vojvodina use the Latin alphabet; Serbs use both Latin and Cyrillic.

MONEY

Kosovo uses the euro; Serbia retains the dinar but the inflation rate is about 10%. Many hotels will quote prices in euros, the favoured currency. ATMs accepting Visa, MasterCard and their variants are widespread in major towns and MasterCard, Visa and Diners Club are widely accepted by businesses. Many exchange offices in Serbia will change hard currencies into dinars and back again when you leave; look for their large blue diamond-shaped signs hanging outside. Some Belgrade banks and hotels have machines for changing foreign notes. A large number of banks cash hard-currency travellers' cheques, and again the euro is preferable. **Western Union** (www.westernunion.com) transfers can be made at most banks and major post offices.

POST

Parcels should be taken unsealed to the main post office for inspection. Allow time to check the post office's repacking and complete the transaction. You can receive mail,

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

- Police ☎ 92
- Ambulance ☎ 94
- Fire brigade ☎ 93
- Motoring Assistance ☎ 987
- Road Conditions ☎ 9800

addressed poste restante, in all towns for a small charge.

TELEPHONE

Press the i button on public phones for dialling commands in English. The international operator's number is ☎ 901.

Mobile Phones

In Serbia a 1000din card provides a local number and 500din of credit; the best coverage is gained with a number starting with ☎ 063, but ☎ 064 is cheaper.

Phonecards

Phonecards don't give enough time for a decent international call so use telephone centres at post offices.

TOURS

Ace Cycling and Mountaineering Center (www.ace-adventurecentre.com) Organises guided cycling and walking tours in Serbia.

Balkan Holiday (www.balkanholidays.co.uk)

Regent Holidays (www.regent-holidays.co.uk)

VISAS

Tourist visas are not required for citizens of most European countries, Australia, Canada, Israel, New Zealand and the USA. The website of the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** (www.mfa.gov.yu) has details. If you're not staying at a hotel or in a private home, then you have to register with the police within 24 hours of arrival and subsequently on changing address.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Other than a cursory interest shown by men, solo women travellers should find travelling hassle-free and easy. In Muslim areas a few women wear headscarves but most young women adopt Western fashions. Dress more conservatively than usual in Muslim areas of Kosovo.

TRANSPORT IN SERBIA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Hopefully it won't be long before the European discount airlines fly to Belgrade; currently Dubrovnik and Split (Croatia) are the nearest airports. For information on regional air links into Serbia, see p928.

Belgrade's **Nikola Tesla airport** (☎ 011-601 555, 605 555; www.airport-belgrade.co.yu) handles most international flights. Airline offices in Belgrade:

Aeroflot (code SU; ☎ 011-3235 814; www.aeroflot.com)

Air France (code AF; ☎ 011-638 378; www.airfrance.com)

Alitalia (code AZ; ☎ 011-3245 344; www.alitalia.com)

Austrian Airlines (code OS; ☎ 011-3248 077; www.aua.com)

British Airways (code BA; ☎ 011-3281 303; www.britishairways.com)

CSA (code OK; ☎ 011-3614 592; www.csa.cz)

Emirates (code EK; ☎ 011-624 435; www.ekgroup.com)

JAT (code JU; ☎ 011-3024 077; www.jat.com)

Lufthansa (code LH; ☎ 011-3224 975; www.lufthansa.com)

Malév (code MA; ☎ 011-626 377; www.malev.hu)

Montenegro Airlines (code YM; ☎ 011-262 1122; www.Montenegro-airlines.com)

Olympic Airways (code OA; ☎ 011-3226 800; www.olympic-airways.gr)

Swiss International Air Lines (code LX; ☎ 011-3030 140; www.swiss.com)

AIRLINES SERVING KOSOVO

Kosovo is served by **Prishtina airport** (☎ 038-548 430). Airline offices in Prishtina:

Adria Airways (code JP; ☎ 038-543 411; www.adria-airways.com)

Albanian Airlines (code LV; ☎ 038-242 056; www.albanianairlines.com.al)

Austrian Airlines (code OS; ☎ 038-242 424; www.aua.com)

British Airways (code BA; ☎ 038-548 661; www.britishairways.com)

Malév (code MA; ☎ 038-540 878; www.malev.hu)

Turkish Airlines (code TK; ☎ 038-502 052; www.turkishairlines.com)

Land

BORDER CROSSINGS

You can easily enter Serbia by land from any of the neighbouring countries and no bus changes are required.

Kosovo can be entered from Serbia via Novi Pazar; see the boxed text on p772 for information on entry requirements.

BUS

There's a well-developed bus service to Western Europe and Turkey from all major towns; contact any travel agency. Buses go from Belgrade to Malmö, in Sweden (€122, 34 hours, Friday), Munich (€82, 17 hours, daily), Paris (€88, 28 hours, Monday, Wednesday and Friday) and Zurich (€70, 23 hours, Wednesday and Saturday).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Drivers need an International Driving Permit and vehicles need Green Card insurance, otherwise insurance (from €80 a month) must be bought at the border.

TRAIN

All international rail connections out of Serbia originate in Belgrade with most calling at Novi Sad and Subotica heading north and west, and Niš going east. A good money-saver is to buy a Balkan flexipass (under/over 26 €50/80) that gives five days of travel in one month in Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Romania and Turkey.

Fares from Belgrade (all trains run daily):

Destination	Duration	Fare (€)	Couchette (€)	Sleeper (€)
-------------	----------	----------	---------------	-------------

Bucharest	14hr	30	10	17
Budapest	7hr	16	16	22
Istanbul	26hr	45	10	17
Ljubljana	10hr	30	*	15
Moscow	50hr	95	*	25
Munich	17hr	110	15	30
Sofia	11hr	12	8	12
Thessaloniki	16hr	30	10	15
Vienna	11hr	60	15	25
Zagreb	7hr	20	*	15

* no couchette

GETTING AROUND

Bicycle

Cyclists are rare, even in the cities, and there are no special provisions. For cycling tours see opposite.

Bus

The bus service is extensive and reliable and covers all of Serbia with a separate system

in Kosovo. Buses are rarely full and there's usually a row available for everyone; luggage carried below is charged at 70din/€0.50 (in Serbia/Kosovo) per piece.

RESERVATIONS

Reservations are only worth considering for international buses, holiday times and long-distance journeys with infrequent services.

Car & Motorcycle

Independent travel is an ideal way to gad about and discover the country. Beware of traffic police with speed radar guns; they also do spot checks of documents and the car.

AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATIONS

The **Auto-Moto Savez Serbia and Montenegro** (Serbia & Montenegro Automotive Association; Map p753; ☎ 9800; www.amsj.co.yu; Ruzveltova 18, Belgrade) web page has details on road conditions, tolls, insurance and petrol prices.

DRIVING LICENCE

Generally your national driving licence will suffice but as a caution bring an International Driving Permit, available from your national motoring organisation.

HIRE

Many hire companies such as **VIP** (☎ 011-369 1890), **Hertz** (☎ 011-334 6179) and **Budget** (☎ 011-

311 3050) have offices at the airport and in Belgrade. **Master Rent a Car** (☎ 011-245 0842; www.mastercar.co.yu) rents out a basic Yugo car from €25 a day.

Make sure the tyres are in good condition, and all lights and indicators work. Cars are required to carry a first-aid kit, an emergency-stop warning triangle, spare tyre and spare bulbs; the police can fine you for not having these.

ROAD RULES

Vehicles in Serbia drive on the right; seat belts must be worn and the drink-driving limit is .05.

Speed limits are 120km/h on motorways, 100km/h on dual carriageways, 80km/h on main roads and 60km/h in urban areas.

Train

Jugoslovenske Železnice (JŽ; www.yurail.co.yu, in Serbian) provides trains from Belgrade to Novi Sad, Subotica and the highly scenic line down to Bar in Montenegro; the website gives timetable details. Trains are generally slower than buses due to lack of infrastructure investment.

Different types of train require different tickets, so when buying make sure you state the service you'll use.

The only train service in Kosovo is to Skopje.